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Archiving post-attack reactions : issues and perspectives

This issue focuses on the initiatives to collect and to archive the popular reactions to the terrorist attacks which have struck France and its European neighbours in recent years.

After each attack flowers, candles, messages and soft toys accumulate at the site of each attack or in symbolic places. But other spaces and means of expression also exist, such as the frescoes which flourish on the walls of grief-stricken cities, the content posted on social media and networks, the books of condolence opened in many places, and the messages addressed to the victims, those closest to them, or to the institution targeted by the attack.

The safe-keeping of the evidence of this varied activity, physical or digital, poses many questions. In order to understand the archival and also political concerns raised by these preservation operations, this issue brings together archivists, journalists and researchers from different disciplines. Their contributions retrace the decision-taking process of archiving from collection to outreach. The comparison of different geographical areas and different time-frames enables the identification of similarities and divergences in approaches and practices.

This issue of *La Gazette des archives* has been jointly coordinated by Maëlle Bazin, doctoral candidate and semiologist at the Centre for Analysis and Inter-Disciplinary Research on the Media (CARISM), and Marie Van Eeckenrode, lecturer at the Catholic University of Louvain and researcher attached to the State Archives.



The journal is available at a price of 30 € (including postage – orders and cheques payable to Archivistes français formation), it is also possible to subscribe and to benefit from an interesting price for 4 issues of *La Gazette des archives* (information:

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About the AAF

The Association des archivistes français, AAF (Association of French Archivists), which was founded in 1904, has a membership of more than 2 000, coming from both the public and private sectors. The association intends to defend the interests of professionals, promote the profession of archivist and raise awareness of the importance of the citizen archives in France but also around the world.

In order to fulfill its goal of professional promotion, the AAF regularly publishes books aimed at archival professionals as well as other stakeholders. The AAF also publishes a quarterly scholarly journal, La Gazette des archives, intended for all directly or indirectly interested in archival matters.

For more information: www.archivistes.org

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ABSTRACTS OF THE ARTICLES

Preface. Archiving the emotion, by Guillaume NAHON

Introduction. The archivist and the traumatic event, by Maëlle BAZIN and Marie VAN EECKENRODE

Unusual collections? Decisions, initiatives, reactions

Archiving Charlie: an Archival introspection, by Cyril LONGIN

The acquisition of messages left following the attacks at Charlie aroused many reactions inside the archival community as well as outside. With hindsight, the relative absence of the profession raises questions. At Saint Etienne, their safe-keeping appeared to be self-evident in the continuity of actions of the archives service but also in the long tradition of archival practices. For all that, the context and the process of creation did not correspond with traditional practices of acquisition. From that point on their acquisition necessitated a reexamination of professional practices and a questioning of the vision of archives and archivists in society.

The memory of the attacks of 2015: an atypical collection of the Municipal Archives of Rennes, by Marie PENLAË

After the attacks of January and November 2015, ephemeral memorials of messages and objects were erected in Rennes, outside the town hall. In spite of the interest of these testimonies, the delicate political context made the initiative to acquire them neither evident nor easy. Once responsibility for acquisition had been entrusted to the municipal Archives of Rennes, the service took the necessary measures to select and to conserve the material. The content of this body of documentation can become clearer from the context of their creation thanks to two elements. The first is the enquiry conducted by the archivist focusing on those people who created the material, the questioning of whom can be applied to this body of documentation, which was nevertheless constituted in conditions rarely found in relation to archives acquired in the usual way. The second is the spatial dimension, which appears as an entirely separate dimension of the documentary context.

The Charlie Archive at Harvard Library: archiving from afar, by Virginie GREENE, Lidia UZIEL and Luke HOLLIS

This article is a history from three perspectives of the creation, construction and development of an unclassifiable archive. If the Charlie Archive at Harvard Library (CAHL) belongs to the category of 'grief archives' as Our Marathon or the archives of Charlie in Rennes or Toulouse, it was created at some distance from the place of the traumatic events. The community to which it gives a voice is neither national nor local or territorial. It is being created by donations, requests and commentaries. Is it neutral? Is it engaged politically or morally? The debate (in common with the collection) remains open.

Nice, July 14th, 2016. Collecting the tributes deposited at the bandstand: the Archives under pressure, by Marion DUVIGNEAU

Getting a grip very quickly on the question of the tribute to the victims of the attack of 14 July 2016 on the *promenade des Anglais*, the City of Nice set up a 'committee to commemorate the victims of 14 July'. The acquisition of tributes left at the bandstand in the garden of Albert 1st by the archive service gained extensive media coverage, but leaves the archivists with regrets: the acquisition was too late and without selection, its conservation was very costly, and making it widely accessible was difficult in a political context. By accident or design, the attack took place right in the middle of the cycle of commemorations relating to the First World War, and this acquisition prompts the archivist to reassess the question of his social usefulness and his role in national and municipal commemorations.

Archiving the ephemeral after the attacks in Brussels: a theoretical reflection, by Frédéric BOQUET and Marie VAN EECKENRODE

The acquisition of ephemeral archives, such as the testimonies deposited in ephemeral memorials after the Brussels attacks, invites the archivist to explore their theoretical context. The present article proposes a trail towards a definition of the ephemeral document and points out some of the main issues relating to their acquisition and evaluation. What does one wish 'to archive', how should it be evaluated and when should one intervene? In other words, how do we resolve the paradox of ephemeral documents, in this context 'post-attack testimonies', which by their very nature are not intended to be kept permanently? It appears indispensable to understand the dynamic that dictates the formation of these documentary collections, which do not have an identifiable creator but endowed with a strong coherence.

The natively digital heritage of terrorist attacks in Europe: cross-referencing, by Valérie SCHAFER

The National Library of France and the National Audiovisual Institute made important acquisitions from the web and Twitter in January and then November 2015 (and continued at the time of the events in Nice). The safe-keeping of the digital heritage was also at the heart of the reflection of other actors, individual and institutional, European and North American, during the same period and sometimes in advance. These extracts from oral interviews conducted with several of these actors express their perspectives on the motivations, successes, constraints and limits of these archiving operation, confronted with a huge amount of data that was rapidly changing in real time. They throw light on the issues of memory and safe-keeping, but also the accessibility to, and exploitation of, this data by researchers.

From the primacy of the written word to the diversity of collections: safe-keeping, description and classification

Overview of the letters received at the Editorial Office of *Charlie Hebdo* following the 2015 attacks, by Camille PETITBREUIL

From 7 January 2015 right up to today, in 2018, thousands of messages have been received at the editorial offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in response to the terrorist attacks. They bear witness to a massive mobilization of the population in France but also abroad, and of the diversity of responses to such traumatizing events. This article retraces the conditions of receipt, processing

and classification of these messages, while thematically describing this rich collection of over 56,000 to 70,000 documents and objects. The messages testify as to the diversity of points of view on these attacks, and also engrave the multiple portrait of what *Charlie Hebdo* may represent in the collective imagination.

[From homage to affirmation of identity: Registers of condolence in commemoration of the killings at the Hyper Cacher \(kosher supermarket\), by Solveig HENNEBERT](#)

From the registers of condolence placed at the disposal of the public during the second commemoration of the Hyper Cacher attacks, on 9 January 2017, this article proposes to analyze the expressions of the writers in relation to identity. Beyond the messages of condolence, we observe a solidarity towards the victims through their Jewish identity. The article is particularly interested in the forms that this expression of Jewish identity take.

[Obvious memory, the Toulouse testimonies of the 2015 attacks, by Catherine BERNARD and Pierre GASTOU](#)

The attacks which took place in France in January and November 2015 had a profound psychological impact. Following these events, many inhabitants of Toulouse gathered together in the city's main square and started to deposit testimonies on the façade of the city hall. The Archives of Toulouse, as other public services, did not for a moment envisage that these documentary collections should be allowed to disappear. It was at this point that a long series of questions opened up in front of us, in relation to the formalization of acquisition, the choice of referencing and documentary processing, with the aim of giving back to the population this individual and collective memory. We decided to consider the collection of testimonies as archival items, of private origin, and with singular characteristics. This choice was made in the continuity of this civic gesture, in order to convey this collective tribute to the victims of the attacks. If the context of this unusual acquisition called into question our usual ways of working, it strongly encouraged us to question our daily practices and the rules of archival science.

[From the street to the Archives of Paris: the treatment of tributes to the victims of the November 2015 attacks, by Audrey CESELLI and Mathilde PINTAULT](#)

After the attacks in Paris in November 2015, the Archives of Paris intervened at the sites of the attacks in order to safeguard the documents which had been deposited there. From acquisition of the material to putting it on line, eighteen months elapsed, during which the archivists in charge of the project were led' to put in place a methodology adapted for this unusual collection. Access and dissemination of the documents to the greatest number was the guiding thread of this project. Today several thousand tributes are available on line, on the website of the Archives of Paris, and can be the object of advanced researches thanks to their indexation.

[What am I? 'I am Charlie' and the testimonies concerning the 2015 attacks in questions, by Laurence FAUQUET](#)

The acquisition of testimonies relating to the attack of January and November 2015 have raised several archival and legal questions. What status should be accorded to these collections of testimonies, which are half-way between public and private archives? In this connection, can one speak about 'fonds'? And what is their nature? Finally, how should one communicate and promote them while respecting the rights of copyright, rights to the image and rights to a private life? All of these are questions that will interest you.

Outreach projects: communicate, commemorate, raise awareness

[Walls of memory, memory of the walls, by Marie CHRISTIAN](#)

It was immediately after the massacre at *Charlie Hebdo* that I started my photographic collection of what graffiti and street artists and anonymous individuals were painting and writing on the walls of Paris. The decision to turn it into a book was rapid. By gathering together more than 400 documents, we were able to keep the memory of this ephemeral expression which has essentially disappeared today and to see the emergence of several large themes. We continued to collect after the attacks of November and to see how the themes have evolved.

[The *Charlie Hebdo* Archives: vectors of media education and citizenship with Dessinez Créez Liberté, by Agathe ANDRÉ and Félix BOURGUIGNON](#)

The association Dessinez, Créez, Liberté was born out of the will to promote the thousands of drawings sent, in an immense surge of fraternity and solidarity, to the editorial office of *Charlie Hebdo*, after the attacks of January 2015. Henceforth these archives serve as teaching materials in order to dialogue with young people and have become educational tools in the media and for citizenship.

[Archives as memorial materials, by Sarah GENSBURGER](#)

This sociological text focuses on the social uses and commemorative purposes of the words, objects and photographs collected by the Archives of Paris at the places of the attacks of 13 November 2015, in the course of the period 2015-2016. This article mobilizes ethnographical methods to lay down the bases of a research programme on the future of these traces of a recent past. It is part and parcel of an original enquiry being carried out by Sarah Gensburger, a sociologist of memory and inhabitant of the 11th district, who has held regular sociological chronicles about the appearance, in the public space below her flat, of what is now agreed should be called 'tributes to the victims'.