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Dismantling the Monolith: Post-Media Art and the Culture of Instability

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Abstract—Art that falls under the "new media" paradigm is problematic, or rather, it renders many traditional assumptions about art as problematic. In a practical sense, new media art raises fundamental questions about the nature of curation and preservation and the role of cultural heritage institutions as stewards of digital assets. Curation and preservation challenges, while significant, are fundamentally a symptom of a more catastrophic failure of concepts and language to adequately address changing relationships between art, materiality, and audiences. This article explores how burgeoning concepts in information and media theory may help shape curation contexts and redefine approaches to preservation. Some of the ongoing challenges that practitioners face and current practices for preserving and curating born-digital artworks are examined through the lens of "post-media" theory. The concept of the "new repository" is introduced and discussed in relation to concerns about digital curation, commodification, authenticity, and intentionality.

DIGITAL PASTS AND DIGITAL FUTURES

The problem of curating and preserving artwork reliant upon technology and manifested in digital formats is not new. For the past decade, much critical literature in the field of art librarianship has been devoted to digital preservation strategies and the particular challenges of archiving and providing access to new media artwork. Most of the information on this topic is technical and institution-specific since broadly accepted best practices for digital preservation—such as those published by the Library of Congress National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program—cannot adequately address the challenges presented by complex digital art objects. Institutional documents often treat concepts rooted in art and media theory as underlying factors that affect digital stewardship, but for the most part these concepts are not fully explored as *the* ideological frameworks upon which curation and preservation decisions should be based. A focus on the technical over the conceptual reflects an attempt by practitioners to grapple with modes of art production and dissemina-

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tion that are constantly mutating. This techno-centric approach, in spite of its practical slant, cannot be seen as isolated from theory. The interdependence of new media art and theory is confirmed repeatedly in curatorial contexts that "celebrate technologies"[1] as aesthetic perspectives and integrate cultural techno-speak into exhibitions.

A strictly techno-centric approach to media preservation is also problematic because digital art is not static or tied to a physical medium in the same way that analog art is. In her 1999 text *A Voyage on the North Sea*, Rosalind Krauss illustrates the problem with media-based designations for art using the example of film:

> . . . the medium or support for film being neither the celluloid strip of the images, nor the camera that filmed them, nor the projector that brings them to life in motion, nor the beam of light that relays them to the screen, nor that screen itself, but all of these taken together, including the audience's position caught between the source of the light behind it and the image projected before its eyes . . . [T]he parts of the apparatus would be like things that cannot touch *on* each other without themselves being touched.[2]

This schism between medium and apparatus persists in a digital context as what Rhizome Artbase conservator Ben Fino-Radin refers to as "data diffusivity." As with the case of film, digital conservators must determine how to preserve a work when its apparatus is a dispersed system.[3]

In order to combat against "inherent vices" of media, which include diffusivity along with obsolescence and degradation, Fino-Radin recommends that practitioners consider "human questions of an artist's intent, material, conceptual authenticity, and commodification" in addition to practical questions of "longevity and data authenticity."[4] In the realm of media theory, addressing these human questions becomes a problematic and recursive process. For one thing, the role of mass media technology in art production collapses long-held distinctions between reproducible commodities and fine art objects: "[W]orks of locative media art . . . are now indistinguishable from non-artistic, management applications for the visualization and monitoring of certain data, [and] net art . . . cannot always be distinguished from on-line content."[5] The concept of artistic intention has long been subject to critical scrutiny, and never more so than in the context of digital media where many works are generative, interactive, and algorithmic. Even the term *new media*, which originated in the 1960s and is commonly conjured to describe digital, hybrid, and conceptual artworks, is little more than a meaningless placeholder, a remnant of the fact that "media-based typology" (i.e., material-type designation) is still the de facto organizing principal for art collections and

1. Domenico Quaranta, "The Post Media Perspective," Rhizome, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/jan/12/the-postmedia-perspective/.

2. Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 25.

3. Ben Fino-Radin, "Digital Preservation Practices and the Rhizome Artbase," Rhizome, http://media.rhizome.org/blog/8332/rhizome-digital-preservation-practices.pdf, 8.

4. Ibid., 6.

5. Maurizio Bolognini, "From Interactivity to Democracy. Towards a Post-Digital Generative Art," *Artmedia X International Symposium Proceedings* (Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, December 12-13, 2008), http://www.olats.org/projetpart/artmedia/2008/te_mBolognini.php.

basis for curation and preservation activities.[6] As media theorist Lev Manovich, who outlined a "Program for Post Media Aesthetics" in a 2001 article, notes, "despite the obvious inadequacy of the concept of medium to describe contemporary cultural and artistic reality, it persists." Eleven years later in 2012, it still persists.[7]

POST-MEDIA AESTHETICS

Post-media reflects a conceptual move away from media-based typology, and toward what Krauss calls "the condition of general equivalency" that follows the loss of medium specificity and of physical distinctions between commodities and fine art objects.[8] It is easy to mistakenly take these losses as a derision, but post-media art is distinct in its ability to be self-reflexive, to appropriate and subvert the functions of commercial communication tools. Manovich delineates the beginnings of a "new conceptual system which would replace the discourses of mediums"[9] and provide a basis for the revision of preservation and curatorial practices. What follows is an examination of three facets of post-media aesthetics—the substitution of media concepts by concepts from net culture, the subversive appropriation of mass media communication tools as a mode of art making, and the shift to a user-centric model of communication—and their evolving impact on curation and preservation initiatives.[10] Glimpses of a medium-independent preservation program can already be observed in institutions that have adopted The Variable Media approach, an innovative digital stewardship model developed around the same time that media theorists began to explore alternatives to media-based typologies. An analysis of The Variable Media approach and the concept of the new repository will illustrate how a cogent theory of post-media aesthetics can provide an evolving framework for post-media curation and preservation.

NET LANGUAGE AND THE MUSEUM

One of the tenets of the post-media program outlined by Manovich is the necessity for concepts and terms derived from net culture to supplant media-based typologies in order to develop a discourse that can define and bridge "our own post-digital, post-net culture, and . . . the culture of the past."[11] When Manovich set forth his program in 2001, he probably did not fully envision how pervasive the culture and language of the web would become. As it turns out, art has put fewer demands on language than the language of the techno-centric culture has on art. Technology has particularly caused a profound transformation in the language of communication; think of the word *interface* or what it now means to *visualize* something.

A recent exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art New York entitled *Talk to Me: Design and the Communication between People and Objects* exemplifies how net culture has subtly infiltrated and merged with museum culture. Based on the themes of

6. Lev Manovich, "Lev Manovich Analyzes the Post-Media Age," *ARTMargins*, October 25, 2001, http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/featured-articles/412-lev-manovich-analyzes-the-post-media-age.

7. Ibid.

8. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, 46.

9. Manovich, "Lev Manovich Analyzes the Post-Media Age."

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

interaction and communication, and installed as an architecture and design exhibition, *Talk to Me* implicitly redefines the parameters of the museum object to include "computer and machine interfaces, websites, video games, devices and tools, furniture and physical products, . . . installations and whole environments."[12]

A shift from defining aesthetics in terms of net culture rather than media designation may significantly mitigate inherent resistance to the integration of digital works into traditional gallery settings. While digital art has become more common in museums, many institutions and audiences still object to the conception of digital art "objects as independent creative works"[13] because of their reliance on technology that is often associated with interpretation and reproduction. Beryl Graham notes that the view of digital media as a "tool for interpretation" rather than "an artwork in itself"[14] is one of the main obstacles museums face when introducing digital exhibitions into a traditional gallery setting or alongside digital copies of analog artwork in online repositories. Through the appropriation and critical application of concepts and terms native to net culture, curators can mediate audience experiences, contextualize digital exhibitions, and differentiate between artworks and interpretive tools.

As a result of the pervasiveness of net culture and digital communication tools, artists and the general public are more aware of digital life cycles and more actively involved in digital stewardship. In the essay "Redefining Digital Art," Graham comments on the tendency for "artists/curators [to be involved] in this work rather than strictly conservation specialists."[15] The cultural prevalence of open-source technology and crowd sourcing has contributed to a burgeoning DIY movement in the digital art world, and many institutions now rely on audiences to "tag" works and report instances of link rot or file corruption. Some artists who support the open-access, DIY culture are even opting to supply their source code to audiences and archives to facilitate creative appropriation and effective digital stewardship. In addition to the positive effects of the DIY movement and the direct involvement of artists in preservation processes, net language can also be harnessed by conservators to define new preservation standards. Manovich argues that "aesthetics needs categories that can describe how a cultural object organizes data and structures users' experience of this data."[16] While conservators can rely on the autonomous efforts of artists and audiences, they can also create new descriptive protocols based on concepts native to net culture to better facilitate collective preservation efforts.

SUBVERSION, COMMODIFICATION, AND AUTHENTICITY

In her essay "Digital Preservation of New Media Art Through Exploration of Established Symbolic Representation Systems," Megan Winget describes the collaborative

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12. Museum of Modern Art, *Talk to Me: Design and Communication between People and Objects,* July 24–November 7, 2011, http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1080.

13. Fiona Cameron, "Beyond the Cult of the Replicant—Museums and Historical Digital Objects: Traditional Concerns, New Discourses," in *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage,* ed. Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 70.

14. Beryl Graham, "Redefining Digital Art: Disrupting Borders," in Cameron and Kenderdine, *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage,* 94.

15. Ibid., 105.

16. Manovich, "Lev Manovich Analyzes the Post-Media Age."

work by Paul Kaiser, Shelly Eshkar, and Marc Downie entitled *Loops* to demonstrate the kinds of extreme challenges that preservationists of new media art might face:

> For this work, Kaiser and Eshkar attached sensors to [Merce] Cunningham's hands, and, using a combination of motion-capture software and 3D modeling techniques, recorded the sensor data. . . . Marc Downie then developed an artificial intelligence algorithm which would let the sensor-nodes individually "make their own decisions about how to appear graphically." . . . *Loops* consists of a basic vocabulary of forms, movements, topologies, and interaction for each sensor node, or "creature," eleven minutes of "script," fifteen minutes of recorded narration by Cunningham, and ten minutes of music by Brian Eno, which are looped indefinitely.[17]

The self-regenerative nature of *Loops* and the numerous layers of technology tied to its creation and presentation make this work—and works like it—a virtual nightmare for archivists and digital curators. Kaiser, Eshkar, and Downie, like many contemporary net artists, not only recognize but are intentionally playing with the notions of digital instability and fluidity through their artwork. These artists have founded an online collective and repository called the OpenEnded Group which provides access to the group's artwork, internal documentation, and technology.[18] Not only can users access information about *Loops*, its choreography, and development, but they can "examine (and even rewrite and repurpose) its underlying code,"[19] using open-source software released by the group. The OpenEnded Group's beliefs about open access and their commitment to document their own artwork in a public forum are obviously beneficial to conservators. On one level, members of the group are certainly concerned about the long-term viability of their artwork, but their motivation for putting their source code online also reflects a particular orientation towards technology and art. The repurposing of artificial intelligence algorithms and motion capture technology to create a multimedia artwork that can then be repurposed and distorted by audiences harkens back to the original definition of post-media, coined by Felix Guattari, before the advent of net culture. Guattari viewed the post-media era as the age in which individuals could appropriate and subvert functions of mass media technologies as a kind of revenge-of-the-consumer political act.[20] In many ways the advent of DIY communities, open-source software, and the explosion of web 2.0 technology has led to a democratization of communication commodities. Projects like *Loops* illustrate

17. Megan Winget, "Digital Preservation of New Media Art Through Exploration of Established Symbolic Representation Systems" (JCDL 2005 Doctoral Consortium Papers), Rice University Digital Scholarship Archive, http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/123456789/23, 1–2.

18. Marc Downie, Shelley Eshkar, and Paul Kaiser, "About," OpenEnded Group, http://openendedgroup.com/index.php/about/.

19. Ibid.

20. Dominico Quaranta discusses Guattari's use of the phrase "post-media era" in order to delineate a transition from a political to artistic conceptualization of the role of mass media appropriation. Quaranta, "The Post Media Perspective."

how an open and democratic approach to art making can help abstract artworks from a "particular machine architecture . . . [and] particular programming language."[21]

The process of abstracting artworks from physical machines also abstracts them from the traditional commodity culture. In a world where original and authentic are traditionally *the* demarcations of value, the art community is only beginning to redress the concept of value to accommodate assets that are reproducible, diffused, and unstable. Since many digital works use commercial and mass media tools in nontraditional ways, they are more closely aligned with commodity culture than many traditional artworks and simultaneously have less value in the commodity marketplace. The exclusion of digital works from commodity culture is exacerbated by the fact that "some artists . . . would assert that the thing being displayed was only a 'record' of the art, not the art itself."[22] Conservators must determine in such cases if a born-digital "record" belongs in an institutional repository, and if so, should such records be displayed alongside other digital surrogates? In cases when the digital object *is* the artwork, the issue of display is equally complex: Can the repository effectively display the work? Should the work be presented alongside digital copies? Is reproducing a digital work in a new context akin to creating a digital copy of an object-based work? Fiona Cameron explicitly addresses the original/copy dichotomy that has caused a significant amount of institutional angst and proposes that "there is however a need to move away from formalist notions of technology and materiality, the original and authentic, and the desire to make digital objects fit into the rubric of replicant."[23]

USER-CENTRIC COMMUNICATION MODELS

Both Domenico Quaranta and Lev Manovich discuss the cultural importance of digital sampling, a practice making its way increasingly into the fine art arena as an ongoing "remote dialogue based on exchanging, manipulating and commenting on [found] media materials."[24] The use of communication tools that allow for media to be continuously sampled, expanded, and recontextualized is changing relationships between audiences and artists and has all but eradicated the notion of artworks as self-contained monoliths. Interactivity, an inherent characteristic of net art, has also fundamentally changed user orientations towards art, affirming Manovich's belief that post-media involves a reconceptualization of both art of the past and of the present. According to Manovich, a post-media approach to viewing involves a shift from thinking about materiality to thinking about "operations that are available to the user"[25] in the same systemic way that structuralism ushered in a shift from thinking about intentions to thinking about content.

The user-centric communication model disrupts the traditional medium-based, object-oriented museum environment. Institutions now have unique opportunities to reinvent the gallery experience through innovative curation initiatives that ac-

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21. Marc Downie, Shelley Eshkar, and Paul Kaiser, "Cultural Ecology," OpenEnded Group, http://openendedgroup.com/index.php/artworks/loops-2001-present/loops-ecology/.

22. Winget, "Digital Preservation of New Media Art Through Exploration of Established Symbolic Representation Systems," 2.

23. Cameron, "Beyond the Cult of the Replicant," 70.

24. Quaranta, "The Post Media Perspective."

25. Manovich, "Lev Manovich Analyzes the Post-Media Age."

knowledge the "interpretive potential of digital objects."[26] Theorist Christiane Paul concedes that the integration of net art into traditional galleries often undercuts the ubiquitous, diffused attributes of online works, but notes that "physical spaces could nonetheless play an important role when it comes to Internet art—providing a context for the work, chronicling its developments, assisting in its preservation, as well as expanding its audience."[27] Curators who organize digital exhibitions or integrate digital artwork into traditional museum galleries may find themselves thinking more about user perspectives and how audiences interact with physical and digital spaces. A conceptual shift to focus on user "operations" may lead curators to develop exhibits that provoke dialogues between different kinds of works.

In spite of the potential for digital artwork to lead to more provocative and accessible museum environments, there are persistent practical obstacles that curators must contend with—particularly when works are designed to be viewed by individuals from personal computers. Since "internet art often requires a relatively private engagement over a longer period of time . . . net art has often been presented in a separate area of a public space, which in turn raises the criticism of 'ghettoization.'"[28] Controversy surrounding the inclusion of digital works in traditional gallery environments and the practical problems that such works introduce have sparked an ongoing critical dialogue that may lead to a productive reassessment of spaces and viewing contexts.

A critical dialogue about the relationships between artworks, audiences, and exhibitions will potentially lead to a revision of preservation initiatives as well. Christiane Paul notes that as long as documentation exists, "bits and bytes are in fact more stable than paint, film, or videotape,"[29] and so the preservation revolution is, in many senses, a revolution of documentation. Online repositories for new media art and digital ephemera are working directly with artists and curators increasingly to create open platforms that acknowledge the interdependence of art, culture, and technology. The Rhizome Artbase and the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive are two examples of new repositories that have confronted the challenges presented by digital art by treating preservation "as an interpretive act."[30] Direct-to-web repositories like the Rhizome Artbase also illustrate how social media and crowd-sourcing approaches to documentation can be successfully implemented to reduce the institutional burden of archiving works. The OpenEnded Group website, a kind of microcosm of a new repository, exemplifies what a documentation revolution might look like. Using *Loops* as a case study, the group aims to "preserve and document the dance and the digital artwork, . . . [and]

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26. Cameron, "Beyond the Cult of the Replicant," 54.

27. Christiane Paul, introduction to *Digital Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 23.

28. Ibid., 24.

29. Ibid., 25.

30. Richard Rinehart, "Berkeley Art Museum / Pacific Film Archive," in *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach,* ed. Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito, and Caitlin Jones (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2003), 25, http://www.variablemedia.net/pdf/Permanence.pdf.

also to create 'living wills' for the choreography and the software that would allow their perpetuation—and propagation—far into the future."[31]

Both Rhizome and the Pacific Film Archive use the Variable Media Approach to preservation, which relies heavily on input from artists to determine how artworks "might outlast their original medium."[32] This approach and parallel DIY initiatives are currently dominant in post-media preservation. The book *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach* outlines theories underlying new media preservation and includes a Method section which contains essays that present practical solutions for preserving unstable works by identifying medium-independent behaviors of artwork and posing "strategies for slippage."[33] In a chapter entitled "Accommodating the Unpredictable: The Variable Media Questionnaire," Jon Ippolito writes, "[W]e need artists—their information, their support, and above all their creativity—to outwit oblivion and obsolescence."[34]

HAMLET IN A CHAT ROOM[35]

The Variable Media Questionnaire attempts to identify features of a work that go beyond media-specific categorization; however, categorizing works is still the object of the questionnaire. The categories outlined by Ippolito have more to do with performative and display specifications rather than material types. For example, works may be identified as *performed, encoded,* or *interactive,* and specific distinctions are made between *installed* and *contained* artworks.[36] Ippolito introduces seven features of works that can be identified and documented to inform preservation strategies and to allow for works to be exhibited in cases where the original media is no longer possible to curate.

The Variable Media Network website includes several case studies of volatile new media and conceptual works. These studies identify potential preservation issues that should be explored for each work component with the explicit goal of making works "translatable."[37] For example, the case study documentation for a 1975 audio installation by Bruce Nauman outlines preservation questions associated with the audio

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31. Marc Downie, Shelley Eshkar, and Paul Kaiser, "Loops/ 2001-11," OpenEnded Group, http://openendedgroup.com/index.php/artworks/loops-2001-present/.

32. "For creators working in ephemeral formats who want posterity to experience their work more directly than through second-hand documentation or anecdote, the variable media paradigm encourages creators to define their work *independently from medium* so that the work can be translated once its current medium is obsolete. This requires creators to envision acceptable forms their work might take in new mediums, and to pass on guidelines for recasting work in a new form once the original has expired." Variable Media Network, "Definition," http://www.variablemedia.net/e/index.html. The Variable Media Network proposes an unconventional preservation strategy based on identifying ways that creative works might outlast their original medium. This strategy emerged from the Guggenheim Museum's efforts to preserve its collection of conceptual, minimalist, and video art. The growth of the Variable Media has been supported by the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, and subsequently promoted by the Forging the Future alliance.

33. Jon Ippolito, "Accommodating the Unpredictable: The Variable Media Questionnaire," in Depocas, Ippolito, and Jones, *Permanence through Change: The Variable Media Approach,* 50.

34. Ibid., 47.

35. Forging the Future is a consortium of museums and cultural heritage organizations dedicated to exploring, developing, and sharing new vocabularies and tools for cultural preservation. The organization uses the parenthetical example of "Hamlet in a chatroom" to illustrate the principle of "reinterpretation." Forging the Future, "Background," Variable Media Questionnaire, http://variablemediaquestionnaire.net/.

36. Ippolito, "Accommodating the Unpredictable," 46.

37. Forging the Future, "Background."

source, the audio equipment, and the construction of the "corridor" installation.[38] This piecemeal approach challenges conservators to consider future hypothetical scenarios that might threaten works and individual work components; in the case of the Nauman piece *False Silence,* questions include: "Under what conditions could the original tape be rerecorded? Could it be rerecorded by another speaker, and if so, who chooses an acceptable narrator?"[39]

The Variable Media Approach is not without its own set of challenges since it relies heavily on artist questionnaires to inform strategies for "refreshing, migrating, emulating, or reinterpreting"' digital art.[40] Megan Winget identifies two issues that make the questionnaire approach problematic: "Artists find it difficult to answer the written questionnaire, and when being orally questioned their answers are almost always qualified with 'you'd have to ask me if that situation arose,' sorts of answers; . . . [in addition,] artists were almost universally appalled at the technology available for preserving and reproducing their work."[41] While significant, these practical issues pale in comparison to the more systemic theoretical problem of intentionality and interpretation. The Variable Media Approach validates many of Manovich's concepts; however, the use of subjective responses from artists as the most important indicator of how a work should be curated and preserved stands in direct opposition to Manovich's belief that the post-media perspective requires a focus on the user, and particularly the "operations available to the user."[42] The questionnaire process is also problematic since any inquiry about an artwork, even at the component level, must be concerned with both how a work should *look* and what a work should *do.* Even if each questionnaire considered both function and aesthetics, instances would certainly arise where it would be necessary to privilege one over the other.

In 2010, the Variable Media Questionnaire, which previously existed as "a standalone database template" was "reincarnated as a free Web Service . . . [that] looks at works as ensembles of functional components."[43] The revised web-based questionnaire, which is currently in its third version, reflects a commitment by the Variable Media Network to keep pace with both changes in technology and developments in media theory. The latest questionnaire is an interactive, open-source web application. This version includes options for institutions to "customize interview questions . . . [and] add new questions on the fly."[44] The web-based format and consortia association will potentially increase the visibility of the Variable Media preservation approach and lead to broad, global implementation. Increased customization options will allow for fluidity in the language of the application and prevent institutions from attempting to make works conform to predefined preservation rubrics. The new questionnaire also includes the option for institutional administrators to add multiple

38. Variable Media Network, "Bruce Nauman," case study of *False Silence,* audio installation, 1975, http://www.variablemedia.net/e/index.html.

39. Ibid.

40. Variable Media Network, "Definition."

41. Winget, "Digital Preservation of New Media Art through Exploration of Established Symbolic Representation Systems," 2.

42. Manovich, "Lev Manovich Analyzes the Post-Media Age."

43. Forging the Future, "What's New," Variable Media Questionnaire, http://variablemediaquestionnaire.net/.

44. Ibid.

stakeholders, a designation that refers to anyone who contributes to the creation or preservation of a work. In addition, the questionnaire reflects an acknowledgement of context—"environments, user interactions, motivating ideas, and external references" can now be treated as components of works.[45]

The questionnaire is still in a beta version, and although users can technically be included as stakeholders, there is still work to do to ensure that the user perspective is well documented and considered integral to the development of preservation strategies. The more democratic customizable structure does allow for flexibility and institutional autonomy, but at the risk of eroding standards that enable resource sharing and cross-repository interoperability. While the questionnaire supports the inclusion of relationship designations for different stakeholder types, conceptually the inclusion of audiences and peripheral contributors in important preservation conversations is a marked departure from traditional curation and preservation models. A significant by-product of the Variable Media Approach to preservation is that "creators and institutions who accept the concept that a work can change over time may find a number of their assumptions changing along with it. . . . They may cease to view the conservator's job of preservation as independent from the curator's job of presentation."[46]

CONCLUSION

The challenges facing digital curators and conservators are profound but not dire. Through a critical dismantling of traditional definitions and approaches, curators and conservators can develop models for preservation and presentation that acknowledge the diffused, complex nature of digital works. It is clear that through an application of principles derived from media and information theory, as evidenced by the success and continuing evolution of the Variable Media Approach and new repository model, sustainable preservation and curation practices can be developed without relegating works to an inadequate media-based topology. The most important aspect of a post-media approach is that it is necessarily revisionist and self-reflexive. Art and technology will undoubtedly continue to change and so must institutions, strategies, and perceptions.

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45. Ibid.
46. Forging the Future, "Background."