Urban Exploration: Traces of the Secretly Documented, Decayed, and Disused

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Abstract

While formal documentation processes have long been explored in information science, less about more ephemeral documentary practices has been explored. Urban exploration, a hobby in which *urbexers* visit and photograph abandoned and decaying sites, offers one example of informal and fleeting documentary practice. The visual outputs of urban exploration are often found via websites and social media channels, with reposting by the public facilitating wider dissemination of images. The informal, shadowy, and sometimes transitory documentary practices that feature in urban exploration often exist as digital traces of the hobby. This article explores the documentary practices of urban explorers through semistructured, face-to-face interviews with seventeen urban explorers as well as investigations of their online presence. The highly secret nature of the hobby places urban explorers outside mainstream social participation; however, their approach to documenting and sharing with others reveals a unique means of understanding how individuals gather, create, share, and document information as part of their evolving documentary practices as individuals and as a hobby community.

Introduction

The process of documenting information in and for multiple contexts has long occurred in information science. While formal documentary practices exist, less is known about some of the informal practices individuals may follow to collect and maintain information. Urban exploration offers a particularly useful example of documentation, in which hobby participants record settings through photography and video. The highly secret and sometimes illicit nature of the hobby places urban explorers outside mainstream social participation, which makes the hobby less visible than

other documentary examples; however, their approach to recording and sharing with others reveals a unique means of understanding how individuals gather, create, share, and document information as part of their evolving documentary practices as individuals and as a hobby community. This article explores urban explorers' approaches to documentation and the need for examining digital traces to follow less obvious documentary practices.

Background

Urban Exploration
Urban exploration or *urbex* is a hobby in which participants enter and take high-quality images via photography or video of buildings, factories, sewers, and so on that have been abandoned or that have fallen into disuse. As urban explorer Paiva (2008, 9) has described, "UrbEx means different things to different people. For some, it's about infiltrating a city's storm drains and subway tunnels. For others, it's climbing bridges and radio towers. Generally speaking, though, UrbEx is the exploration of TOADS (Temporary, Obsolete, Abandoned and Derelict Spaces). Industrial complexes, military installations, junkyards, asylums, hotels—you name it." The essential components of the hobby include a disused site and a means of capturing images (photography or video) to document the hobbyist's journey through that particular space. The resulting photographic images may then be collected and potentially shared with selected audiences. The urban explorer may have multiple motivations for pursuing this hobby, often thrill seeking and, importantly, capturing or documenting evidence of a visit.

Urban exploration is practiced throughout the world. Urbexers often participate covertly, sometimes visiting sites with permission, but also often entering illegally (Fulton 2017; Lyden 2013). As a result, the hobby functions in significant secrecy; only a small amount of photographic outputs of this hobby appear across social media and on websites, offering a glimpse of the hobby to the public.

Documentation, Practice, and the Process of Documentation
To begin, some definitions of our approach to documentation and practice are foundational. The *Oxford English Dictionary* ("Document" n.d.) defines a document as "something written, inscribed, etc., which furnishes evidence or information upon any subject, as a manuscript, title-deed, tomb-stone, coin, picture, etc.," and added in 2015 as a digital entity, "a collection of data in digital form that is considered a single item and typically has a unique filename by which it can be stored, retrieved, or transmitted (as a file, a spreadsheet, or a graphic)." This definition offers wide

scope for considering the nature of a document, the essence of the definition focused on the information transferred through the document.

The term "practice" may be defined variously. Some information behavior researchers have, in recent years, explored a theoretical framework for what they have termed "information practice." Lloyd and Olsson (2019, 1312) define information practice as socially and contextually embedded activities: "Information practices are viewed as being shaped and maintained in the context of people's actions and interactions with other people, materials, signs, symbols, and tools, which are all constituent elements responsible for the formation of information environments and information landscapes."

Information practice is a discursive approach that aims to discern social reality, complementing the field of information behavior (Fulton and Henefer 2017). In this article, the term "practice" is used in conjunction with documentary process to examine the means by which urban explorers enact their hobby.

The *process of documentation* has long been a core feature of information science through a process bibliography involving identifying, collecting, and generating metadata in the form of cataloging. Cataloging has formed a traditional means of documentary practice, resulting in a collection of the metadata applied as well. Libraries, archives, and other repositories have often traditionally housed these catalogued outputs of the documentary process. However, individuals and groups have also documented their activities, producing local collections that speak to principles of individual approaches to gathering and organizing information, observed in personal information management (PIM; Jones 2008). Jones (2008) recognized that at the heart of PIM is individuals' approach to processing information to facilitate understanding of their world, as well as the development of strategies to deal with information, such as email, photographs, and life experiences, that has importance to us but to which we do not always give our attention.

Interestingly, PIM characterizes the personal approach as a personal system (e.g., Jones 2008; Lush 2014). A PIM approach might, for example, involve tagging or labeling information to establish order over that information (Lush 2014). Researchers in this area also consider PIM in systemizing information in particular contexts; for example, Hwan-Ik and Yekyung (2014) have utilized blogs to frame a PIM system for young people. Bass (2013) examined the importance personal digital record-keeping, appraisal, and preservation strategies among the public for traditional institutional archival approaches. The author noted that personal recording of day-to-day life forms is the "first horizons of personal record-keeping, whereby digital information is created but has yet to undergo processes of organization and management" (Bass 2013, 54). Digital files deepen the act of personal documentation, with varying media file types and means of storing and preserving digital files locally and online (Bass

2013). The cumulation of steps in personal systemization of information suggests a process of documentation that may facilitate formal documentary practice.

The significance of the process of documentation has been observed by researchers (e.g., Henninger and Scifleet 2016) with documents serving uniquely as heritage artifacts, containing both content and signs for saving, reproducing, and sharing. With this understanding, documentation serves an evidentiary purpose as well as an expression of human activity. Genealogists focus on this evidentiary focus (Fulton 2016). In the online realm, Henninger and Scifleet (2016) offered the U.S. Library of Congress's decision to archive Twitter activity as part of the social creation of memory institutions. Their analysis of social networking activities revealed that individual and collective memories contribute to social memory. Importantly, the authors found that social networking services created a "sense of belonging within a discourse and social space for sharing of memories" (Henninger and Scifleet 2016, 292).

Documentary Practice in a Hobby Context
A growing body of research over the past couple of decades has focused on the hobby context as well as a range of documentary activities within that realm. For example, Lee and Trace (2009) examined the collecting behavior of rubber duck enthusiasts, Prigoda and McKenzie (2007) investigated knitting as a group hobby in the public library context, Chang and Su (2007) explored backpackers' information gathering around trips, Case (2009) observed coin collectors' information-seeking behavior, Gorichanaz (2017) examined monitoring physiological outcomes while running as information gathering, Lloyd and Olsson (2019) revealed the networks of social knowledge of luxury car restorers, and Fulton (2005, 2009) reported on genealogy as a pleasurable activity that facilitated learning and literacy among older adults through active engagement with information sources. Fulton's (2016) genealogists fulfilled the whole of the process of documentation by conducting such documentary actions as creating, gathering, and managing information to provide both formal (e.g., published local histories and family histories) and informal (e.g., personal websites) documentation of their hobby activities. Hartel's (2010) research on the documentary practices of gourmet cooks positioned this documentary process within PIM, offering a "personal cooking library" or PCL, inclusive of cooking resources and collecting approaches found in PIM. Cooks linked their collecting behavior to the nature of items collected, such as celebrity cookbooks, as well as with heritage, that is, creating a record using the cooking of past generations to pass on to future generations. Importantly, cooking collections were kept in the home, where they were immediately accessible for hobby activities.

Photography further offers a powerful documentary hobby. Brown (2011, 201) refers to documentary practice through photography as cap-

turing the form, that is, the means of capturing images, with visual ethnography. The combination offers a discourse "that links together tacit knowledge, observational and empirical content" to social meaning. Forms of photography, such as street photography (Belov-Belikov 2017), may be particularly relevant for examining documentation through the visual. Belov-Belikov (2017) observed that the most important characteristic of documenting through photography is the archive-like aspect of photographs because they are embedded in context. The author points to "the age of the amateur" in which anyone with any specification of camera (e.g., higher quality photography equipment, mobile phone camera, etc.) can capture images, as well as distribute online, manipulate, and display these images because they are now digital (Belov-Belikov 2017, 48–50). The modern street photographer may take pictures to show a particular narrative, to document what they see around them as the social condition and distribute their message through social media channels.

A similar documentary purpose may be identified in urban exploration. The urban explorer creates a narrative by photographing or videoing a site as it is explored. Researchers of urban exploration have linked place with social activity and memory. For instance, Varsányi (2011) referred to abandoned and decaying buildings as having once been designated as place, but when abandoned, this status changed to that of out of space and time. Edensor (2005, 832, 834) also associated memory with place, with photography offering one "act of memory making" in industrial ruins that "extinguish and reveal successive histories as layers peel away and things fall out from their hiding places," explaining further that, significantly, the abandoned and decaying hold traces of who has been present and what has occurred in a place over time. According to Rojon (2014, 84), photographing old and disused sites offers "alternative ways of seeing how to preserve precarious places without following the path of museumification," serving to "articulate" heritage.

Digital Traces as Documents
A digital trace is a "footprint of our media use" from our online activity that extends further to include the interactions we have with others (Hepp, Breiter, and Friemel 2018, 439–40). Digital traces include both information that people create and publish online as well as traces of presence that may not be intended. As Hepp, Breiter, and Friemel (2018, 440) have itemized, "These traces can be produced not just by us but also by others; when our friends, family, or contacts interact online with reference to us, by synchronizing their address books with our digital addresses, or by tagging pictures, texts, or other digital artifacts with our handles, they inadvertently contribute to our own archive of digitally rendered echoes." The nature of documentary evidence is an important consideration in the digital environment. Information in this space, whether a local digital

storage space or the web, can be fleeting, with information created and shared, and then potentially removed, overwritten, or deleted. Even under these conditions, digital traces of information may remain.

Importantly, these digital traces may be considered documents. However, Henninger and Scifleet (2016), who viewed social media as temporal, ephemeral content, noted that these digital traces are often overlooked as documents. Sköld (2015) analyzed Reddit posts and echoed this finding, noting a research gap in investigating memory and memory making in virtual worlds. Sköld further linked documentary practices and social interaction in communities. In particular, he examined documentary practice in digital contexts, noting that "little analytical attention has been paid to virtual world community memory-making and recording of things past" (Sköld 2015, 295). Henninger and Scifleet (2016, 293) added that documentation of traces of society distinguishes communicative memory from cultural memory in the making and keeping of records of social life.

Method

Research Objectives and Research Questions
An umbrella research project sought to understand information flows in the hobbyist world of urban exploration (Fulton 2017). The project to date has revealed that the hobby involves high-quality photography of disused and abandoned sites. Urban explorers are motivated by the thrill of entering an abandoned site, often illicitly. They capture their adventures through photography and sometimes video. They may share their photographs with the public or other urban explorers, or they may elect not to share. There are multiple levels of secrecy inherent in hobby practices, including around frequently protecting hobbyists' identities with pseudonyms, sometimes not naming sites hobbyists wish to keep for themselves, and covertly entering sites, especially where an exploration involves trespass. The current article focuses on urban explorers' documentary practices. By examining how urban explorers implement documentary practices in their hobby, both as individual hobbyists and as a hobby community, we may gain alternative perspectives on methods of documenting information.

Research questions posed included

- What are urban explorers' documentary practices?
- What hobby behaviors and outcomes of hobby activities may be linked to understand documentary processes?
- What does documentation of sites mean to urban explorers?

Case Study
The study took the form of a multicase study in which each participating urban explorer's individual experiences and narrative about their docu-

mentation contributed to an overall picture of this process. A case study allows for in-depth investigation of a phenomenon in a given context, with Yin (2003, 1) further labeling the case study method as "the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context." According to Jupp (2006, 20–21), "A 'case' can be an individual person, an event, or a social activity, group, organization, or institution." Miles and Huberman (1994, 25) explain that the case is the unit of analysis in a research project, with case defined as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context."

A common criticism of the case study is lack of generalizability (e.g., Jupp 2006); however, the case study approach has merit, for example, as an exploratory device or examination of a critical case (Yin 2009). The use of multiple cases for comparative purposes lends greater representativeness in data collected than a single case, adding "confidence to findings" (Miles and Huberman 1994, 29). By comparing cases in the current study, it was possible to note similarities and differences in urban explorers' approaches to documentation and what this documentation meant in this hobby.

Interviews with Urban Explorers

In this study, urban explorers were located via their contact information on their websites and their web presence on urban exploration websites and invited to participate in face-to-face, semistructured interviews. This initial gathering of participants enabled the use of snowball sampling to locate further participants; to do this, initial urban explorer contacts were asked to suggest other hobbyists, and so on to continue snowball sampling. Because urban exploration is quite a hidden hobby, accessing the seventeen participants in this study was a significant achievement (as further outlined in the next section). Snowball sampling facilitated a degree of trust because urban explorers recommended the study to their fellow hobbyists.

All interviews took place face-to-face. Urban explorers were asked to describe their most recent urban exploration, their photography of explorations, and their contribution through their hobby. Participants were further asked about their documentary practices around their photography from an urban exploration. The appendix provides a list of questions asked in interviews.

Participants

A total of seventeen urban explorers participated in interviews; most were from Ireland (fifteen urban explorers), two from the United Kingdom. All were taking part in explorations in Ireland. Urban explorers frequently disguise their identity and conduct their hobby in the shadows. The major-

ity of participants (eleven, 65 percent) were secretive about their identities, using code names online. As a result, locating seventeen urban explorers was a significant achievement. This issue of secrecy was important because hobbyists' hiding of their identities contributed to fragmented digital information found online.

Still, saturation, as recommended by qualitative researchers (e.g., Miles and Huberman 1994; Jupp 2006), was achieved in interviews with this sample. Saturation refers to sampling until new information does not emerge in the data, as Jupp (2006, 281) described, until "new data do not appear to add anything substantial to existing understanding." In the current study, a snowball sampling strategy was pursued until new information no longer arose in interviews; the researcher examined data continuously examining themes encountered as recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and when new data gathered seemed to be repetitive, an additional two interviews with urban explorers were sought to confirm saturation.

As reported in Fulton (2017), most participants were male (fifteen, 88 percent male; two, 12 percent female) and under the age of fifty years. The majority of participants were married (eleven, 65 percent) or in a common-law relationship (six, 35 percent); most participants were employed (thirteen, 76 percent), and most had completed higher education degrees (fourteen, 82 percent; Fulton 2017). Most participants categorized their level of urban exploration experience as *intermediate* (nine, 53 percent), that is, they categorized themselves as having participated in several urban explorations; seven (41 percent) said they were *advanced*, that is, they routinely initiated and participated in urban explorations as well as advised others on urban exploration; only one (6 percent) reported being a *beginner*, that is, someone new to urban exploration. Most participants (eleven, 65 percent) stated that they engaged in urban explorations twice a month. Reports of sites visited included disused power stations, military installations, hospitals, farmhouses, churches, old mines, and holiday parks, as well as popular urban exploration haunts, such as Boland's Mill in Dublin (Fulton 2017).

Ethics

This project was submitted to University College Dublin's Research Ethics Committee and has been acknowledged by UCD's Ethics Review Committee for ethics exemption. Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants received and read a Letter of Information and then signed a consent form to take part in the project. All data were deidentified; even pseudonyms used by some participants were deidentified.

Data Analyses

Interview data were digitally recorded, transcribed, and deidentified. Transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software, using a constant compar-

ative approach to identity patterns and themes in the data. Specific themes around hobbyists' documentary practices emerged, including how urban explorers viewed their hobby as a process of documentation and what hobbyists did with the documents they created during an exploration.

The digital presence (e.g., social media, web) of each coded participant was further examined for hobby outputs. Because urban exploration is highly secretive, some participants had removed their content from the public part of the web. Many explained this in interviews. Cached web pages were examined to track the remaining digital traces, that is, fragmented pieces of the urban explorer's digital footprint. These digital traces were examined for patterns in hobby behaviors. This analysis was mapped onto the interview data analyses to provide a more holistic picture of the hobby.

Findings

Forms and Processes of Documentation

Urban explorers were aware of the documenting function of their hobby. They often referred to their activities as documenting scenes, the past, and the socially forgotten. Documenting took the form of capturing images, and high-spec photography equipment provided the tools supporting documentation. While video was sometimes identified, cameras were most often the tools of choice for capturing images. For many urban explorers, the use of a high-spec camera was part of their hobby; for a few, photography was also part of their work lives.

The first part of the documentary process involved site selection. Some urban explorers conducted reconnaissance on a potential site for exploration before they entered. Checking a site in advance allowed urban explorers to gather such information as potential means of site access, whether security or other people were present, and existing facts or stories about the site. One urban explorer spoke of additional research they conducted to learn more about a site before visiting it: "[I use] the databases online. *Buildings of Ireland* is very useful. Landedestates.ie is also quite useful. It's a similar idea, but it follows then their families . . . So other than that then, it's just flicking around and asking people. . . . It can be a bit of serendipity. You know, you can be lucky, and then you might have to ask permission to get into a site."

The actual process of exploration involved visiting the chosen site and taking images from entry to exit. Video supported the storytelling aspect of the exploration; however, urban explorers using photographs mapped their journey through a site in images both staged and spontaneously captured. The well-known motto of the hobby is "Take only photographs; leave only footprints," and urban explorers focused on this overarching approach as they described their explorations.

Urban explorers referred to their personal patterns of documentary practice during interviews. They revealed locations, names of sites, and some information about sites that were popular in the hobby, such as Boland Mills, a historical stronghold during the Irish War of Independence. The urban explorer might share information about an exploration site, posted alongside photographs and a story about a given exploration.

Documenting the Past

Urban explorers frequently aligned their hobby with the recording and preservation of history, identifying their roles as documenters of the abandoned and decaying. The hobby purpose combined multiple interests brought together in documentation, as explained by one urban explorer: "What's in it for me? A hobby I suppose. I enjoy photography and videography. So I see chances like this to document a heritage site and also exercise my interest in photography. I'm also trying to build up a portfolio, whether it be an art-based portfolio or just an exercise in photography."

Urban explorers' documentary practices varied between simply photographing or videoing sites as they encountered them to staging settings for dramatic visual effect. The decision to capture images in a particular way depended on the urban explorer's hobby ethos. One urban explorer described the importance of a natural, untouched setting to them:

> I try to make [my photos] as realistic as I possibly can, whereas you get other people who do the sort of images that I do, and [the photos] don't look real. For effect. They look too over-real, in a way. People like, you know, [Urban Explorer X], I really do like the pictures that he does. . . . I love the way he does his photos, but I can see that he modifies them quite a lot and adds extra bits to them, as you can probably see yourself. I try not to do that. If it is like that and it comes out, it is lovely. I always try and ensure it is natural . . . I don't try and fake anything in pictures. Apart from this one time when I was doing some car photos with this shooting star going across and you could see it but you couldn't quite see it, so I made it a bit more visible myself, modified it to that degree.

Urban explorers followed their own practices for capturing images of a site, which were personally motivated by their interest in the setting and their expression of their hobby as well as their social position among other urban explorers. In interviews, urban explorers spoke enthusiastically of fellow hobbyists whose exploration images and exploits they admired. Hobbyists' approaches to staging or not staging a scene, photographic techniques, and ethos to the hobby were emulated, discussed, and evaluated as hobby practice. Urban explorers might or might not articulate particular documentary practices alongside photographs online; instead, the viewer of a photograph might need to consider for themselves how a photograph was, for example, set up.

Documentation as a Creative Activity
While urban explorers did not always see themselves as information creators (Fulton 2017), they did often describe their documentation activities as artistic or as creating a historical record. For example, one urban explorer referred to the creation of a record of the past through hobby documentation: "I like to think that we are creating an archive. A record of these places that are not really recorded. A lot of these places, because they are abandoned, people have stopped recording them. I mean, there are images going back of when they were in use, from the last century or whenever, and now the place is derelict, it is abandoned and usually nobody is recording it." In particular, photography offered a creative output of the hobby (Fulton 2017).

Digital Documentary Practices and Traces
Urban exploration can include both physical and digital images published in different venues. Urban explorers in this study described their own documentary outputs as appearing in social media and on web pages. Some also referred positively to urban explorers outside the study who formally published their photographs in monograph collections, some publishing under their actual names and some under pseudonyms.

The digital documentation in urban exploration may be made selectively visible to the public via the Internet. The hobby presents a complex representation of itself, with various websites dedicated to photographs and stories of hobbyists' exploits as well as posting of images via social media outlets. However, as urban explorers have explained in this study, the publicly available content captures only part of the hobby, with a significant portion remaining unposted by individual urban explorers or available within the hobby hidden by the Dark Web. The issue of potential trespass informed decisions among urban explorers not to publish images.

In addition, some spoke of the temporal nature of their digital postings, with images sometimes removed and sites taken down by these urban explorers. An exploration of the digital footprint of urban explorers in this study revealed digital traces of previous postings, that is, a fragmented digital footprint from a posting. Some urban explorers explained that they changed their mind about participation on a given social platform and subsequently removed their posted images and other content. Some of the removal of images surrounded assertion of copyright; urban explorers concerned with the use of their images might remove their work to protect their images.

The Meaning of Documentary Practices to Urban Explorers
Urban explorers' reasons for documenting abandoned and decaying sites spoke to the meaning of urban exploration to participants. For instance,

when asked why they documented the sites they visited, one urban explorer stated,

> I think it is a personal thing, a memory thing to have images or something written down about a place that you visited. Then it helps you revisit [the site] all the time, whenever you want to. You may not be able to go there. You might be off exploring something new, so you want some reference that you can go back to and go, "Oh look at that," "Remember that." Some of [the photographs] I would print off and frame—you know, particular ones that would mean something either in terms of the atmosphere of the place you have been [to] or just how visually striking the particular place was.

Another urban explorer explained the power of photographs in society:

> People look at old photographs. I don't know anyone who doesn't do it, but every time you look back at old pictures, that kind of reminiscing. . . . They don't look at landscapes and pictures of mountains and go oh yeah lovely landscape. They look at pictures of people. They look at pictures of old buildings, they look at pictures of old towns, how the street has changed, they look at the way people used to dress, y'know, work. . . . They look at the conditions, at what life was like. . . . I would like to think that some of the stuff that I am doing now will be there in a hundred years' time like that stuff.

For urban explorers, the images they created helped to document the past for future society.

Discussion

Urban exploration offers an example of informal and individual documentation of hobby activities, demonstrating a process of tasks and outputs at exploration sites. To document excursions and sites, urban explorers captured images and video and, to some extent, shared images created in pursuit of their hobby. Their means of creating documentation were framed by their information behavior, including secrecy surrounding sites and distribution of images taken during explorations.

   Urban explorers described a processing of information not unlike elements articulated in PIM (Jones 2008; Lush 2014); in the case of urban exploration, this entailed working with information about sites found before an exploration, knowledge of photographic processes, and connecting the hobby with social settings with historical context. Urban explorers viewed their methods of creating documentary as a social contribution that held meaning for themselves and others. The evidentiary nature of urban exploration images echoes the documentary purpose of the hobby as cited by, for example, Henninger and Scifleet (2016) and Fulton (2016). Researchers writing specifically about photographing abandoned places have related this documentary hobby to memory making (Edensor

2005) and heritage preservation (Rojon 2014), and they confirm the significance of urban explorers' informal documentary practices.

Urban explorers also help us think about the potential temporal nature of documentation. In particular, the digital traces found in this study confirmed urban explorers' descriptions of participating and then attempting to delete their presence on the web and in social media. Urban explorers left behind a digital footprint of traces of their online presence linking urban explorers and past posting of content. It is essential to recognize and explore these digital traces that Henninger and Scifleet (2016) and Sköld (2015) have identified as often overlooked in research. These digital traces can act as documents on their own, helping to evidence participants' information behavior in a given context. As less obvious documentary processes, digital traces can add to social memory of a hobby as well as of a community.

Digital traces serve as an important addition to traditional library and archival systems of information acquisition and bibliography. By thinking about digital traces as documents, we can expand our notions of the document and how it functions in a temporal, social context. The creation and archiving of a digital presence can play a significant community role for memory making (Sköld 2015), building social context, and maintaining connections between documents and community.

Conclusion

The ways in which urban explorers approach documentation and documentary processes offer valuable insight for information science researchers in the consideration of documentary activities outside the traditional system of bibliography, which forms the basis of librarianship. Urban exploration offers a means of understanding everyday documentation of places and the human experience of those places; the viewing of potential documentation through the eyes of the urban explorer can facilitate different perspectives on this information. In addition, the digital traces around information that has been removed from the digital environment can provide further clues to the individual's documentary processes. Ironically, the digital footprints of urban explorers, echoing the hobby mantra of leaving behind only footprints during an exploration, may help us understand the digital documentary process more fully.

Appendix. Interview schedule.

Background Questions:

What is your marital status?

□ single   □ divorced/separated

□ married/common law   □ widowed

Are you currently…?

□ employed full-time   □ unemployed

□ employed part-time   □ retired

What is your occupation (if retired, what was your occupation)?

What is your age group?

□ 18–29   □ 60–69

□ 30–39   □ 70–79

□ 40–49   □ 80–89

□ 50–59   □ 90+

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

□ elementary school   □ undergraduate university degree

□ secondary school   □ master's degree

□ college/technical program diploma   □ doctorate

What would you consider your level of urban exploration experience?

□ beginner. New to urban exploration.

□ intermediate. Have participated in several urban explorations.

□ advanced. Routinely initiate and participate in urban explorations and
   advise others.

Do you mainly participate in urban exploration . . .?

□ On your own

□ With others

How often would you usually participate in urban exploring?

_____ days / month.

Questions about your Urban Exploration:

Please tell me about your urban exploration, starting with your
identification of a site to explore.

Prompts:

   Where did you go?

   How did you choose this site to explore?

   Would you walk me through your exploration step-by-step?

   Did you go alone? If not, with whom? Why?

What are you creating through your urban exploration activities?

Prompts:

   How did you document this site?

What did you do with your documentation? (e.g., post to Flickr, other social media; Would you please provide this URL?)

What would you create as an individual? How do you work as a group to create something new?

What role do social media play in your urban exploration?

Prompts:

Who typically participates via social media?

How do others participate?

the public? (e.g., comments on posted photos by the public)

your fellow urban explorers?

How does this participation influence your urban explorations?

How important is reciprocal sharing to your hobby?

Was this a typical urban exploration for you?

Prompts:

Please explain how/how not.

What other types of explorations have you done? E.g., military sites, factories, tunnels, etc.

What does an urban exploration mean to you?Appendix. Interview schedule.

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