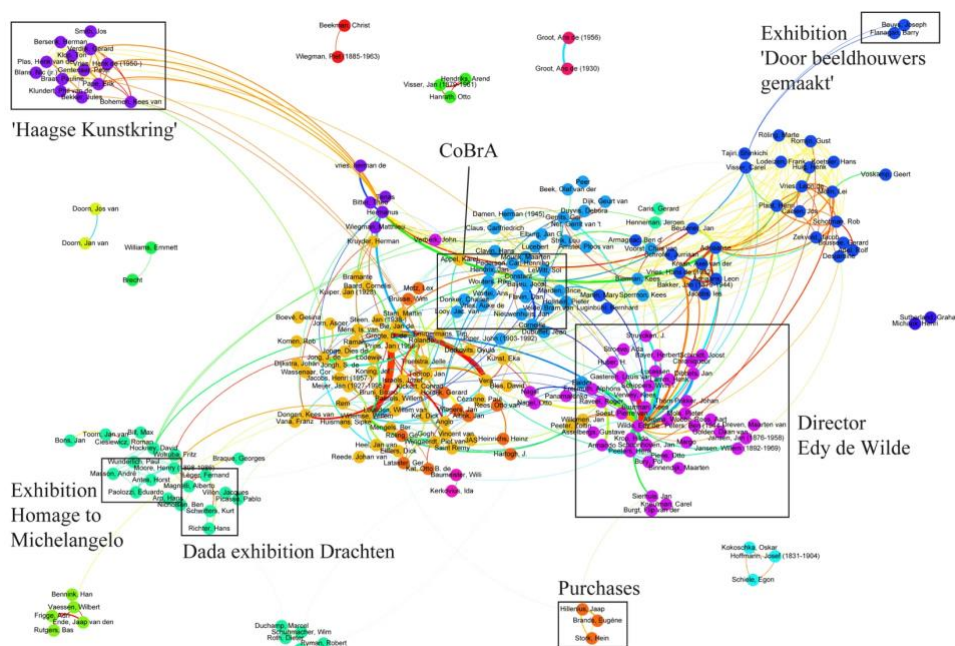


Call for Papers:

Imagining the Future of Digital Archives and Collections



J. Smeets, J. Scholtes, C. Rasterhoff, and M. Schavemaker, "The Stedelijk Museum Text Mining Project," paper presented at Digital Humanities Benelux 2016, Belval, Luxembourg, June 9–10, 2016.

THEME OUTLINE

The web of digitized collections and archives in the field of arts and culture is expanding rapidly. As with any technological burst, the digital imperative evokes promises for an improved functionality, but also brings about new challenges and perils. Many museums, like other memory institutions, embrace the digitalization of their archives and collections as means to attract new audiences, for instance, and further their participation and engagement in their collections, their program of activities, and their research. At the same time, these digital transformations challenge existing modes of knowledge production and dissemination, requiring new competencies and new forms of collaboration.

This issue of *Stedelijk Studies* investigates how we imagine those transformations, and how they affect cultural and academic practices. We invite manuscripts that critically investigate how practices of digitization of collections and archives transform knowledge production and knowledge exchange across academia, museums, and archives. This question ties in

with recent scholarship in the fields of digital heritage, digital art history, and digital humanities, but is also addressed in other fields, such as science and technology studies (STS), artistic practices, and design theory.

Scrutinizing existing digitization practices allows us to identify and challenge the forceful imaginaries that often kick-start and drive large-scale and costly digitization projects. Socio-technological imaginaries are part of new technological developments, but as social theorists (c.f. Castoriadis 1997; Marcus 1995; Flichy 1999; Jasanoff and Kim 2015) have argued, such imaginaries are not innocent; they shape our perceptions and elicit our actions, even if we may not realize they do. With this issue we therefore aim to explore how interdisciplinary scholarship on the effects and challenges of digitalization may enhance a deeper understanding of past and current projects concerned with the digitization and new usages of archives and collections in the field of arts and culture, such as [Stedelijk Text Mining Project](#), [Time Machine](#), and [Accurator](#). To start the discussion, we identify three dominant promises associated with such digitization projects. Contributions addressing other possible promises are equally welcome.

Promise 1: Towards increasing inclusivity

Projects involving digital archives and collections are often presented as challenging traditional forms of knowledge production and consumption, and by extension, as questioning our cultural canons (Ciasullo, Troisi & Cosimato 2018). Through co-creation and participatory designs, such projects promise a less hierarchical form of knowledge production in which practitioners, academics, and, increasingly, citizens or niche experts are considered equal contributors to knowledge production (Ridge 2016). The development of more inclusive and diverse digital “pipelines” that include crowdsourcing and folksonomies, however, also warrants practical, moral and epistemological concerns over biases, authority and accuracy, and issues of multiple interpretations and narratives.

Promise 2: Towards complete connectivity

Many heritage and cultural institutions are adopting linked open data as a way to organize and disseminate their collections, archives, and research data (Jones & Seikel 2016; Van Hooland & Verborgh 2014). The advent of linked open data would allow unlimited aggregation of materials from disparate geographical locations. It promises a transition from specialized and siloed information in archives and museums to a web of cultural data. Yet the operationalization of linked open data comes with many questions and concerns, ranging from web standards and domain-specific ontologies, loss of contextual information, presentation of provenance, and user interfaces, to legal and ethical considerations related to copyright and privacy.

Promise 3: Towards unlimited and easy access

Online resources provide access to tens of millions of items from thousands of cultural institutions. In an ideal world, these increasingly democratic and connected institutions will offer unlimited and easy access to data that are personalized and meaningful, but also reusable for academic research. In reality, the myriad interfaces and smart digital techniques notwithstanding, many users and producers still experience difficulties in accessing, interpreting, and presenting online archival and collection data (Kabassi 2017). This may in part be the result of lagging digital literacy skills, and evokes concerns about, for instance, the

aptness of the methodologies researchers employ in analyzing this data. It also raises questions about how diverging interests of developers, cultural organizations, and audiences affect the affordances of human-centered designs in graphical and conversational user interfaces.

This issue of *Stedelijk Studies* aims to reflect on these kinds of promises, encouraging practitioners and academic researchers to revisit past and current digitization efforts. We particularly invite discussions of good practices as well as failed projects in order to assess indicators of success and failure against the backdrop of such promises. Contributions can be submitted in the form of text with images, but with this issue we also seek to explore innovative digital publication formats. We welcome theoretical, methodological, and practice- or case-based contributions focusing on questions such as:

- What kinds of imaginaries can be identified in the digitization of archives and collections? How are future imaginaries about the digital enacted in archiving practices?
- How do diverging expectations of developers, content producers, volunteers, niche experts, and computer scientists affect digital projects involving collections and archives?
- How can we assess the processes and outcomes of digitization projects of memory institutions in light of presumed promises? What are examples of good practices, and what can we learn from failed attempts?
- Which new imaginaries may emerge from scrutinizing past and current projects in the realm of digital archives and collections?

The thematic issue *Imagining the Future of Digital Archives and Collections* will be edited by Dr. Vivian van Saaze (Maastricht University), Dr. Claartje Rasterhoff (University of Amsterdam), and Karen Archey (Stedelijk Museum).

ABOUT STEDELIJK STUDIES

Stedelijk Studies is a high-quality, peer-reviewed academic journal published by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The journal comprises research related to the Stedelijk collection, exploring institutional history, museum studies (e.g., education and conservation practice), and current topics in the field of visual arts and design.

SUBMISSION

Deadline for the abstract (max. 300 words) and CV is **June 14, 2019**.

Deadline for the article (4,000–5,000 words) is **October 15, 2019**.

Publication of the issue will be in **May 2020**.

Please send abstracts and other editorial correspondence to:
Esmee Schoutens
Managing Editor, *Stedelijk Studies*
stedelijkstudies@stedelijk.nl