

Remembrance of Contemporary Events: On Setting Up The Sunflower Movement Archive

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URL: <<http://www.iis.sinica.edu.tw/~trc/public/publications/DH2017/>>.

Abstract: In the late evening of March 18, 2014, students and activists stormed into and occupied the main chamber of Taiwan's Legislature. The event set off the Sunflower Movement, signifying a turning point in Taiwan's history. Researchers at Academia Sinica arranged to acquire all the supporting artifacts and documentary materials in the chamber before the protest came to a peaceful end. In this paper, we discuss the issues in archiving and making available to the public a large collection of artifacts created by thousands of participants in a contemporary event. We demonstrate systems designed to encourage people to identify items of their own in the archive. We show how an accessible catalog to the archive can help people tell their stories hence collectively may strengthen the public's recollections about the movement.

Background

In the late evening of March 18, 2014, a small group of students and young activists stormed into the main chamber of the Taiwan's Legislature in protest of the hastily reviewed and pending signature of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) with China ([Figure 1](#)). The occupation of the Legislature would take several weeks and grow into an island-wide movement with strong popular support. In its aftermath it would amend the course of Taiwan politics, as well as its relation to China. It was a major contemporary event in Taiwan, and continues to influence the political landscape and societal reflection in the country. The occupation of the Legislature was streamed live, and when people vacated the chamber they left behind a massive amount of supporting artifacts and documentary materials. What would one do with these artifacts and materials, presumably soon to be abandoned, vanished and forgot? What could an archivist — or anyone who ever was involved in the movement — do in preparing for the future generations to remember the present events?

A few historians in Academia Sinica, Taiwan, seized this opportunity and reached a general agreement with the occupants to systematically collect what was in the Legislature main chamber before they would prepare to end the protest. Afterward Academia Sinica suddenly got hold of a large collection of artifacts created by thousands of participants in a contemporary event. In this paper we discuss a few issues involved in digitizing and archiving artifacts from contemporary events of this nature. We outline our approach to addressing them, and we present the current status of this archive. The archive is called the 318 Civil Movement Archive at Academia Sinica. More background information about it can be found at the archive website [\[About\]](#). As the movement started on March 18, 2014, has since better known as the Sunflower (Student) Movement [\[W-en\]](#) [\[W-zh-tw\]](#), in this paper the term *Sunflower Movement Archive* and the term *318 Civil Movement Archive* will be used interchangeably to refer to the archive initiated at Academia Sinica. Often we simply call it the *Archive*.

Principle

To strive for general access to the Sunflower Movement Archive probably was our topmost principle when we were starting to digitize the artifacts. This principle, however, shall be applied to a conflicting context of requirements and constraints. On the one hand, making the archive publicly accessible — on the Web of course — keeps Academia Sinica accountable to the activists (and to the public as well) about what it is doing. Academia Sinica will keep its promise in preserving all the artifacts it has acquired, and the proof is in the form of a Web catalog of all the digitized artifacts. On the other hand, as the artifacts are made by individuals, and some are of a personal nature (encouraging notes to the activists, for example), the individuals' personal privacy, publicity rights, as well as copyrights can be vulnerable when digital copies of the artifacts are made available for all to exam and use.

Because of these considerations, only thumbnail images of the artifacts are made available on the Web for the Archive. The thumbnails are still useful for artifact identification (more about this later), but they are of no plausible other values. In addition, sensitive information inscribed in the artifacts, such as recognizable signatures and phone numbers, has to be pixelated to prevent misuse. No doubt there are boundary cases challenging our judgments. Often we will rather be safe than be sorry, hence will not release even thumbnail images at all for some artifacts. Still, how shall we deal with a banner with hundreds of signatures, sent in by overseas students to support the occupants? Scrubbing out all the signatures from the digital image of the banner will surely defeat the purpose of such an expression of solidarity. We make it a general rule that if it is a form of public communication, it shall be made public, even if there are personal information (names, signatures, affiliations, etc.) on the artifact.

If what are made available are just thumbnail images and artifact metadata, a Web archive will not be too interesting. As participation to the movement is both personal and collective, we hope people will use the online archive to identify artifacts of their own (creation), and to make available high-resolution images of their artifacts to the public for general reuse. That is, we want the Web archive to be a conduit to help transit a collection of orphaned works into a domain of collective remembrance. A feature is built into the online catalog to allow registered users to identify artifacts of their own. Once identified, the user can choose to release the high-resolution

image of the artifact to the public under one of the six Creative Commons Licenses, or more openly to elevate it to the public domain by using the CC0 Public Domain Dedication. Of course the claimant can choose to declare to reserve his/her copyright to the work. In this case, the high-resolution image will not be made public. To facilitate better search into the Archive, each item in the collection is annotated with rich metadata, including a transcription of the text appearing on the artifact (the words in a note, for example). People have used this feature to find and release artifacts of their making in spite of (or because of) the artifacts have been archived (and put online) for this historical event.

At the same time when the physical artifacts were being digitized, we also began to collect “born digital” documentary media such as photo images and audiovisual recordings. At the time of the Sunflower Movement, these media were widely dispersed on media sites (e.g. YouTube), social networks (e.g. Facebook), or Web storage services (e.g. Dropbox). After the event, these media may be removed for various reasons, buried in new materials, or hard to find. Many service providers where these media are hosted often scale down the uploaded originals into low-resolution media, transform them into less desirable formats, and/or strip out all the metadata embedded in the original media (e.g. EXIF data in photos). These tainted media are not for archival purposes. We chased down some of the most well-known citizen media activists who were broadcasting and reporting the events. We acquired batches of original files from them. By going after the original producers, we also get to keep better records of the provenance of the digital media in the collection. Many providers chose to donate the entire collections on their hard drives to the Archive, by using the CC0 Public Domain Dedication.

Use and Identification

We feel it necessary to have a *Terms of Use* (ToU) for the publicly accessible catalog to the Archive [\[ToU\]](#). By this, we will be able to communicate clearly to the public the purposes of the Archive, as well as various conditions and considerations in using the catalog. As the catalog is free and open to all, even without registration, to search and browse the Archive, we do not want the ToU to sound discouraging. Still, the catalog is the outcome of a provisional project at a research institution. We cannot really warrant the continuity and accuracy of the catalog and its associated services (in particular when funding was very uncertain in the beginning). Nor should we be held liable for people's use of these services. The ToU keeps users aware, and requests their understanding, of the right of publicity, the right to privacy, and other rights of the individuals whose artifacts are collected — or whose appearances are recorded — in the Archive. We also worry about the Archive being used by the authority as a source of evidences to pursue legal cases. Therefore, specifically in the ToU, we ask all users “not to cause civil or criminal disputes,” and “not to commit harassment, threat or other misconducts on any individual.”

We now demonstrate how anyone can use the Archive. Let us use as an example the hand-written note shown in [Figure 2](#). This item is a small post-it note written by a student from the Chinese University of Hong Kong [\[10531\]](#). It is part of a large panel sent in by the students from Hong Kong to support the students occupying the Legislature [\[12958\]](#). The panel is shown in [Figure 3](#), with all the notes attached to it, as it is in the catalog. Each note attached to the panel has been individually digitized and cataloged; the note in [Figure 2](#) is but one of them on the panel. [Figure](#)

[4](#) is a photo of the panel hanging on the wall of the main chamber of Legislature during the occupation. As the hand writing in the note has been transcribed into text and becomes part of the item's metadata, one can search for it in the catalog using a few key phrases. In the note, the student says s/he is from the *Department of Social Work* (社工系). Using this three-character Chinese phrase, we search and indeed find this item in the catalog, as shown in [Figure 5](#).

Would anyone actually use the catalog to search and identify his or her own artifacts? We asked this question ourselves when deciding to add functionality to the catalog to allow registered users to identify, online, artifacts of their own. We were not sure. But once the functionality is there, and after some publicity about our work on the Archive, some people do start to identify their works and mail us their Copyright Declaration and Release forms [\[Id\]](#). [Figure 6](#) shows a work of art [\[18247\]](#). It was identified by its creator using the catalog to the Archive. After the identification, he also releases the art work under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 TW license. By identifying it, the work can now be attributed to his name (佐瑪, *Zuoma*). By releasing his works under a Creative Commons license, he allows us to make available high-resolution images of his works for people to download. [Figure 7A](#) shows the template of the Copyright Declaration and Release form. A customized form will be generated automatically once an artifact has been identified by its maker. The PDF form will have included all the necessary information (about both the identifier and the identified item). It need only to be printed out, signed, and mailed in — no stamp required ([Figure 7B](#)) — by the identifier to Academia Sinica.

Who is *Zuoma*, the maker of the art work [\[18247\]](#), and what does he look like? People may ask. We shall know as we happen to meet him in person! In [Figure 8](#), he is holding his own work, now a part of the collection of the National Museum of Taiwan History (NMTH). Since November 2016, all physical artifacts in the Archive had been transferred to the museum by a mutual agreement between Academia Sinica and the NMTH. The photo was taken at a press event on 2016-11-14 at the NMTH, where a one-day conference was held on topics of preserving and archiving artifacts from contemporary events. By building information systems encouraging people to reconnect with artifacts that had been forced to be left behind, we aim to help resurrect and disseminate people's stories of the movement. In this particular case, we did get to learn why and how *Zuoma* made this and other art works in the Sunflower Movement.

Current Status

The catalog of the Archive has been online since March 2015, roughly one year after the events setting off the Sunflower Movement. So far we have not received any complaint about putting the catalog online. For long-term preservation, Academia Sinica has made arrangement with the National Museum of Taiwan History (NMTH) to transfer the Archive to the Museum. The information systems managing the entire collection of digital media, including high-resolution images of all the artifacts, are developed and released as open source software packages. As such, Academia Sinica and the NMTH can both host the digital archive on the Web. Currently the digital archive is still hosted at Academia Sinica even though all the artifacts had been transferred. The museum by itself has been collecting artifacts from various contemporary events for many years, including those from the Sunflower Movement. What Academia Sinica had collected were from the main chamber of the Legislature. The NMTH collects many more from

other sources. There is a tentative plan between Academia Sinica and the NMTH to mutually enrich their digital collections on the Sunflower Movement.

An online recollection of the 318 Civil Movement, drawing from a group of individuals loosely connected to the people working on the Archive, was announced and made public on March 18, 2015, the first anniversary of the events. The recollection is a website expressed as a map of Taiwan covered with images and narratives; these are individual stories told with supporting materials drawn from the Archive or from other sources [\[Expo\]](#). We imagine any person, any group of individuals, can use this catalog to the Sunflower Movement Archive to tell their stories. Each item in the catalog has a permanent link; anyone can use the links to weave stories about the various events in the movement.

Discussion

Remembrance of contemporary events can be both personal and collective. When artifacts are collected from contemporary events, individual and public access considerations constrained what shall and can be done with the artifacts. We hope we have maintained a balance in setting up the Sunflower Movement Archive. We hope our experience can draw some attention to, and incite more discussion about, the issues that are involved in building archives of contemporary events.

We would like to emphasize that the work on the Sunflower Movement Archive is but one among the many in the field of digital archiving and curation. We opt not to give an overview of the best practices, nor cite the many literature, in this brief paper as we fear we cannot do it properly with the current time and space constraints. A balanced and comprehensive survey of the field will be obligatory when an extended version of this paper is to be prepared. Nevertheless we note that our effort is most related to the many existing works in catching the ephemeral but personal (as compared to those in holding on to the permanent and institutional). We look forward to learning from and further extending the practices in post-disaster remembrance and diasporic recollection.

Acknowledgement

The work on the Sunflower Movement Archive has been funded by Academia Sinica and is a collaboration between the Institute of History and Philology and the Institute of Information Science. The author thank all the collaborators, especially Ming-Chong Hwang who initiated the collection of the artifacts and invited the author to join the project to archive them digitally. We thank Chi-Ling Lai, Shih-Ting Tang, and Chia-Hsun Wang for their enduring hard work on this project. [Digital Memory Asia](#) did all the digitization works. [Word Gleaner Ltd.](#) built all the information systems. Without their help, this project will not finish in time. We are very grateful to Shu-Jiun Chen for her advice on metadata, and to Shun-Ling Chen for her legal advice. We thank the Research Center for Information Technology Innovation, as well as the Office of Vice President Fan-sen Wang, Academia Sinica, for their support. Under a mutual agreement between Academia Sinica and the National Museum of Taiwan History, the entire collection of the Archive had been transferred to the Museum. We thank the Museum for giving the collection a most proper home.

Figures



Figure 1. Students occupying the main chamber of the Legislature ([photo](#) from the *Voice of America* [\[VoA\]](#)).



Figure 2. A supporting note from a student at the Department of Social Work, Chinese University of Hong Kong [\[10531\]](#).

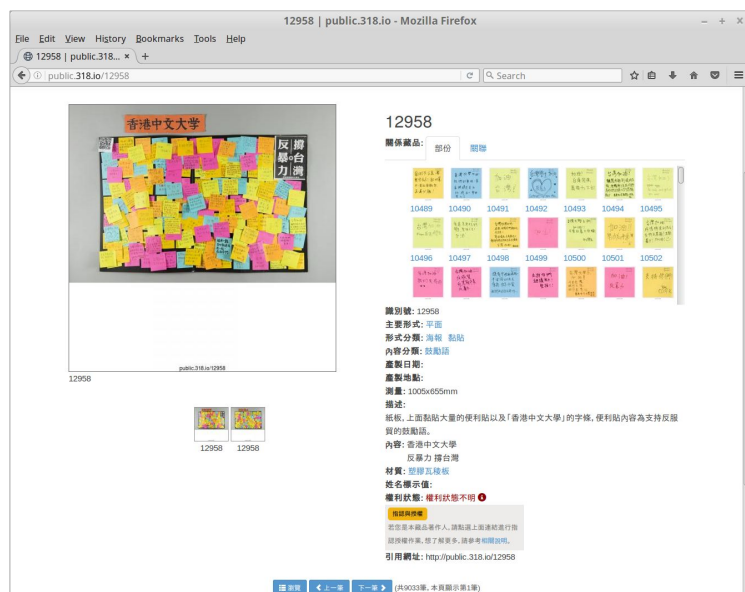


Figure 3. A panel of supporting notes from the Chinese University of Hong Kong [12958].



Figure 4. The panel on the wall of the occupied main chamber of the Legislature.

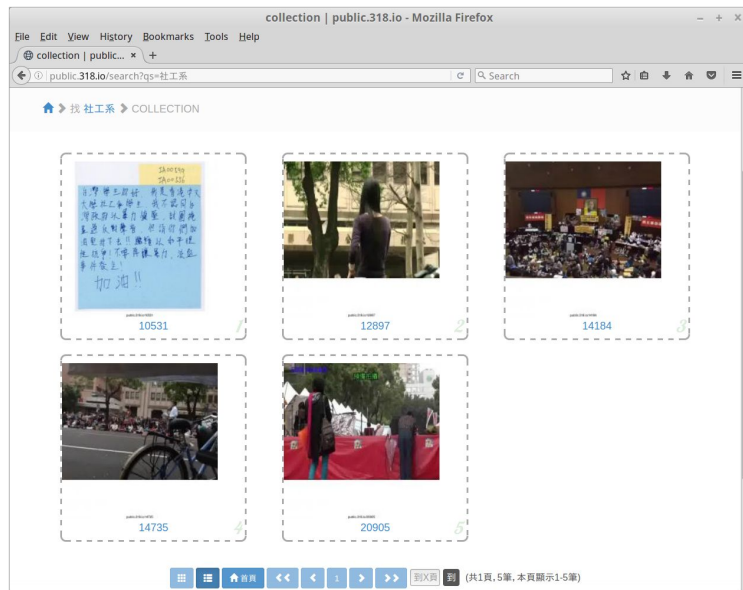


Figure 5. The items returned by a search to the Archive with the phrase 社工系 (Department of Social Work).



Figure 6. An identified artifact [18247].

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Figure 7A. A copyright declaration and release form.

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Taiwan Citizens Movement

318公民運動



Figure 7B. The back cover of the form, to be folded into an envelope — NO STAMP REQUIRED.



Figure 8. The entire collection of the Archive was transferred to the National Museum of Taiwan History on 2016-11-14 (as reported by the *Liberty Times* [\[LT\]](#)).

Resources

[10531] Item no. 10531 in the Archive catalog: <<http://public.318.io/10531/>>.

[12958] Item no. 12958 in the Archive catalog: <<http://public.318.io/12958/>>.

[18247] Item no. 18247 in the Archive catalog: <<http://public.318.io/18247/>>.

[About] Background about the 318 Civil Movement Archive: <<http://public.318.io/about/>>.

[Expo] Remembrance of the events, as an online group exposition of the Archive catalog: <<http://expo.318.io/>>.

[Id] Artifacts identified by their makers: <http://public.318.io/identified_collections>

[ToU] *Terms of Use* of the Archive: <<http://public.318.io/usage/>>.

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[LT] 自由時報 (Liberty Times), 〈318 學運文物 台史博接手典藏〉 (*Artifacts From The 318 Student Movement Handed Over To The National Museum of Taiwan History*), 2016-11-15. <<http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/life/paper/1052141>>.

[VoA] 美國之音 (Voice of America), 〈反「兩岸服貿」學生繼續佔據立法院大會堂〉 (*Students Against CSSTA Continue To Occupy The Main Chamber Of The Legislature*), 2014-03-19. <<http://www.voachinese.com/a/taiwan-students-protest-20140319/1874406.html>>.

[W-en] Wikipedia article: *Sunflower Student Movement*, accessed 2017-03-31. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunflower_Student_Movement>.

[W-zh-tw] Wikipedia article: 太陽花學運, accessed 2017-03-31. <<https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-tw/%E5%A4%AA%E9%99%BD%E8%8A%B1%E5%AD%B8%E9%81%8B>>.