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Digital Diaries: What will become of our online memories?

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Abstract

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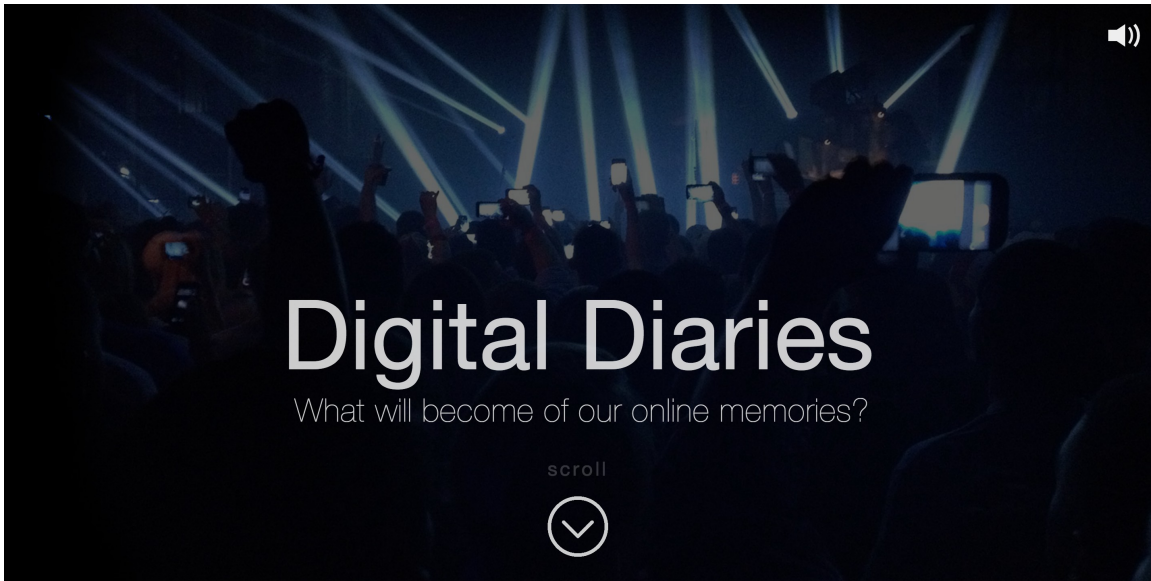
Digital Diaries: What will become of our online memories?

Three out of four adults using the Internet in the United States have accounts to at least one social network, according to the Pew Research Center's 2013 Social Media report. In the last several years, sharing digital memories on social networks – such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and many others – has become a part of our *daily* lives. Today, more than 350 million photos are uploaded to Facebook every day and 60 million photos are shared daily on Instagram. These digital memories replace the ephemera that people once kept safe in a shoebox or in a photo album. Invitations once sent through the postal service, for example, are now in the form of an Evite. This project explores what will happen to this information from a preservation perspective. How is society preserving this new and evolving cultural space that people are more commonly living in. This project is meant to invoke contemplation as opposed to answers – mostly because there is no simple answer today. As Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archives, points out, personal digital archiving is a new topic.

The Internet Archive, founded in 1996 in San Francisco, developed the Way Back Machine, which takes a picture of every public webpage on every website every two months. However, it does not preserve private websites or webpages protected by a password. This is often confusing to the average Internet user because most social networks are free and available to anyone who signs up for an account. The result: all of the information posted to these sites are held by private companies, which — besides sharing with advertisers — are at the behest of these corporations, said Abigail De Kosnik, assistant professor in the Berkeley Center for New Media. Some of the earliest online social networking platforms – such as MySpace or Friendster and Geocities – no longer exist despite their popularity a decade ago. In some cases, users were not forewarned.

The Internet, in some cases, is like the Wild West. No one owns the Internet. It's not public nor is it private. It will be interesting to see how regulations play out at the federal level in the coming decades. Until then,

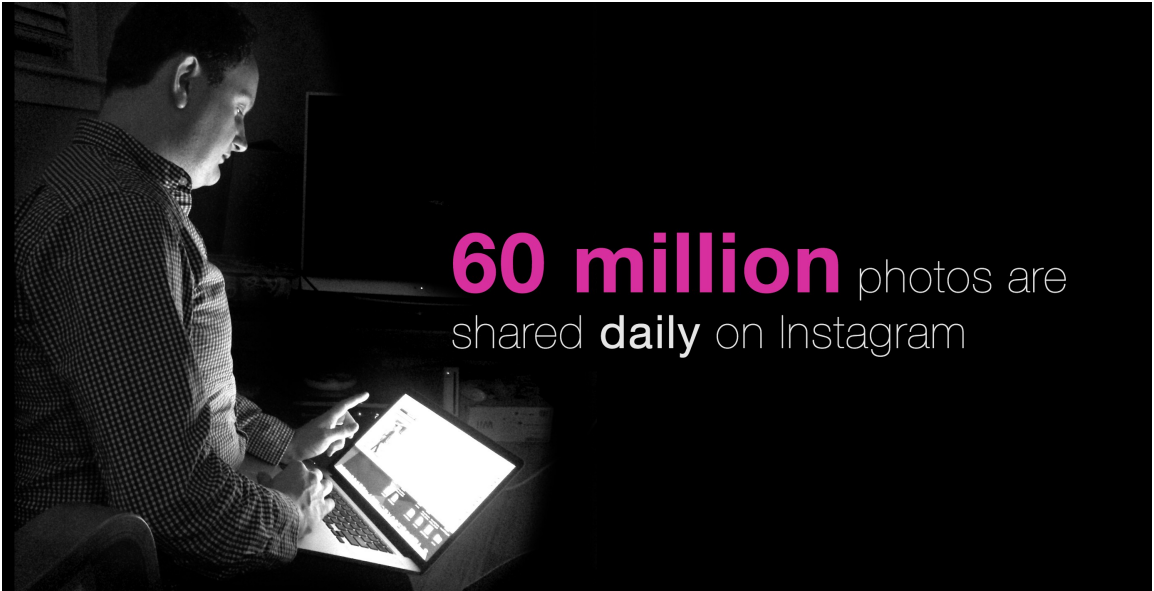
it's up to individual users to preserve their digital data on hard drives, but also realizing that even hard drives have a life span. Americans, in general, De Kosnik said, do not backup their data well. It was through thinking how to preserve a post I was tagged in on Facebook that I began asking myself these very questions and how this master's project came to fruition. Duplication of material, it seems, is the only clear answer at this time. Backing up on hard drives will preserve digital data, but the best way – maybe somewhat ironically – is still printing it out.



More than
350 million photos
are uploaded to Facebook
every day

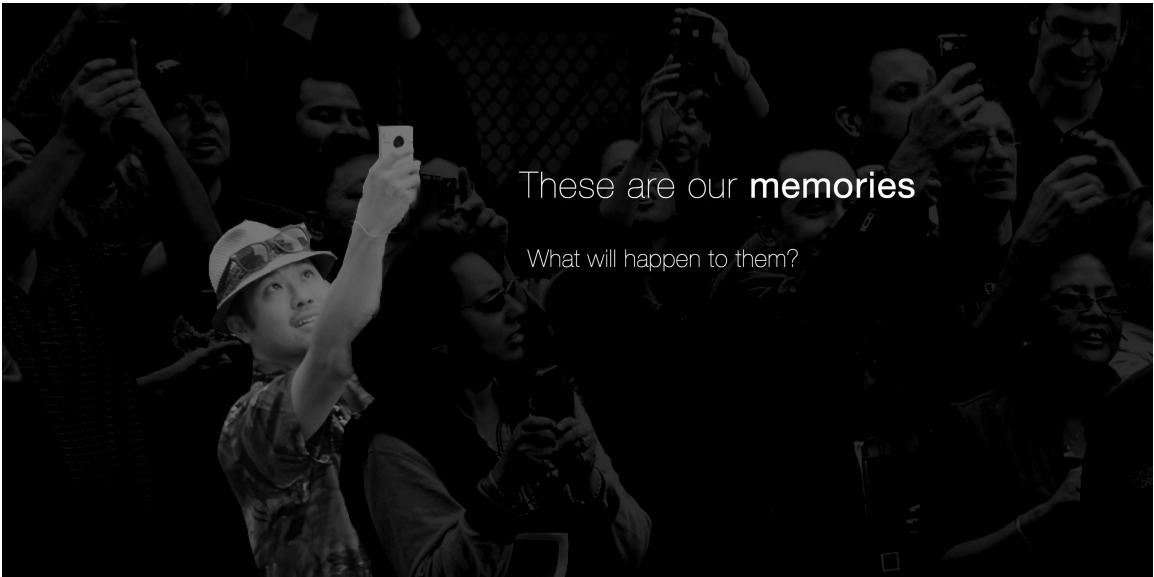


60 million photos are
shared **daily** on Instagram





100 hours of video is
uploaded to Youtube **every minute**



These are our **memories**

What will happen to them?

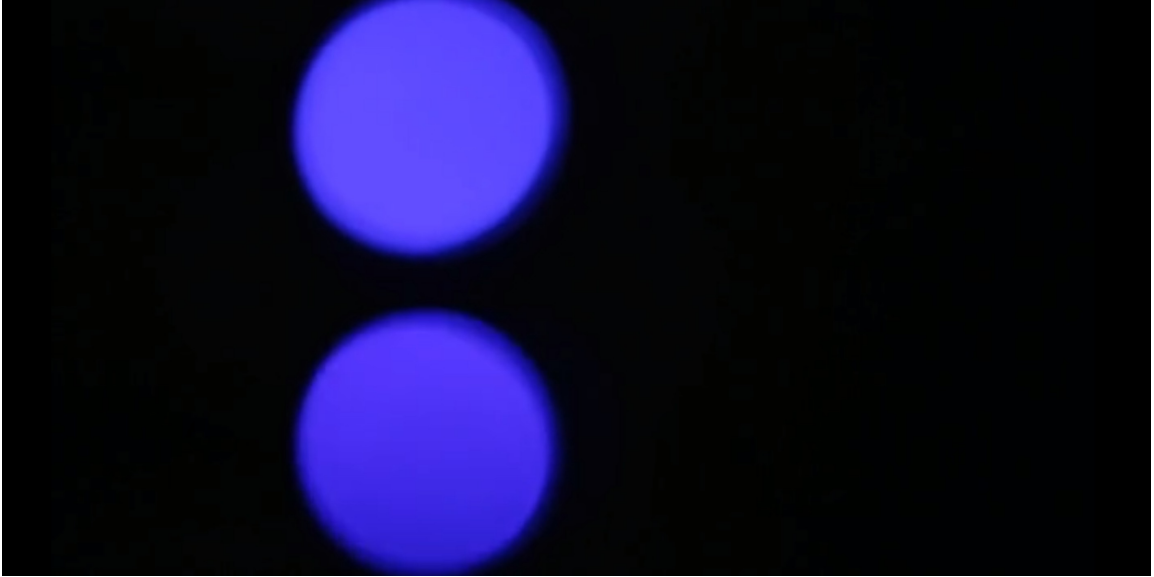


The
**Internet
Archive** is a
non-profit digital library
founded in San
Francisco in 1996.

It takes a snapshot of
every webpage on
every public website
every two months.

So far, that's **380**
billion web captures.

The Internet Archive is
visited by **4 million**
people a day.



So what do we do?



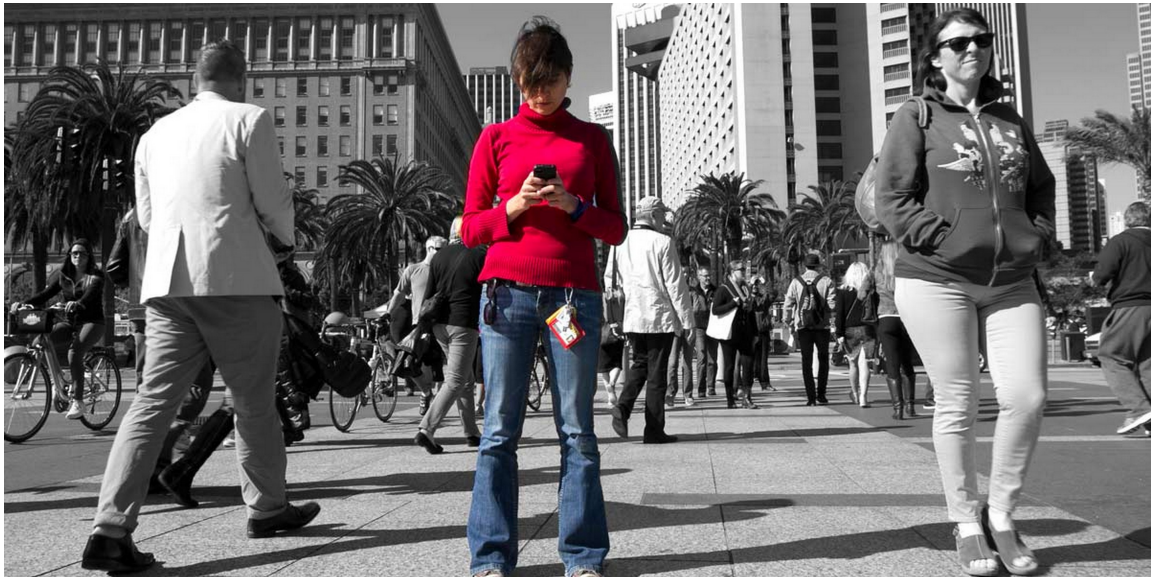


So... what do people have to say?

Question:

Do you care about preserving your digital memories?

(Click on a box to hear their response)



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Credits and Thank You

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Source: Pew Research Center's Social Media Update 2013