

# Weaving Data Fabric for the Empirical Humanities: Pliable Infrastructure, Webs of Relationships, and Other Challenges of Visual Life Oral Histories Collections

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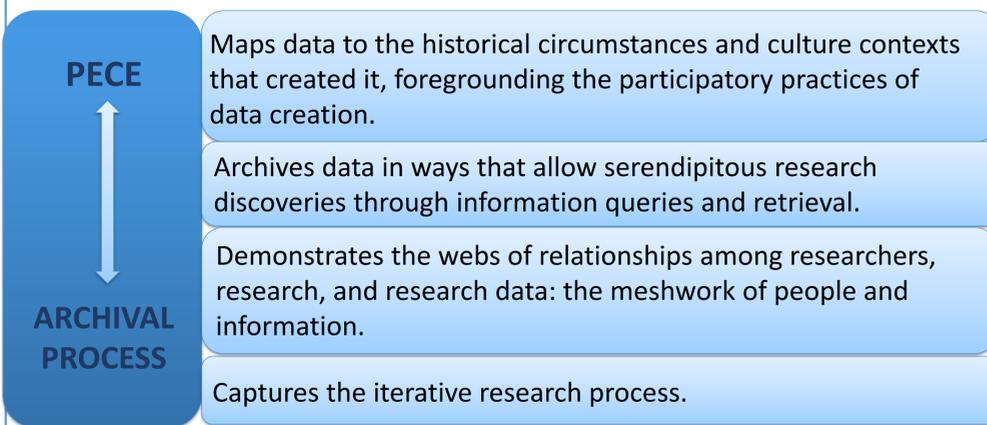
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## ABSTRACT

For archiving an ethnographic visual life oral histories research project I am developing a pliable digital humanities infrastructure and lively virtual work environment that facilitates exploratory and interpretive research designs and queries, in order to create an archive with an adaptable recordkeeping system. I also identify obstacles and challenges in building a PECE instance of the collection as I am appraising, describing, preserving, and providing intellectual access to unstructured ethnographic visual life oral histories data.

## PLIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ADAPTABLE RECORDKEEPING



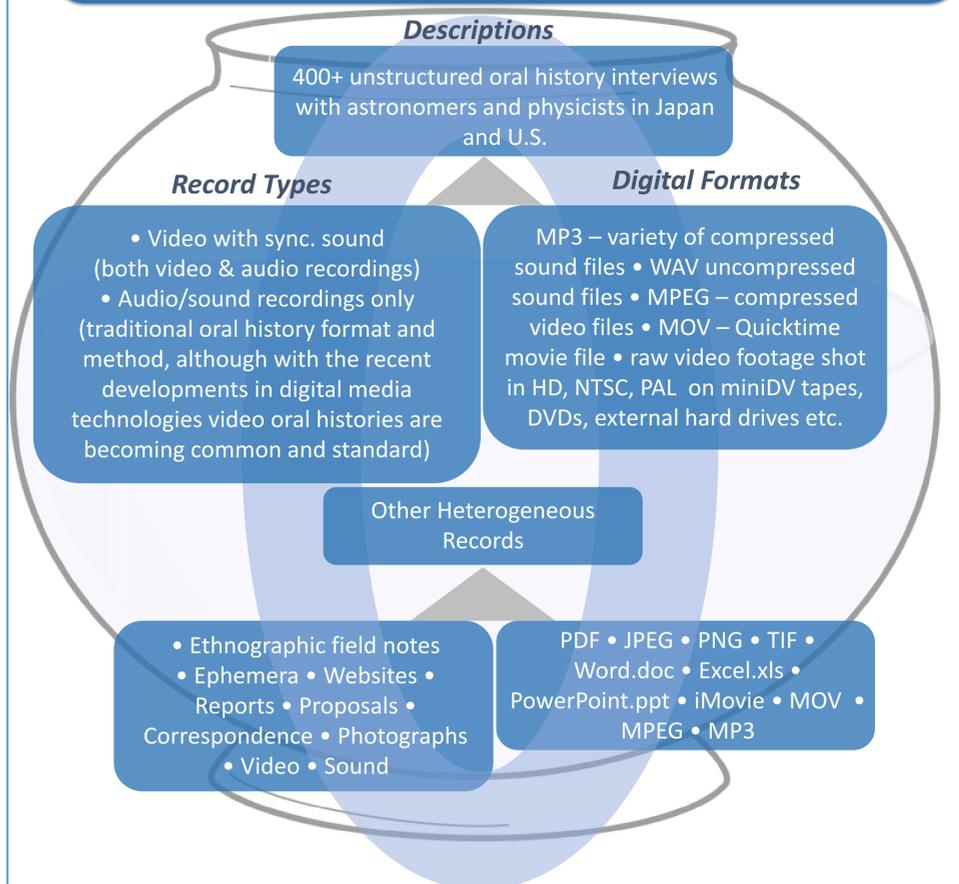
## CHALLENGES: LOST IN TRANSLATIONS & TRANSFERS

**Researchers' Idiosyncrasies** emerging through diverse and different intellectual traditions; theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary approaches; interpretive strategies; professional identities and affiliations; research agendas and commitments etc.

**Research's iterative process:** its ebbs and flows; fits, starts, and stops; trials and triumph; fails and successes, methodical studies and serendipities (–reflect on your favorite cartoon illustration of research).

**Unstructured, heterogeneous data:** ethnographic visual life oral histories research projects

## Visual Life Oral Histories Project: Contents of the Collections



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ✧ How to develop and produce digital tools to seamlessly connect diverse data collections, record types, and digital formats to support researchers' idiosyncrasies and research's iterative process?
- ✧ What tools are available now?
- ✧ How to better apply the available tools?
- ✧ How to adopt alternate tools?

## THE ARCHIVAL PROCESS



**People producing scholarship:** Research Collaborations • Community Partnerships • Independent Researchers • Digital Humanities Scholars • Digital Archivists & Librarians •

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## THE PLATFORM FOR EXPERIMENTAL, CREATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY (PECE)

PECE provides a place to archive and share primary data generated by empirical humanities scholars, facilitates analytic collaboration, and encourages experimentation with diverse modes of publication. The platform encourages humanities scholars to experiment with digitally-mediated, interdisciplinary collaboration, provides opportunities to involve students in humanities research as it progresses, and quickens the public availability of humanities research in an open access form. It also functions as a portal to a suite of open source tools useful for humanities research.

PECE's design is both theoretically inflected and ethnographically grounded: platform design has been oriented by "design logics" drawn from cultural, social, and language theories, oriented by the constantly evolving needs of a collaborative ethnographic project: The Asthma Files (TAF). My project represents the next phase of PECE, refining existing functions and developing others through an ethnographic visual life oral histories project on PECE. — <http://worldpece.org/about>

**PECE DESIGN LOGICS** = hauntology + explanatory pluralism + juxtapositional logic + pursuing different reproductions + scruffie contours & blurred focus + transmuting ambivalences of meaning + valuing noise

### MORE PECE WORK



THE ASTHMA FILES



Disaster STS Network

4S ARCHIVE / STS2020

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**REFERENCES:** \* Photos: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/garden/a-live-in-cabinet-of-curiosities.html> and House of Collection slideshow + Supplement: Artful and Stunning Cabinets of Curiosities, Decoded, NYT Magazine 2/26/16 • <http://disaster-sts-network.org/> • <http://worldpece.org/> • <http://theasthmafiles.org/>