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**Abigail De Kosnik:**  
***Rogue Archives. Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom.***  
**MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England. 2016**

**Tanja Välisalo**

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“Memory has gone rogue” (p. 1). This claim constitutes the basis of Abigail De Kosnik’s book *Rogue Archives - Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. The book provides a unique combination of perspectives on digital archives existing outside of traditional memory institutions, especially focusing on the practices connected to the creation and continued existence of these archives. The majority of the research data and examples in *Rogue Archives* are derived from fan fiction archives, which ties the book strongly to fan studies. Nevertheless, *Rogue Archives* is located at the intersection of research fields such as new media studies, information studies, fan studies and performance studies, making it a source of inspiration to scholars from any of these fields.

De Kosnik introduces several new concepts in her book, beginning with *rogue archives*, which according to her are defined by their constant availability, free online entry, fully streamable or downloadable content, disregard for copyright restrictions, their often unconventional content, as well as being managed by volunteers without formal training in archiving. These archives are further categorized as (1) universal digital archives, such as Project Gutenberg and Online Library, attempting to archive everything in their scope, (2) community digital archives aiming to preserve cultures of specific, often marginalized, communities, and (3) alternative digital archives focused on filling the gaps left by traditional memory institutions, for example in the fields of art or cinema, but some archives can be placed in all of these categories simultaneously.

*Rogue Archives* makes for a dense reading experience. The book consists of alternating segments: chapters and mini-chapters, which the writer calls 'breaks'. These breaks enable the writer to include ideas and additional material that do not fit into the chapters themselves. While this makes for a somewhat unconventional structure and at first seems like a failure to define a clear scope, many of these breaks ultimately tie different chapters together, and despite their modest name, make some of the most meaningful contributions in the book. For example in break 3, drawing on Matt Hills' observations on temporalities in fandom and Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'queer time', De Kosnik introduces the concept of *fan time*, which is time, facilitated by fan archives, spent by oneself on one's own terms as opposed to time regulated or dictated by media industries or normative notions of gender and sexuality. There is clear potential in this concept for opening new discussions on the way fan cultures are interwoven in the everyday lives of fans.

From the very beginning of the book, De Kosnik emphasizes the ephemeral nature of digital content in rogue archives; what persists of digital cultural memory are the practices connected to archive labour, not the archives or their contents themselves. Here she makes an important point of drawing attention to the human labour behind the creation and maintenance of digital archives. While fan studies scholars have extensively studied fan fiction, they have so far mainly focused on the works of fan fiction themselves or their creators instead of those dedicated to preserving them and making them available to others. This is where the perspective of archives and information studies helps fill a gap in the study of these volunteer-created archives.

Segments of the book are dedicated to the study of the meanings and functions of archives for marginalized communities. De Kosnik gives an example of fan fiction events where people are invited to write fan fiction portraying non-white or multiracial characters in order to increase representation of different groups of people in fandoms (p. 166). Interestingly, she analyses these events as filling in the gaps of not just a particular internet archive but, more importantly, 'meta-archives', which she defines as being conceptual collections of all productions deriving from a single source text (p. 34, 167-168).

What the book is lacking is an overview of the history of rogue archives in general, and fan fiction archives in particular. This lack is somewhat remedied with patches of historical perspective throughout the book, and excerpts from oral history interviews with fans give welcome glimpses of the data, and help locate the phenomena discussed in its context. One chapter in particular focuses on the historical perspective in the form of a particular topic, that is, the transition from print fandom to digital fandom, but only enough to function as a teaser on the subject. Historical overview on rogue archives would certainly deserve a book of its own.

The concluding chapter of the book leaves the reader with contradictory feelings as the chapter introduces a fascinating quantitative approach to studying fan fiction archives, but is somewhat disconnected from the whole. What it does do effectively is

show the scale of rogue archives: the original television series *X-Files* (1993-2002) included 202 episodes and there were also two films published based on the series; simultaneously, the largest archive of *X-Files* fan fiction included over 34,000 stories. These figures open a window into the possibilities this novel approach could give to research on a topic that is commonly only studied with qualitative methods.

The greatest contributions of *Rogue Archives* are its multidisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of digital archives, and its focus on the practices, communities and cultures of these archives. The book combines several distinct areas of research, even though the synthesis of different perspectives could have been taken further, for example in discussing fan studies theory. Nevertheless, this book deserves attention in a wide group of fields starting with media studies and its related fields, but extending to fields connected to traditional memory institutions, such as history and museology.

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