

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

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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 with China. 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 and her 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 you do with these artifacts and materials, presumably soon to be abandoned, vanishing, and forgot? What could you 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 occupyists to systematically collect what were in the Legislature 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 current event. In this paper we discuss a few issues involved in the digitization of contemporary event archives of this nature, outline our approaches to addressing them, and present the current status of the Sunflower Movement archive. We also offer a few thoughts on the development of new archives for contemporary events.

To strike for access of the general public to the Sunflower Movement archive probably is the topmost principle when we were starting to digitize the artifacts. This principle, however, shall be viewed in 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 she is doing. Academia Sinica will keep her promise in preserving all the artifacts she 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 catalog. 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, have to be pixelated to prevent misuse. We also need to take care of the images and videos that can be used by the authority to identify individuals so as to make legal cases. 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 do you deal with a banner with hundreds of signatures, sent in by overseas students to support the occupyists? Scrubbing out all the signatures from the banner image 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 is some personal information on the artifact.

If what are made available are just thumbnail images and artifacts metadata, the 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 wish the Web archive also acts as 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 liberally 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 the case, the high-resolution image will not be made public. To facilitate better search to 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 written note, for example). People have used this feature to find and release artifacts of their making in despite of – or because of – the artifacts have been archived 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 were original hosted will also 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 activist/citizen media who were broadcasting/reporting the events, and acquired the 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 of providers chose to donate the entire contents on their hard drive to the Archive by using the CC0 Public Domain Dedication however.

We feel it is necessary to have a “Terms of Use” for the publicly accessible catalog to the Archive. 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 Archive. The catalog to the Archive has been online for about 20 months and so far we have not received any complaint. For long-term preservation of the physical artifacts and digital media, Academia Sinica has made arrangement with the National Museum of Taiwan History to transfer the Archive to the Museum. The information systems managing the entire collection of the Archive are developed using (and released as) open source software packages. This is good for long-term preservation.

Remembrance of contemporary events can be both personal and collective. When artifacts are collected for a current event, individual and public access considerations constrained what shall and can be done with the artifacts. We hope we have maintained a balance in our setting up of 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.

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### **Guides to Resources:**

1. “About the 318 Civil Movement Archive” <http://public.318.io/about>
2. “Terms of Use” for the online archive <http://public.318.io/usage>
3. A Sample exposition of the Sunflower Movement Archive <http://expo.318.io/>

**Note:** 8 images are appended at the end of this paper for illustration. The entire text of “Terms of Use” (both Chinese and English) is also attached.

**Acknowledgement:** The work on the Sunflower Movement Archive has been supported 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 Dr. Ming-Chong Hwang who initiated the collection of the artifacts, and for inviting the author to join the project in archiving them. The author thank Miss Chia-Hsun Wang, Miss Chih-Ling Lai, and Miss Shih-Ting Tang for their enduring hard work on the project. The author thank Digital Memory Asia, for the digitizing work, and thank Word Gleaners Ltd. for building the information systems. As of November 2016, the Sunflower Movement Archive has been transferred to the National Museum of Taiwan History under a mutual agreement with Academia Sinica.

Fig. 1.

"Occupy Taiwan Legislature by VOA (1)" by Voice of America. Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Occupy\\_Taiwan\\_Legislature\\_by\\_VOA\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Occupy_Taiwan_Legislature_by_VOA_(1).jpg)



Fig. 2.

The occupation was streamed live. Sample video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYcAQ5JS8G0>



Fig. 3.  
Part of the collected artifacts in Academia Sinica. Photo by Lai Chi-Lin.



Fig. 4.  
The Sunflower Movement Archive. Publicly accessible at  
<http://public.318.io>



Fig. 5.  
Identification of artifacts online (a cake found in the chamber is used here for illustration).  
The text in yellow: “Click the to identify and license”.

12398 | public.318.io

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內容分類: 太陽餅  
產製日期:  
產製地點:  
測量: 210x296mm  
描述: 太陽堂太陽餅一塊  
內容:  
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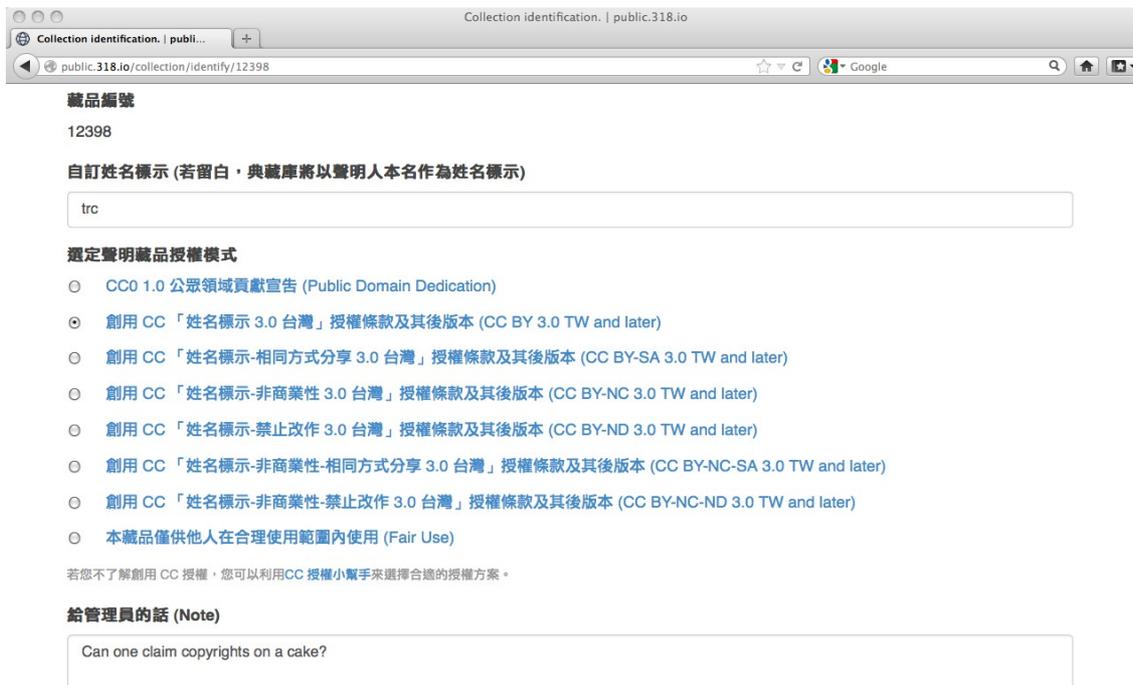
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Fig. 6.

The identification process. What name to use for attribution (“trc” in this case), and what public licenses to use (CC0, one of the six CC licenses, or only allowing fair use). CC BY 3.0 Taiwan license was selected.



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**給管理員的話 (Note)**

Can one claim copyrights on a cake?

Fig. 7.  
The document to be signed, and to send to Academia Sinica to self-certify the identification.

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Fig. 8.

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典藏與製作: 中央研究院 (<http://www.sinica.edu.tw>)

藏品系統建置: 拾穗者文化 (<http://www.wordgleaner.com>)

藏品數位化: 亞洲數位典藏 (<http://digitalmemory.asia>)