Sex in the Archives: The Politics of Processing and Preserving Pornography in the Digital Age

GVGK Tang

ABSTRACT

By synthesizing perspectives from both archival theory and porn studies, this article relates archives, pornography, and technology to reveal the growing complexities of processing sexually explicit materials in the archives. Amid canonical discussions of privacy/access for physical (personal) documents, the digitization of visual records, and shifting ideas of permanence (in part due to new tools for preservation), archivists must address the problems in preservation and access posed by digital records themselves. How will both analog and contemporary born-digital (e.g., Internet-based) pornographies be processed given the stigmas and metadata issues surrounding sexually explicit materials in the archives? These problems are all the more complicated by new theories of "digital preservation" and conceptualizations of the Internet as a (faux) "archive." As such, archives and archivists are left to negotiate the politics of what is "appropriate" content for the public—balancing outreach programs, educational initiatives, and grant-seeking with representation in and diversification of their collections. Rather than propose solutions for an unforeseen future in archival practice, the author interrogates current issues affecting the preservation of pornography in tandem with the advent of new technologies (e.g., the unfurling realities of digitization initiatives and cyberporn). The author intends to encourage further discussion and planning initiatives to account for these issues.

KEY WORDS

Digital preservation, Technology, Sexuality, Pornography, LGBTQ

> "Pornography, when it is kept, is often stashed away in dark recesses of collections, joked about, infrequently cataloged, and generally ignored."[1]
>
> —*Dwight Swanson, 2005*

If sex work is the world's oldest profession, then pornography must be one of the world's oldest genres of material culture. Indeed, the word *pornography* comes from the Greek *pornographos*—to write about prostitutes (*pornē* prostitute + *graphein* write).[2] From the walls of ancient Pompeii to the courts of early America, pornography has both constituted and borne witness to the inner and outer lives of human civilization for millennia. Why, then, has pornography been so stigmatized—treated with perverse shock and condemnation in the media; mocked in mainstream entertainment and public dialogue; and (most important) neglected, censored, and even destroyed when it comes time to process and preserve it for future study?

Recently, the archival canon has been preoccupied with issues of privacy/access for personal documents, the digitization of records, and shifting ideas of permanence (in part due to new tools for preservation). Taking into account the problems in preservation and access presented by digital records themselves, how will both analog and contemporary born-digital (e.g., Internet-based) pornographies be processed? To address the stigmas surrounding sexually explicit materials in the archives, we must acknowledge their intersections with the evolving values of our so-called information-rich society and the interplay between censorship and "too much" data. These problems are all the more complicated by new theories of "digital preservation," the proliferation of born-digital content, and contemporary conceptualizations of the Internet as a faux "archive." How can archives and archivists negotiate the politics of what is "appropriate" content for the public—balancing outreach programs, educational initiatives, and grant-seeking with representation in and diversification of their collections?

A note on terminology: for the purpose of this article, we may take "pornography" (or "porn"[3]) to mean any "material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, [especially] intended to stimulate sexual excitement."[4] The term itself may leave the reader with an impression of anachronism, as *pornography* is a particularly Western conception that arose in the mid-1800s.[5] However, I wish to highlight this particular conundrum; through a presentist lens, archivists may indeed label sundry erotic materials "pornographic" (depending on their geographic and temporal context). As Tim Dean cogently outlined in the introduction to *Porn Archives*, pornography itself as a concept has grown up in tandem with the modern archives. While sex has always been a subject of material culture, "pornography as a category of aesthetic, moral, and juridical classification" is a relatively recent phenomenon[6]—as

with the example of Pompeii's excavation. When archaeologists discovered myriad phallic statuary and brothel frescoes amid the ruins, they designated a locked room at Museo Borbonico as the "Pornographic Collection (*Raccolta Pornografica*)."[7] Thus, the notion that something may be considered pornographic was employed concurrently with its isolation and suppression, as well as with the creation of an "archive."

Literature Review

Since porn studies emerged as an academic field some thirty years ago, it has devoted much of its time and space to defending and justifying its existence as a serious area of scholarship. While this article's main focus is on archival theory, important intersections exist with this nascent discipline. In much the same way archivists have been forced to negotiate the exponential growth and effect of digital technologies on all facets of their work, so too have porn scholars witnessed an increase in interest, dialogue, and public engagement with their subject matter. At the same time "the increasing accessibility provided by various media technologies has opened up the market for pornography"[8]—making it more accessible and an increasingly more prominent part of people's everyday lives[9]—large-scale archival digitization projects are forcing both academics and laypeople to reevaluate their assumptions about archives as dusty and exclusive inner sanctums of memory and information.

This article relates archives, pornography, and technology to reveal the growing complexities of processing sexually explicit materials in the archives. Rather than propose solutions for an unforeseen future in archival practice, I will explore current issues affecting the preservation of pornography in tandem with the advent of new technologies (e.g., the unfurling realities of digitization initiatives and cyberporn). The interconnected discussions of scope and study featured in both archival and porn studies research best embody these overlaps. James O'Toole, for instance, envisioned the freedom to redefine the scope, purpose, and management of our collections. By reprioritizing the permanence of content over the permanence of the original medium, we are able to complicate binary associations of permanence and worth versus impermanence and worthlessness.[10] Digital technologies present more diverse and abundant content; they are also a less cost-effective and impermanent (albeit more flexible) medium of creation and storage. As such, how do we negotiate the intrinsic value that the act of preservation (the bestowal of a "permanent" status) signifies? In the digital age—when digital preservation (however oxymoronic) is increasingly being viewed as an effective, yet expensive, tool for archives, and born-digital content is being produced every millisecond—our ideas about what is permanent and valuable (how they are supposedly one and the same) are in flux.

Likewise, Peter Wosh reflected that "impermanence itself can become a virtue" as brevity becomes less of one.[11] Our lives are being increasingly flooded with "large quantities of undigested, unfiltered, and unedited" information and, as such, "very different notions of authority, self, and communication" have developed.[12] Wosh was concerned that form has overtaken content—that we ask what defines a record more often than we investigate what is inside of one. Similarly, Terry Cook heavily critiqued archivists' seemingly "unreserved acceptance" of the maxim "the medium is the message," pointing out the increasing popularity of archival repositories' devotion to or organization by medium (e.g., film, photo, sound).[13] Cook warned of the dangers of even "documenting the history of the medium itself . . . because of the isolation it symbolizes and invites."[14] Roy Rosenzweig's discussion of "the promiscuity and . . . persistence of digital materials"[15] evidences this practice. Rosenzweig addressed 1) the tenuousness of born-digital materials/data and our digital cultural heritage, and 2) the potential for a major historiographic paradigm shift given the abundance, or even "completion," of our historical record(s). Wosh and Cook would likely take issue with this optimistic and fallacious vision of a "complete historical record," because it focuses too narrowly on the records themselves, not on the content that actually constitutes the so-called (monolithic) historical record. Records are limited; they are representations (not manifestations) of events and experiences.

With the rise of the digital age, pornography has proliferated in production and public dialogue. In turn, archives and academia alike are being forced to (re)consider the value of incorporating taboo and controversial subjects and objects into their scopes and spaces. We must explore the ways in which digital media open up "the study of pornography to a broader consideration of the ways in which sex, technology and the self are represented and experienced in contemporary societies."[16] In this way, we are actually re-reminded of the significance of the medium—of its physicality (or lack thereof). Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith's 2014 introduction to the first ever *Porn Studies* journal delineated meaningful research as that which closely engages contexts, facets, and forms. For porn studies, much of the message is, in fact, in the medium, be it word or image or, more specifically, a book, a magazine, an illustration, a photograph, or a film. The list goes on; the advent of digital technologies and the Internet confronts us with more media for recording pornography and types of pornography than ever before—DVDs and online streaming (paid subscriptions or free hosting sites, live amateur cams or commercial productions), even smutty online fiction and sexy selfies.

This profusion of form—medium and genre—brings us to these final questions: What is pornography, and what are archives? What have they been, and what are they becoming? How do they complicate each other's traditional definitions when set against the backdrop of the digital age? As archival theory

continues to integrate postmodern paradigms of activity over passivity (acknowledging the subjectivity and fluidity of both the archivist and archival materials), a total abstraction of the discipline should be avoided; we ought to maintain a sense of tangibility and structure. Postmodernism is forcing a general shift away from static tradition and toward dynamic adaptation: concepts over objects, function over structure. Archivists must begin to view themselves not "as passive guardians of an inherited legacy," but as people who assume the celebrated "role in actively shaping collective (or social) memory."[17] Simultaneously, we are moving from conceptualizing "records as the passive products of human or administrative activity and towards considering records as active agents themselves in the formation of human and organizational memory."[18] As we balance what is and what is in "a record," so too must we examine both what is and what we can derive from "pornography," because "documentary form and informational content share a complex, ever-changing, and unexplored relationship"[19] that is effectively embodied by sex in the archives.

Sexuality and Solemnity: Processing Pornography Stigma

> "Porn's appeal lies partly in its lack of respectability, whereas archives are nothing if not respectable. . . . If porn is juicy, then the archive is dry as dust."[20]
>
> *—Tim Dean, 2014*

Sex and archives, by convention, seem like opposites: a private experience versus a public institution, secret and stigmatized versus official and approbate; "archives offer sites of preservation and permanence, whereas pornography is commonly considered to be ephemeral and amenable to destruction."[21] Most important, the archives is conceived of as a site of power—alternatively a temple of "authority and veneration" or a prison that "controls" that which resides inside of it.[22] Indeed, the latter symbol conjures a Foucauldian association of docile bodies with materials and their passive consumption. Archives users are subject to the disciplinary gaze (and/or mediation) of the archivist; the archivist follows a "script that has been naturalized by the routine repetition of past practice"[23] (established by tradition and administration). The solemnity with which archives and archival materials are treated stems from their traditional status as institutions—state or organizationally "ordained" repositories of recordkeeping. Archives are unexpectedly political because they keep "those records that support the dominant position, the metanarrative, or the status quo."[24] Pornography, a raunchy burlesque of human sexuality, its emotivity and passion, presents an illicit contrast. Obscenity has traditionally held no place in the archives because it destabilizes "accepted standards of morality and decency."[25]

So, to subvert this implicitly dichotomous narrative of historiographic legitimacy—what is and is not worthy of incorporation into our archives and, therefore, our collective memory—we must first assess the standards, ethics, and semantics of processing pornography. Processing is an act of interpretation that lies between acquisition and access.[26] Processing involves selection, appraisal, and description, the construction of a cohesive narrative, a "labor-intensive, resource-heavy, and time-consuming" ritual of "sense-making."[27] To process porn, one must consume it and risk internalizing the notion that one is a pervert for doing so. Viewing (or reading) pornography in a professional setting, even for a professional purpose, conjures a sense of hyperawareness, a self-consciousness of one's own (objectifying) gaze. Processors automatically position themselves as the embodiment of everything seemingly contradictory about pornography and archives. The processor encounters something intimate and taboo in a formal and respectable space, then bestows permanent status on something ephemeral. While a volunteer may be wary of such a task, a "specialist processor [perhaps a porn studies scholar] will become too involved in the subject to process quickly and impartially," and/or describe and organize materials in a particularly esoteric and inaccessible manner.[28]

Caitlin McKinney reflected on this issue when she encountered a Hollinger document case labeled "unprocessed 'porn'? and several snapshots"[29] at the Lesbian Herstory Archives. She observed that the amateurism, banality, obscenity, and ambiguity of materials like pornographic "vernacular photography" make it difficult to label/categorize. McKinney attributed this problem to a larger issue of describing and mediating visual materials. She argued that processing pornography must be "improvisational, open to revision and critique, and willfully imperfect in its management of considerations such as metadata."[30] Labeling (for metadata and keyword searches) is inherently interpretive. Searching for "sexuality" might yield no results; searching for "porn" might produce images of sex wars protests; searching for "erotica" might generate images of sex with a "specious aura of antiquity."[31] So, what *is* pornographic; what *is* erotic? One archivist may find a given document to be wholly unseemly, while another may not even bat an eye. Archival classification and the definition of "what is pornographic and what is fit for public consumption" go beyond issues of presentist renditions and language usage.[32] Archivists determine access, draw connections, and define borders. The act of processing—naming and arranging—shapes censorship policies and the ubiquity and ambiguity of sexual imagery.

As such, we must be wary of how metadata both shapes and is shaped by our positionalities and biases. The public's constructive and meaningful engagement with archival materials (sexually explicit or otherwise) depends upon a dominant narrative constructed, in part, by standardized metadata. Metadata creation is, inherently, an exertion of "power and authority"; it represents

"the problematic act of applying labels to things."[33] For instance, is a collection featuring male-on-male sex to be classified as "homosexual" or "gay," "pornographic" or "explicit?" Each of these words carries its own connotation and is more commonly used by a different group of people to evoke either positive or negative reactions; neutrality does not exist in the world of metadata. Only when we acknowledge and reflect on this issue of partiality can we adapt to a world of "changing contextual and relational factors [that] are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation."[34]

Another important archival precept is that "a repository should only seek to acquire materials for which it can indeed provide adequate processing."[35] In this instance, we find evidence of communal self-sufficiency. Marginalized communities, including sexual minorities, will take the matter of preserving their own legacy and collective memory into their own hands because they know that either 1) nobody is going to do it for them, or 2) the dominant historiographic narrative is actively trying to exclude and silence them. What proceeds from this tangle of cooperative hoarding and compilation of ephemera is an act of defiance. John D'Emilio emphasized the role of archives in queer historiography: how early research in this nascent field was very rarely conducted in physical institutions that housed and cared for materials. This grassroots historiography necessitated community engagement—speaking with individual activists and wading through piles of documents at their organizations of origin. Indeed, D'Emilio reflected on his visit to the Mattachine Society in New York, after being told that it would be closing at the end of the month, and having any/all of the office files offered to him. He kept two four-drawer file cabinets in an apartment closet for several years. The sheer absurdity of the situation acts as a solemn reminder of "how precarious the survival of our historical records has been."[36]

With this in mind, we may conceive of the ways in which "LGBT researchers expand the notion of the archive to capture the fullness of LGBT lives,"[37] through different "nontraditional" types of materials—like pornography. As expansively illustrated by the Lesbian and Gay Archives Roundtable's *Lavender Legacies Guide*, a great deal of pornographic and erotic material comprises queer archival collections.[38] Caitlin Shanley recently took on the cumbersome task of compiling a comprehensive bibliography of pornographic research collections, and a similar theme emerged. The majority of the archives on her list are major research libraries, film repositories, and archives devoted to the study of sexuality and/or LGBT history.[39] How or to what extent the pornography at these sites has been processed is unknown. However, in the 2015 anthology *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives* (the first book to focus on LGBT archival research), one of the authors noted that all of the repositories discussed throughout the work "hold visual, filmic, written, and other forms of pornography and erotica, often catalogued as individual items or by genre or format." Exceptions were a collection

of DVDs at Cornell University amassed by one individual and a collection of 1,100 midcentury BDSM[40] stories housed at the Kinsey Institute.[41]

While pornographic materials are certainly not unique to LGBT collections, they tend to be more prevalent, thus jarring placid archivists into recognizing the intractability of attempting to be both inclusive of sexual minorities and keeping their repositories "respectable." Indeed, once pornography intersects with identity and community, it is difficult to accurately position the "objectivity" of the processor. How do we reexamine the role of archivists in shaping their (pornographic) collections, making them "suitable" for public consumption, when said collections are a part of a larger narrative of liberation and representation (e.g., the increasing visibility of LGBT material culture). Locating the relationships between the positionalities of archivists and archives users, as well as the archives', archivists', and archives users' "historical, political, geographic, social and cultural" contexts, allows us to determine and outline appropriate "processes of exchange."[42] Porn collectors amass materials according to their own tastes in a deeply personal act of consumption and compilation. Much like porn processors, porn collectors—upon offering materials for donation—make themselves a nexus of the elite and the illicit, the sacred and the profane.

For example, John Mercer and his colleagues at Birmingham City University recently acquired a collection of "1200 numbered VHS tapes of commercially available 'mainstream' gay porn," the majority of which was collected in the 1990s.[43] Mercer expounded on the value of this "turn-of-the-century," "pre-Internet" "time capsule" and how it "offers insights into collecting practices, the scope and nature of material that was available to porn consumers in the United Kingdom."[44] The collector himself created a system of cataloging—documenting titles, directors, and actors (useful information for description and perhaps even provenance), as well as engaging with format and textual quality—while maintaining a personal rating and coding system.[45]

How do archivists preserve the personalities behind these collections while weeding and keeping organic structures intact? Of course, this issue is hardly unique to pornography; still, we ought to bear in mind the intimacy involved in viewing (or reading) such materials and (re)processing them for public consumption. In the case of another gay male porn collector "who lovingly indexed his bootlegged VHS tapes," some scholars would argue that his "binders are as important as the tapes."[46] These men momentarily wrested the power of mediation and interpretation from archivists by consuming and organizing their own materials in what was (perhaps) an individuated, yet historically significant act of "sense-making." The third symbolic site of archival power best illustrates this role switch: the archives as a restaurant. The archivist as the server "interprets the menu" and provides knowledge for those who seek nourishment (the scholar/customer),[47] except the porn collector has created that menu.

Digital Preservation: Impermanence vs. Born-Digital Abundance

> "The Internet offers nearly free access to pornography uninhibited by previous barriers of time and space . . . [Cyberporn] is easily accessible, incurs minimum transaction costs, and enjoys a large demand."[48]
>
> —*Jonathan Coopersmith, 1998*

Digital technologies pose two major issues for pornographic materials in the archives. First, the digitization (and/or "digital preservation") of analog erotica brings up questions of copyright infringement and privacy rights. Second, born-digital (e.g., Internet-based) pornographic content is overwhelmingly abundant (problematizing traditional notions of preservation and weeding that mistakenly lead us to view the Internet or "the cloud" as an archives in itself). Additionally, born-digital pornographies are more ambiguous in terms of copyright and privacy than their nondigital counterparts. "Ethically, the archive also presents a dilemma" when we inherit the secret collections of individuals who no longer have a say in the matter of acquisition.[49]

As is true for any and all archival materials, donors are not always the same as the collectors, subjects, producers, or creators of the content. For instance, consider how materials "frequently fail to document the direct words and experiences of sex-industry workers themselves."[50] Does every film or photograph come with a copy of the actors' contacts? Are the warnings and affirmations of legality (if there are any) that cover the VHS tape sleeves and the DVD cases or preface the scenes themselves sufficient? What if the content gets separated from its original packaging? What if the scenes get clipped? How do we *really* know that the performers are consenting adults? These questions do not even begin to address more concrete issues of felony and exploitation. The Dark Web has aided in the proliferation of child and rape pornography. In such cases, questions of consent are no longer ambiguous. Do archives have a place in aiding criminal investigations—bearing in mind the treatment of these materials as evidence, not as subjects of academic study?

Provenance is key, not necessarily in determining history of ownership, but in tracing origination. Mainstream pornography is an inherently commercial enterprise. Primarily in the case of analog visual materials, the archives' acquisition or reproduction of copyrighted materials (or its bootlegs) must be negotiated. Archivists ought to contact production companies, directors, and performers to determine issues of intellectual property, consent, and privacy. Meanwhile, the only major example of preserving born-digital erotica is the Internet Archive.[51] Without any concerted effort, the Internet Archive has captured a variety of popular porn sites since the early 2000s. While the Internet Archive cannot preserve the main content of video-hosting sites, it can record

side ads, stills, and comments sections. It preserves a mix of repurposed bootlegs (of either tapes/DVDs or streaming videos), trailers and scenes from longer feature films promoted by production companies themselves, and amateur cams and recordings (self-made and/or self-posted, or neither)—a snapshot of the disarray that is twenty-first-century pornography.

Cyberporn is a mess of copyright infringement, privacy issues, and consent violations. For the latter instance, take the examples of "revenge porn" (wherein hackers and/or (ex-)lovers share sexually explicit videos or photos of other people) and screenshots/recordings of paid live cams without the consent of the performer(s). Surely preserving these types of pornography, especially once we develop better means of "archiving" the Internet, is a perpetuation of sex crime. How can we document these issues for posterity (so as to not erase the history of the crimes themselves) without reexploiting the victims? Furthermore, how might we frame this issue in light of the recent Belfast Project controversy, wherein the subpoenaing of oral histories to use as evidence in a murder investigation roused the old "archival privilege" debate?[52] Will we conceive of the archives as neither an "apolitical" entity, nor a place of censorship but, in the most extreme case, one of investigation and prosecution? Indeed, when does the confidentiality of cyberporn users and disseminators risk superseding public well-being, such that (alleged) aggressors (e.g., hackers and/or rapists) are afforded the same (or more) protections as those whom they have targeted?

Future Considerations: Privacy, Propriety, and Public Access

> "By denying the existence of pornography in archival collections, or by being prissy about them, we are skewing the historic record and betraying our roles as keepers of the totality of [history]."[53]
>
> —*Dwight Swanson, 2005*

Frank Boles once asked (regarding the Belfast Project controversy), "Is history always more important than justice?"[54] The public's right to "every man's evidence" remains a contested ideal (for journalists[55] and witnesses,[56] as well as archivists). However, the agency of the individuals whose bodies and sexual acts have been made the subjects of film and photography, literature and art, takes the utmost precedence. Sara Hodson wrote of processing the personal documents and correspondence of a gay man, which contained the intimate details and confessions of their authors. In accordance with the Society of American Archivists' Code of Ethics ("respect the privacy of people in collections, *especially those who had no say in the disposition of the papers*"), Hodson considered the possibility of outing anyone were the letters made publicly accessible.[57] Similarly, we must prioritize

the consent of those whose names and images appear in pornographic materials, lest they be unwillingly identified as sex workers. What if all involved parties are unidentifiable or deceased; is attempting to locate and contact them (or their next of kin) for permissions already a violation of their privacy?[58] Hodson's "decision-by-avoidance"[59]—allowing enough time to pass to ensure that public access has, in all likelihood, become a nonissue—while practical, does not allow us to tackle the larger philosophical conundrums of our work.

Future research should investigate the interplay of confidentiality and contextualization—the "privacy" of pornography in the archival space. Is "due diligence" in determining provenance sufficient when subjects and creators have not given their consent to have sexually explicit imagery (or description) of their bodies and acts preserved in a public institution? In this way, are pornographic materials too costly to process because of the massive legal issues they present, not to mention the costs of preserving and maintaining the various formats in which they come? Should materials be withheld from the public for an imposed period of time, perhaps one that encompasses the lifespans of all parties involved in their creation and donation? Should they be sequestered away, reserved only for scholars with a keen interest in them? Should archived erotica bear "graphic content" warnings and be heavily censored for audiences below eighteen years of age (depending on the location of the archives)? How does one maintain the "over eighteen" viewability of pornography in a public digital archives? Are "confirmation buttons" adequate when archives are likely more liable to legal action than popular porn sites as state or organizationally sponsored institutions?

As archivists determine what is "suitable" for public consumption, they negotiate the respectability politics involved in development and education. Archives play a role in regulating the public's conceptions/definitions of and access to obscenity (a term that has come to be synonymized with pornography thanks, in large part, to United States obscenity laws[60]). Like all institutions, they implicitly allow social stigmas, cultural norms, and political regulations (e.g., homophobia, Puritan ethics, and censorship) to shape the way they compile and organize their materials. With an air of cautious self-censorship, we must consider how we handle provocative and, indeed, sensitive materials. As is the general rule of thumb in archival science, "providing context and demonstrating the cultural and historical value of the collections" is key for pornography.[61]

Accessibility and dissemination have played a role in "de-invisiblizing" and promoting critical engagement with pornography. But why has the ubiquity of pornography been the determining factor for its study? Throughout time and place, pornographic materials have served to illustrate both the public and the private, the celebrated and the persecuted desires and drives of people. Pornography is one of the most valuable (and undervalued) primary source

"genres" for the study of sexuality. It serves as a living testament to both the exploitative and empowering elements of our sexualities—the collective product of our repressed desires, shaped by ever-changing cultural moments. In the words of Luke Ford, "Why read about porn? To learn about yourself and the world. . . . While PhDs theorize about sexuality, pornographers deal with its reality. . . . porn springs from the most primal desires."[62]

Our means of interrogating what fuels the id of a racist misogynist, critiquing the objectification of transwomen of color, and affirming the agency of sex workers (to name a few examples) is determined by archivists. Parsing the sexed, gendered, racialized, and classed intersections of pornography is a task best undertaken with the primary source material left intact and thoughtfully maintained. We can, thus, explore the medium and its content—the manner in which it is (or is not) preserved.[63] Implicit in questioning whether we should be trying to save everything, and how we find/define our materials, is how we go about prioritizing one document or byte over another and, thus, prioritizing one historical narrative over another. When does weeding become censorship? Just as the Victorians secreted away the erotica of Pompeii, we must now negotiate the politics of processing and preserving the "seedy," sexually explicit substrata of our modern (digital) society.

Notes

1 Dwight Swanson, "Home Viewing: Pornography and Amateur Film Collections, A Case Study," *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 5 (2005): 136.

2 *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "pornography," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pornography.

3 Henceforth, the abbreviation "porn" is used only in quotations from other sources and/or when modifying a noun (e.g., "porn scholars" or "porn sites"). While "porn" is generally accepted in scholarly circles as synonymous with pornography (hence, "porn studies"), I wish to avoid any confusion associated with variation and abbreviation in the article.

4 *Oxford English Dictionary*, "pornography."

5 For more background on the origination of "pornography" as a material category, please refer to Lynn Hunt, ed., *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), especially Hunt's introduction, 9–45.

6 Tim Dean, "Introduction: Pornography, Technology, Archive," in *Porn Archives*, ed. Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczycky, and David D. Squires (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 2.

7 Dean, "Introduction: Pornography, Technology, Archive," 2.

8 Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith, "*Porn Studies*: An Introduction," *Porn Studies* 1 (2014): 1.

9 With the advent of cyberporn, pornographic materials have become increasingly accessible (both intentionally and accidentally) and popular. For instance, as of July 2017, PornHub is the thirty-eighth most popular site on the Internet globally (placing above Tumblr, Imgur, and Bing), and the eighteenth most popular site in the United States (placing above Pinterest, Wikia, and IMDb), according to Alexa, http://www.alexa.com/topsites.

10 James M. O'Toole, "On the Idea of Permanence," *The American Archivist* 52 (1989): 24–25.

11 Peter J. Wosh, "Going Postal," *The American Archivist* 61 (1998): 239.

12 Wosh, "Going Postal," 239.

13 Terry Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on 'Total Archives,'" *Archivaria* 9 (1979): 142.

[14] Cook, "Tyranny of the Medium," 144.

[15] Roy Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," in *The American Historical Review* 108 (2003): 737.

[16] Attwood and Smith, "An Introduction," 2.

[17] Terry Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts," *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 4.

[18] Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism," 4.

[19] Wosh, "Going Postal," 239.

[20] Dean, "Introduction," 1.

[21] Dean, "Introduction," 1.

[22] Randall C. Jimerson, "Embracing the Power of the Archives," *The American Archivist* 69 (2006): 19.

[23] Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 171.

[24] Sue Myburgh, "Records Management and Archives: Finding Common Ground," *The Information Management Journal* 39 (2005): 25.

[25] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "obscene," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/obscene.

[26] Virginia J. H. Cain, "The Ethics of Processing," *Provenance* 11 (1993): 48.

[27] Cait McKinney, "Body Sex, Interface: Reckoning with Images at the Lesbian Herstory Archives," *Radical History Review* 122 (2015): 115.

[28] Cain, "The Ethics of Processing," 46.

[29] McKinney, "Body Sex, Interface," 115.

[30] McKinney, "Body Sex, Interface," 117.

[31] McKinney, "Body Sex, Interface," 125.

[32] McKinney, "Body Sex, Interface," 125–26.

[33] Margery Sly, "Teaching Zines and Metadata," *History News—A Temple Libraries' Blog*, February 8, 2017, https://sites.temple.edu/historynews/2016/05/27/teaching-zines-and-metadata.

[34] Frances A. Maher and Mary Kay Tetreault, "Frames of Positionality, Constructing Meaningful Dialogues about Gender and Race," *Anthropological Quarterly* 66 (1993): 118.

[35] Cain, "The Ethics of Processing," 43.

[36] John D'Emilio, "In the Archives," OutHistory.org, October 19, 2016, http://outhistory.org/blog/in-the-archives/.

[37] Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell, "Introduction: Something Queer at the Archive," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, ed. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 10.

[38] "Lavender Legacies Guide," Society of American Archivists, https://www2.archivists.org/groups/lesbian-and-gay-archives-section/lavender-legacies-guide.

[39] Caitlin Shanley, "Clandestine Catalogs: A Bibliography of Porn Research Collections," in *Porn Archives*, 441–55.

[40] BDSM is an acronym for bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism.

[41] Whitney Strub, "Indexing Desire: The Gay Male Pornographic Video Collection as Affective Archive," in *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives*, 145.

[42] Leora Farber, "Archival Addresses: Photographies, Practices, Positionalities," *Critical Arts* 29 (2015): 2.

[43] John Mercer, "The Secret History: Porn Archives, 'Personal' Collections and British Universities," in *Porn Studies* 1 (2014): 412.

[44] Mercer, "The Secret History," 412.

[45] Mercer, "The Secret History," 413.

[46] Ann Cvetkovich, Foreword, xvii.

[47] Jimerson, "Embracing the Power," 27.

[48] Jonathan Coopersmith, "Pornography, Technology and Progress," *Icon* 4 (1998): 110–11.

[49] Mercer, "The Secret History," 414.

[50] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Prostitutes in the Archives: Problems and Possibilities in Documenting the History of Sexuality," *The American Archivist* 57 (1994): 526.

[51] "Wayback Machine," Internet Archive, http://web.archive.org/.

[52] Peter Schworm, "BC reflects on missteps in Northern Ireland project," *The Boston Globe*, May 18, 2014, https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/05/17/controversial-project-stumbles-end-reflects-where-things-went-wrong/Pp7b9cT3CDZ0Ltb3uuUPPI/story.html.

[53] Swanson, "Home Viewing," 136.

[54] Frank Boles and Jackie Dooley, "Should a Legal Right to 'Archival Privilege' Be Established?," *Off the Record*, February 14, 2013, https://offtherecord.archivists.org/2013/02/14/should-a-legal-right-to-archival-privilege-be-established.

[55] Jaime M. Porter, "Not Just 'Every Man': Revisiting the Journalist's Privilege against Compelled Disclosure of Confidential Sources," *Indiana Law Journal* 82 (2007): 549–73.

[56] Donald Koblitz, "'The Public Has a Claim to Every Man's Evidence': The Defendant's Constitutional Right to Witness Immunity," *Stanford Law Review* 30 (1978): 1211–42.

[57] Sara S. Hodson, "In Secret Kept, in Silence Sealed: Privacy in the Papers of Authors and Celebrities," *The American Archivist* 67 (2004): 200–201.

[58] For an example of privacy rights violation posed by the advent of new technologies, please refer to Luke O'Neil, "How Facial Recognition Software Is Changing the Porn Industry," *Esquire*, September 27, 2016, http://www.esquire.com/lifestyle/sex/news/a48942/porn-facial-recognition.

[59] Hodson, "In Secret Kept, in Silence Sealed, 200–201.

[60] Take, for instance, the landmark *Miller v. California* (1973) case that, in prosecuting a man for sending mail-order pornography brochures, changed the legal definition of porn from "utterly without socially redeeming value" to that which lacks "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value," Findlaw, http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/413/15.html.

[61] Amy Fitch, "Privacy-Related Session at MARAC Spring Conference: Jeremy Floyd," *The Keyhole*, July 2014, 5.

[62] Luke Ford, *A History of X: 100 Years of Sex in Film* (Amherst, Mass.: Prometheus Books, 1999), 7–8.

[63] The difficulty presented by the appraisal of pornography warrants more study and perhaps a companion piece to this article.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GVGK Tang is a public history MA student at Temple University in Philadelphia with a specialization in transnational queer history and politics, nascent community-building, and identity construction. Tang graduated summa cum laude from Temple in 2017 with a BA in history and sociology, and a minor in LGBT studies. Tang has worked as a research assistant for renowned gay historian Jonathan Ned Katz on his grassroots LGBT history initiative OutHistory.org, as well as for the director of the Center for Public History at Temple. Tang interned at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, digitizing and curating the society's *"One Manly Soul": White Masculinities in Late Colonial America* exhibition in collaboration with the Digital Paxton Project. Tang works at the John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, processing and curating an upcoming exhibition of materials from the AIDS Library Graphics Collection. Tang's digital history project, "The Semiotics of Sex: A History of Queer Identity Politics," was recently featured by the National Council on Public History following its presentation at the 2017 conference.