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Web archiving of the COVID crisis in Europe
Infrastructures, agencies, challenges and tensions

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Friday 2 July 2021, 10.00-12.00 am

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This panel, which is organized within the frame of the WARCnet network[1], aims to analyze web archiving and web archives during an unexpected and disruptive event: the COVID-19 crisis. Combining analysis by web archivists and scholars, it addresses several issues currently at stake, may it be with regards to the historization and heritagization of recent born-digital traces or the value, strengths and limits of these numerous web archives and collections for scholars.

By simultaneously allowing discovery of web archiving practices and the uses of web archives by researchers, this panel strongly entwines questions related to web archiving infrastructures and their agencies in Europe, as well as challenges and tensions that are in the balance when studying these digital traces, building corpora, facing interoperability issues, developing digital skills, conducting distant and close reading, etc.

After a general presentation of the challenges at stake by Jane Winters (SAS, University of London, UK), the first part of the panel focuses on web archives collections that were created during the COVID-19 crisis by many institutions through Europe and the analysis of the large oral history campaign we conducted in European countries (Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, France, Switzerland, Luxembourg, etc.[2]). Nicola Bingham (The British Library, UK) will offer overviews of the collections that were gathered respectively by the UK Web Archive and the IIPC (International Internet Preservation Consortium), while Claude Mussou (Ina THEQUE, France) will explain the strategy of the *Institut national de l'audiovisuel* (France) which was more specifically oriented towards Twitter's archiving. Friedel Geeraert (The State Archives of Belgium and the Royal Library of Belgium) will provide a comparative overview of the strategies of web archiving institutions in Europe, underlining the frame, scope, process, values and agencies at stake.

The second part of this panel then focuses on the methodologies and research approaches at stake when scholars face such rich but also heterogeneous collections: Susan Aasman (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), Karin de Wild (Leiden University, The Netherlands) and Nicola Bingham will provide feedback on a very concrete experiment that the working group is conducting through a Datathon based on metadata and derived data

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[1] The network activities run in 2020-22, and they are funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark | Humanities (grant no 9055-00005B). For more details see https://cc.au.dk/en/warcnet/about/

[2] Retrieve these oral histories and testimonies through the WARCnet papers:
https://cc.au.dk/en/warcnet/warcnet-papers/

provided by several web archiving organizations. This distant reading approach is complemented by a more qualitative approach, which also raises challenges, as Valérie Schafer will explain. The presentation of several concrete research topics will further demonstrate the methodological challenges at stake. Niels Brügger (Aarhus University, Denmark) will discuss two key topics: the notion of digital media events and pandemics on the Web before the COVID crisis. Sophie Gebeil (Aix Marseille University) will develop the case of the social movements of carers, based on audiovisual born-digital heritage, while Henrik Smith-Sivertsen (The Royal Library, Denmark) will help the audience to discover the creativity that arose, especially with regards to the songs that were born in relation to the COVID crisis.

Chaired by Susan Aasman (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), this panel will be followed by a discussion with the audience in order to deepen the topics that are at the core of the panel, may it be the social and technical construction of web archives, the issues of inclusiveness or live archives, the European landscape of web archiving, or the current and future tools and methodologies to approach such data.