

Peripheral Vision and Challenging Invisibilities

Theoretical and Methodological Reflections on the “Digitized Turn” and “Born-Digital” Sources in Archives of Translation and Translators

Peter Jonathan Freeth, London Metropolitan University

Running head: Peripheral Vision and Challenging Invisibilities

Abstract

This article presents a discussion of the theoretical and methodological challenges posed by digitization processes and born-digital sources within translation and translator studies research — particularly in archival contexts. It begins by demonstrating how the digitization of archives and source materials remains an undertheorized issue in translation contexts, as well as the need to understand how digitization allows new forms of “peripheral vision” across our research and publication processes. Subsequently, the article problematizes the archiving and use of born-digital sources to research translation and translators, particularly in terms of issues surrounding data collection, access and ethics. In doing so, this article argues that care must be taken to properly understand and preserve the digital sources that will enable archival research in the future, whilst emphasizing the new opportunities presented by digitized and born-digital sources to challenge the invisibility of translation and translators within many of the world's archives and histories.

Key words: translator archives; translation history; digitization; digital turn; translator studies; social history; digital sources, archival research, research ethics

1 Introduction

A recurring theme across archival research in translation studies is that of the relative invisibility of translation and translators. In some cases, such as Lawrence Venuti's genealogical approach to translation history, tracing the development of this apparent invisibility from the seventeenth century to the present day has served as the primary research goal (1995/2008/2018). In many others, the invisibility of translation and translators serves not as the object of study but rather presents a methodological challenge. As noted by Cordingley and Hersant, translators "have long experienced exclusion, indifference, and invisibility within the archives" (2021, 19), resulting in the "loss" of sources and narratives (Stowe 2021) and thereby hindering our ability to construct histories of translation beyond the most "well-known, prolific translators, especially literary ones" (Atefmehr and Farahzad 2022, 251–252). Yet, when combined with questions about the colonial roots of translation (Niranjana 1992) and the Anglophone/Eurocentric nature of many histories of translation and translation theory, the need to go beyond the most renowned and powerful translators and link the personal, lived experiences of history's more invisible translators to broader socio-historical contexts becomes increasingly urgent.

Calls for a more "subjectivized" (Pym 1998, 36) and "humanized" (Pym 2009) approach to translation history comprising "the humanistic study of human translators and their social actions, both within and beyond their material translations" (Pym 1998, 4) have existed within translation studies for over twenty-five years. In recent years, such calls have begun to be answered by the rise of what has been called "translator studies" (e.g. Chesterman 2009). This burgeoning subfield within translation studies focuses on the "central role of translators" in translation processes and seeks to "justify translators' creativity and authority" therein (Hu 2004, 115-116) by shifting the focus onto the "image, status, function, and role of translators" (107), rather than relying solely on source and target texts as evidence. As seen in many of

the chapters in Kaindl, Kolb and Schlager's edited volume *Literary Translator Studies* (2021), much of the work in this field has focused on accounts of renowned historical figures such as Ernest Hemingway (Kolb 2021), Harriet Martineau (Schlager 2021) and Elisabeth Wolff-Bekker (Vanacker 2021); has used traditional historical methodologies and source materials such as archival research (Bardet 2021) and bibliographic catalogues (López and Rodríguez 2021); or has drawn on paratextual evidence such as translator's notes (Ben-Ari 2021), prefaces and newspaper interviews (Fornalczyk-Lipska 2021) due to their position as "loci of visibility" (Feltrin-Morris 2018, 10).

With "translator studies" approaches shifting the focus away from texts and onto the figure of the translator, however, comes a need for a methodological movement away from using translations and their paratexts as the primary source materials for our research. In her study of the professional roles and "multiple lives" of literary translators, for instance, Reine Meylaerts leverages personal letters from Roger Avermaete to situate his translations within the context of his other professional work and his role as an "intercultural mediator" (2013). In more contemporary settings, the position of the translator within broader networks of textual production have been investigated through email correspondence, drafts and working notes (e.g. Galleti 2013 and Jansen, 2017), whilst interviews, focus groups and questionnaire data have allowed scholars to gain direct insights into the conditions, hierarchies of power and networks of communication in which translators work (e.g. Koskinen 2008, Akashi 2018 and Dam and Zethsen 2012). In such cases, the use of these digitized and born-digital primary sources allows scholars to gain insights into the "everyday experience of individuals" (Munday 2014, 65) beyond the narratives found within translations and the paratexts that market and present them to readers.

The use of primary sources to gain insights into "the lives of individuals" and "their interaction with other participants in the translation process" is described by Jeremy Munday

as a “microhistory of translation and translators” (2014). This methodology is developed from the concept of microhistory (Levi 1992 and Ginzburg 1976) and builds upon ideologies from social history and “history from below” (see Sharpe 1991) to present an “encounter with the singular, the specific, and the individual” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 6) that reflects “an individual’s constant negotiation, manipulation, choices and decisions in the face of a normative reality” (Levi 1992, 98). Doing so therefore means abandoning “schematic and general interpretations” (Levi 2012, 123) to instead focus on the study of small-scale events, individuals or contexts to understand the “day-to-day experience and choices” of a particular individual or group (Munday 2014, 67). Such approaches align closely with sociological research in translation studies, where investigations into the sociology of translators, translations and translating (a distinction made by Chesterman 2009) can all be facilitated through microhistorical studies of specific individuals, their practices and the translated texts they produce.

However, while sociological research has shown the productivity of new forms of born-digital primary sources in translation and translator studies, particularly in terms of revealing the networks and relationships that shape translators’ everyday experiences, little work has been done to discuss the theoretical and methodological impact of digital archival practices and source materials on how we engage with and create archives of translation and translators beyond the introduction of big-data driven and quantitative methods (such as Wakabayashi 2019). Yet, as digital and online technologies continue to proliferate across all areas of the working and personal lives of both translators and researchers, the need to consider how we utilize such digital and online sources within translator studies approaches increases significantly — particularly as increasing numbers of archives are utilizing digital cataloging tools and digitizing documents for remote access. Moreover, if existing histories of translation have struggled to account for the lives and working practices beyond the most

“well-known, prolific translators” (Atefmehr and Farahzad 2022, 251–252), the widespread proliferation of home computers, social media networks and online communication channels means that the very tools translators use to produce translations day-in, day-out present new forms of digital archive outside traditional power structures. The fact that these tools underpin the working practices of huge swathes of the world’s translators means that new forms of digital primary materials present opportunities to make visible the translators and translations typically excluded from, or marginalized within, institutional archives. As such, understanding the opportunities and challenges these digital sources present becomes an urgent matter within translation and translator studies, particularly in terms of how we can ensure the preservation, archiving and visibility of these sources for future research.

Consequently, this article presents theoretical and methodological reflections on what I see as two individual but interconnected issues currently facing translation and translator studies research in archival contexts.¹ The first pertains to the digitization of archives and archival collections, with a focus on the potential risks and rewards of disintermediated digital archives in translation and translator studies research. The second then turns more specifically to the issues of preserving, storing and accessing many of the born-digital sources that have already proven fruitful in contemporary research contexts within more formal archival settings. Throughout these two discussions, my primary argument is that there are many ways in which digitized and born-digital archives can challenge the invisibilities of translation and translators both within the archives and in society more generally. However, as I will demonstrate, opportunities for visibility are by no means guaranteed or free from risk of harm without proper consideration of the systems of power that underpin them. Thus, my

¹ These two issues are derived from Jaillant (2022) and, of course, are not the *only* relevant issues. Rather my focus on the digitization of existing archives and new archives of digital sources serves as an indicator of areas where further theoretical and methodological discussion is necessary. Indeed, I present this article as one step towards digital research in archives of translation and translators, but certainly not the *only* step.

aim becomes not only to reflect on the potential of “digitization” and “born-digital” sources in archives of translation and translators, but also on the risks and potential impact of these theoretical and methodological developments.

2 Peripheral vision and the challenges of the “digitized turn” in existing archives

The first area I will focus on is that of digitization, which refers to the process of adapting systems, materials and processes for computer use. In a 2006 blog post entitled *Methodology for the infinite archive*, William Turkel notes the similarities between the impact of printing technology on the proliferation of print materials in the 15th century and current digital transformations. Just as the “explosion of printed materials” led to “widespread literacy,” Turkel argues that this digital transformation also requires new skills, including an ability to digitize existing sources, to manage and interpret born-digital materials, and to account for the role of computers within our workflows, as well as more technical skills including writing programs and creating bots. In doing so, he foresees a world in which we have “nearly instantaneous access to the contents of the world’s great libraries and archives” and a digital environment that “will radically democratize knowledge production” but argues that we must embrace these transformations and technologies within our research lest we get left behind.

What is notable in the skills and technologies discussed by Turkel is that we can clearly make a distinction between what Lara Putnam refers to as the “mass ‘digitized turn’” and the “digital” turn (2016, 379). In the case of the latter, Putnam is referring specifically to digital methods such as text mining and distant reading, as well as the use of digital tools for “counting, graphing and mapping,” all of which allow for the use of big data within historical research contexts to “quantify and “visualize” (2016, 379). In the case of qualitative research methods like biography and microhistory, which are built upon “small-scale” analysis

(Munday 2014, 67), such data-driven and quantitative digital methods are of limited usefulness. As such, there is a temptation to differentiate qualitative archival research from the digital and avoid the skills acquisition necessitated by Turkel under the guise of irrelevance to our methods.

The use of digital, big-data methods is not, however, the only way in which technology has transformed the way that research is conducted. As Putnam notes, digital search tools have revolutionized how we search for, find and engage with qualitative data in both secondary literature, through the use of digitized and digital texts in Google Books, JSTOR and online journal platforms, and primary sources, which are now often hosted in digital archives such as newspaper databases (2016, 378). The use of search engines, key-word searches, optical character recognition (OCR) and hyperlinks between sources therefore constitutes a major shift in the way archival research is conducted by facilitating “disintermediated discovery” and a use of “peripheral vision” to trace individual lines of enquiry across geographic and linguistic borders — a process that could previously be “prohibitively expensive,” or was at least far more time-consuming (Putnam 2016, 392). Putnam’s concept of “peripheral vision” relates to what she describes as “side-glancing,” or an ability to discover “information about people, places, and processes outside the borders of one’s prior knowledge” when working within the confines of a given document, archive or area of expertise (2016, 383-384). In digitized archives, the use of hyperlinks between collections and documents, or the ability to search for a key term found in one source in huge swathes of other digitized documents serve as examples of where peripheral vision can uncover routes of discovery that would previously require researchers to physically access and engage with multiple collections and their archivists.

The positive effects of the peripheral vision afforded by digitized collections and sources can be seen in the work of historians such as Laite (2020), whereby the ability to trace individuals

across geographic borders in the digital space meant she could go beyond defining the women she studied by their prostitution, to instead create multifaceted pictures of their complex social lives and agency both before and after their work selling sex (956–966). Indeed, the discoverability of “small fragments of information” across various digitized archives facilitates what Hitchcock describes as “a more usable history from below” because individual lives may be unknowable if traces of their stories can only be found in one archive (2015). As such, attempts to achieve a “richer knowledge, in which instinct and intuition are at work” through an “individualizing” research strategy and “indirect knowledge, based on conjecture” (Magnússon and Szijártó 2013, 22), can be realized through the disintermediated and transnational access to sources and scholarship facilitated by the “digitized turn.”

In some regards, the benefits outlined in the preceding paragraph may seem both obvious and benign — that search engines and digitized texts dominate our source discovery and reading habits within research contexts, teaching preparation and general reading is arguably both self-evident and “the black box” of an “invisible method” that is difficult to quantify (Putnam 2016, 388). Nevertheless, these online tools do much of the “heavy lifting” in twenty-first century academic practice (*ibid*) and so cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, in translation studies we are often focused on individuals, texts and social networks that cross, if not transcend, geographic, cultural and linguistic borders. The position of translators and translation as a cultural “third space” (Bhabha 1994) between time periods, regions and languages presents a particularly compelling argument in favor of increasing the reach of our peripheral vision in archival research. Indeed, such an approach means that “trails of breadcrumbs” (Laité 2020, 972) across archives in different countries can allow us to “find without knowing where to look” (Putnam 2016, 377). For a group such as translators, who have traditionally been “hard to find in many collections” due to the historical “exclusion” of translation from archives (Munday 2014, 71), the tracing of fragments made possible through

the digitized turn presents an exciting opportunity that must be accounted for in methodological discussions of archive-based research within translation studies.

However, while there has been some discussion of the impact of digitized research within the context of quantitative research methods in translation history, such as Wakabayashi's discussion of digital-humanities-influenced methodologies such as distant reading (2019), the proper disclosure and discussion of digital sources or methodologies are uncommon within methodological considerations of archival research in translation and translator studies. For instance, Atefmehr and Farahzad's recent "archival methodology" for microhistorical research in translator studies details the importance of "extracting evidence from the archives," stating that "to access the archives, the researcher must visit various repositories of archival records and documents," including those of museums and libraries, specific organizations and embassies (2022, 254–255). While of course the verb "visit" may be used in the sense of accessing a digital resource, the example of this methodology in action given by Atefmehr and Farahzad makes no reference to the digital tools or contexts underpinning their research and the impact of these tools on their findings — including any of the archives' own storage, organization and search systems for both documents and metadata. The narrative of their research begins, for instance, by describing how "through our investigation, we came across some translation drafts belonged [*sic*] to a female translator named Khanoom Hajib," with the next step being "to find and trail sources" through what the authors describe as an "in-depth and painstaking investigation of the archives and documents of various repositories" (256). The authors describe the fruits of this labor as finding a myriad of sources including letters, photo albums and manuscripts including translation drafts, but give no details on how this search was structured e.g., solely through the close reading of archival materials or the use of key word searches for terms such as Khanoom Hajib's name or the titles of her translations within archival catalogues. These observations are not meant to

undermine the findings of this paper in any way, particularly given the interesting case of translator visibility presented by Atefmehr and Farahzad. Rather, to demonstrate that even in methodologically oriented work published in 2022, the digital mediation of archival research and historical research often remains unproblematized in translation studies.

The reason it is important that we engage with, and even challenge, the digital tools and systems that underpin contemporary research practice is that the use of the technology and the materials made available or discoverable thanks to the digitized turn is inherently tied to existing power structures, ideologies and inequalities. For instance, access to digitized archives requires at least an internet connection and a device to connect, typically a computer, given that “most, if not all, historians use computers to search and store material, as well as prepare publications” (Romein et al. 2020). While it is easy to assume that internet access is common enough to be a fairly low barrier to entry, particularly given that in 2020 it was reported that 91.5% of the North American population and 83.9% of the European and Central Asian population had accessed the internet within the past three months, this remains only around 60% of the world’s population (Roser, Ritchie and Ortiz-Ospina, 2020). Indeed, the same figures for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are 38.6% and 30.0% respectively (ibid). Thus, while digitization makes it “increasingly possible to do history as a desk discipline” from the comfort of your own home (Putnam 2016, 395), we must acknowledge the risk that digitization processes continue to prioritize data sources and research from the Global North where internet access is most ubiquitous, rather than Turkel’s predictions of the democratization of knowledge production (2006).

Furthermore, this is to say nothing of the various subscriptions and fees required to access both primary sources and scholarly publications in digital spaces, which typically come through institutional licenses and so require affiliation with a well-funded and well-connected institution. Thus, while links between scholars working in Asian and Middle Eastern contexts

with translation studies' traditional European and Anglophone heartland are increasing, care must be taken to ensure that the digitized turn does not result in the continued production of Westernized and Eurocentric histories of translation, whereby disintermediated, remote access to new primary materials results in the bolstering of existing Western narratives on the history of translation and translators. Similarly, the ability to “discover” archives and sources online through peripheral glances beyond our own areas of expertise, to access materials without ever setting foot in a local archive, and to use online machine translation tools to navigate online platforms and collections hosted in languages we do not speak means research on unfamiliar languages, cultures and societies can be conducted without ever coming into contact with local knowledge centers or expertise. This therefore risks the colonization of source materials by privileged scholars working at well-funded institutions in the Global North and the resulting publications produced in English by such scholars may lead to the continued marginalization of researchers working in other contexts for whom publication in top-rated, often English-language journals may be off limits.

As argued by Kassouf and Ronconi (2022), these potential barriers to securing an international audience for research outputs produced by scholars from the Global South are twofold. Firstly, the need for researchers from the Global South to produce work “like their northern colleagues” (4-11) can be an obstacle due to a lack of economic capital (particularly with regards to open access publishing), limited access to networking events and opportunities to accrue social capital, or limited English-language proficiency. Notably, such practices require researchers working outside the Global North to render their difference invisible and produce work that reads like that written by “their northern colleagues” but prevents their participation in the ecosystem they are attempting to enter through a lack of access to, and visibility within, existing structures of knowledge exchange and dissemination. Secondly, systemic inequalities in Western academic publishing can similarly eschew

scholars with low levels of symbolic and cultural capital from participation in that very ecosystem due to the limited international visibility and reputation of their affiliated institutions, whilst research topics that are pertinent to the Global South may be viewed as unimportant or peripheral by editors in the Global North unless worked on by scholars based in that geographic region.

Of course, this is not to denounce the use of online repositories and archives within translation studies research conducted by scholars in the Global North. Rather, researchers working in institutions and contexts in powerful Anglophone and European contexts must acknowledge their own positionality (Levi 2012, 124–125) within global systems of power and support the work of local experts, rather than “discovering” and colonizing regional archives through disintermediated digital access schemes and drowning out the voices of such scholars with their own publications. Indeed, the fact that there has been “little acknowledgment that the practice of translation itself along with scholarship about its practice are shaped by norms and values rooted in systemic white supremacy” (Tachtiris and Layne 2023, 2–3) means that care must be taken to ensure the digitization of research processes and materials does not similarly marginalize histories and research from non-white, non-Western and non-English-speaking contexts.

Furthermore, this is also to say nothing of the time, infrastructure, money and expertise required to digitize and host archival collections in the first place. As noted by Jaillant (2022), even large, well-funded archives in countries such as the UK and USA face numerous challenges when curating and granting access to digitized collections, such as diminishing access to the tools required to digitize old formats such as VHS, limited staffing resources resulting in the need to select “which communities, which records get digitized” (Jaillant 2022, 242 quoting a personal interview with Seles 2021), difficulties obtaining permission from copyright holders to digitize or give access to digitized files, data protection

requirements in line with international law, and the screening of confidential or sensitive materials. These challenges hinder the potential for peripheral vision and digitization to make translation and translators more visible in the archive for several reasons.

Firstly, the complex challenges of storing and granting access to digitized materials often means researchers are still required to go to physical archives and access materials there, even when collections have been completely digitized (Jaillant 2022, 430-431), meaning a return to the potentially prohibitive costs of archival research and limitations to the scope of Putnam's "disintermediated discovery" using our peripheral vision (2016). Secondly, if these challenges are "not easy to solve" (Jaillant 2022, 432) in well-funded institutions in the Global North, this is to say nothing of digitization practices in other contexts. Yet, if we wish to uncover the lived experiences of translators beyond "well-known, prolific translators" (Atefmehr and Farahzad 2022, 251–252), it is the archives in precisely these locations that most urgently require further attention. Finally, even where potential computer-based and digital solutions exist, such as the use of artificial intelligence or machine learning to catalogue, add metadata to, or search individual archival collections, such systems cannot circumvent copyright and data-protection law, and it remains "crucial to avoid biases in the selection and processing of data, which could discriminate against certain groups" when building these algorithmic tools (Jaillant 2022, 418). Indeed, while the use of peripheral vision to trace histories of translation and translators across the world's digitized collections presents an opportunity to increase the visibility of previously marginalized and understudied individuals and texts, the politics, economics and practicalities of archival digitization also risk perpetuating their continued marginalization.

3 Challenging invisibilities with new archives of the born-digital

Where the digitization of archives and scholarly outputs may perpetuate the marginalization of translation and translators within existing power structures and the historical narratives they generate, the proliferation of digital and online technology across the working and personal lives of translators across the globe presents an alternative case — one where the files and data that all translators create, use and share can present new opportunities to understand their “day-to-day experience and choices” (Munday 2014 discussing Magnússon 2006). While this article can by no means constitute a full account of all the possibilities and challenges posed by this digital turn, my discussion of the opportunities afforded by born-digital archives of translation and translators in the following sections aims to encourage others to use this as a starting point to expand on the possibilities and challenges of creating, maintaining and utilizing such archives in translation and translator studies.

3.1 Born-digital archives of translation

The first opportunity I will discuss relates to research on translation, which refers primarily to the processes (in the sense of Holmes [in Venuti 2004, 185]) undertaken by individuals involved in the translation act. Of course, translation process research (TPR) has become a burgeoning subfield within translation studies and typically refers to “introspective,” “(micro-)behavioral methods” and “computational methods” that record and analyze translation and post-editing events in laboratory conditions (Jakobsen 2017, 39). Thus, what I refer to here cannot be conceived as part of TPR, but rather the use of documents such as correspondence between agents involved in translation processes (such as a project manager and translator) or the files used to complete a translation assignment (whether Word documents or files generated by Computer Assisted Translation [CAT] tools). As noted by Walker, there is a need for Language Service Providers (LSPs) to retain thorough records and

back-up different versions of files as a project moves through the translation or localization workflow, such as machine-translation output that is yet to be post-edited, the post-edited file, and then the same file after bi- or mono-lingual review (2022, 104–105). As such, archiving and future analysis of these files could reveal “the process of translation and the conditions under which it takes place” (Munday 2014, 68) within a particular LSP or institution, or a particular translator’s working practices — for instance when translating compared to when reviewing.

Alternatively, versions of a literary translation submitted by a translator to a publisher via email and returned with comments, changes or suggestions from an author, editor or copyeditor can serve a similar function. Given the widespread use of computers within translation workflows, even outside of the use of specific CAT tools and other localization or audiovisual translation software, the files saved and shared by translators on their home and work devices present a form of personal archive that could be preserved and utilized for future research on issues such as client-translator communication, translator working practices and quality assurance methods.

One potentially problematic area within the use of such personal translation archives stems from the assignment of copyright and ethical questions of who may be permitted to access much of the translation process data translators and LSPs now generate and store.² For instance, if we understand translation memories and term bases as databases that can be stored and archived for future use, any translator who maintains their own may be understood as creating a personal archive of translation. Even outside such technology, translators are likely to use a computer to send and receive work via email or file sharing platforms, or to

² As made clear by Jaillant (2022), these concerns also pertain to born-digital archives more broadly, so are not unique to translation and translator studies. Rather, my discussion here provides specific examples of potential challenges faced in our discipline.

open source texts and produce targets in word processors. In all such cases, the accessing and storage of files to facilitate contemporary translation processes create digital traces of manuscripts, personal papers and correspondence that may prove vital in constructing archives of translation workflows and translators' work in the twenty-first century. Indeed, as noted by Munday (2014, 73):

Even though personal papers are normally “a by-product of activity or a means of carrying it out” (Raspin 1996:219), they give an unrivalled insight into the working conditions and state of mind (Grigg 1991:230) of the originator of the papers and the social activity in which he or she is engaged.

Given that such documents are often fragmentary in nature and of limited scope due to a lack of explicit professional methodology for the “acquisition, appraisal, arrangement and description” of personal papers (Williams 2008, 62) and the peripheral position of translators within many traditional archives, the born-digital nature of contemporary translation processes offers an enticing opportunity for future histories of translation in the digital age that would seemingly bypass the marginalization of translation within traditional archives.

However, the fulfilment of these opportunities requires both good, long-term data management on the part of the relevant translators or LSPs, and a willingness, or ability, to share these files within an archival context. As noted by Walker (2022), while documentation and files such as translation memories need to be “maintained in an organized manner,” active records typically do not need to be maintained forever and so many LSPs undertake processes of “project archiving” in a “long-term storage repository” (104). Despite “effective record keeping and archiving practices” being “essential to the smooth operation of an LSP” (106), however, there is “no obligation to maintain archives of past projects” and the format and methodology for doing so will vary not only by company but also depending on the

particular technological solutions they implement (105). Furthermore, data back-ups and security are essential to ensuring long-term access to files and preventing file corruption (105). Consequently, any research into the practices and processes of a particular LSP may need to battle with fragmentary and incomplete archives, an oft-lamented issue also raised by scholars working with traditional archives (see Stowe 2021 for a discussion of “loss” in archival research).

These challenges become even more complex, however, if the point of archival access is a translator, rather than an LSP or institution. Due to a lack of clear, up-to-date copyright law (Moorkens and Lewis 2019), the question of who owns or has copyright control over resources such as translation memories remains “contested” and so “the way in which content is used and re-used requires further attention” (Lambert 2023). Where local versions of resources provided by or to a work-giver are retained by translators, the question then becomes whether they may be submitted for inclusion within an archive if the translator cannot evidence their ownership or at least right of access to the data within and its use in research contexts. Links can be drawn between these issues in non-literary contexts and the fact that “material on translation and translators is often housed in the collections of others (novelists, diplomats, publishing companies, etc.)” (Munday 2014, 72), whereby the client takes on the authorial role of the novelist and the LSP takes the place of the publishing company. Thus, even in non-literary contexts, it becomes clear that translated texts are more likely to be held in archives of the institutions responsible for their commission and funding than in archives of translation or translators. Furthermore, given that the “locus of power” (Claus and Marriott 2012, 386) for the creation and maintenance of such institutional archives lies firmly with institutions rather than individual translators, the born-digital nature of contemporary translation processes may make little difference to structures of power that underpin the creation of translation archives. One potential remedy to this would be further

education on the principles and importance of archiving through outreach and knowledge exchange projects with industry stakeholders, thereby developing industry standard best practice and presenting an opportunity for researchers to begin collating future translation archives.

However, the aforementioned copyright challenges say nothing about the individual affectations, practices and desires of individual translators. For instance, if there is “no obligation” for LSPs to archive all the files with which they work, despite effective record-keeping being essential to the success of an LSP (Walker 2022, 104–105), then the practices of individual translators may be even less consistent than those of LSPs. Moreover, translators may not actually retain access to resources such as translation memories if they were created and shared by a work-giver, particularly if only partial access was given through the sharing of project packages within a translation tool, if access was granted through the cloud, or if the translator was not permitted to retain such files as part of their contractual work agreements. Even in the case of files such as written online correspondence, access to company-owned communication channels (such as Slack servers) will likely only be granted whilst a translator is actively “on the books” and emails may be deleted either by an individual or automatically by a service-provider after a certain amount of time has passed (typically to save storage space), if the person even retains access to a particular email account. As with the creation of institutional archives, the education of translators on how to archive and store their professional data in the long term presents an opportunity to remedy these challenges — particularly through the inclusion of archiving and data management on translator training programs. Nevertheless, even with sufficient training on the part of the translator, the ethics of what files and correspondence may be shared publicly within an archive, as well as obtaining consent from living individuals or companies who are still trading for their halves of these dialogues, may also prevent the archiving of such materials

(at least in public-facing or open access archives). Indeed, as discussed by Jaillant (2022), born-digital archives of email correspondence often cannot be made available to public access due to the personal and potentially sensitive or confidential nature of their contents, and resulting research outputs can be difficult to publish due to privacy concerns even if research can take place (420).

Of course, much of the above discussion is angled towards commercial translation activities with the involvement of LSPs and translation technology as this is an area of translation studies that is both growing and deserving of further attention. Indeed, given the ideological focus of translator studies on “personal experience” (Munday 2014, 12) and presenting a “social” history from below (Magnússon and Szijártó 2013), the opportunities presented by the born-digital nature of contemporary translation practices and workflows are many but also require theoretical and methodological consideration now. Even in less commercial spheres, such as literary translation, the use of computer software and translation technology *may* lead to an increase in archival data for translation historians of the future to study the translation workflows and networks of translators working in the twenty-first century. But we cannot assume that the proliferation of technology and digital data will automatically result in the growth of translation archives. Rather, we must work with translation professionals to preserve and retain data that can provide future insights into the current world in an ethical and sustainable way.

3.2 Born-digital archives of translators

Where born-digital archives of translation processes and professional practice may remain under the control of institutions like LSPs, one area that remains under the control of individual translators is the materials they publish and share themselves. Such materials can

be conceptualized as a “translator’s archive,” which typically comprises materials including the “composition of the translations themselves, and of other writing products and practices, in the context of the translator’s life” (Constanza Guzmán 2020). In born-digital contexts, however, this archive can be expanded to include materials such as social media posts or personal websites. As noted by Garde-Hansen, social media platforms such as Facebook can be viewed as a “database of users and for users,” whereby “each user’s page is a database of their life” (2009, 141) and so can be understood as personal archives pertaining to the everyday lives of the translators who use them.

While social media posts and activity present an opportunity to preserve “a knowledge of what happened,” however, the primary challenge becomes how to preserve, organize and maintain the huge amount of data found on such platforms without encroaching on an individual’s intellectual property rights and rights to anonymity (Stock 2016). Indeed, even within traditional archival research methodologies, questions about the ethics of microscopic investigations into individuals remain, particularly in terms of people who did not publish and record details of their lives of their own volition but rather constitute what Laite defines as “the legions of the unpublished dead,” whose records were taken and archived because they were “legally compelled to do so” (2020, 979). In such cases, even a careful and sensitive history may still “commodify individual lives” to weave a particular narrative that supports our own academic and publishing careers (977) when we cannot be certain that the individuals would want to be studied and used as evidence to support our academic narratives (979).

The same dilemma rings even more true in contemporary social media contexts, where it can be easy to harvest huge quantities of data without actually receiving consent from the users involved and who may not even expect that their social media posts could be used in such a way. For instance, would a translator who tweets about an ongoing project, asks for advice

from colleagues on a particular translation issue, or shares comical or interesting examples from texts they are working on reasonably expect these posts to be quoted within a study into translation strategies and tactics without giving explicit consent? While they may have been happy to be held accountable to their followers or connections on a particular platform, does that extend to public and academic interrogation in broader contexts? Even if the translator themselves does consent, can the researcher be certain that the rights holder for the text in question is happy for extracts from their work to be used in this way?³ As a frequent user of Twitter myself, I have had particularly savvy clients include clauses forbidding me from discussing a translation on social media at all, so we cannot assume that clients who do not think about such potentialities are implicitly consenting — particularly if the translator who made this content public is themselves acting unethically. Thus, as put so simply yet aptly by Desjardins, participant consent and ethics clearance “are not always givens” in online and social-media research contexts (2017, 100).

In terms of obtaining consent from users of social media, some scholars have argued that implicit consent can be inferred through a user’s posting of public-facing content on a given platform where that platform includes the potential for user data to be used in research within their terms of service, such as Twitter (Gold 2020). The longevity of this implicit consent is difficult to ascertain, however, as the dynamic and ephemeral nature of social media data means that this consent can only be assumed if it reflects the current state of the data in question. If a user removes their data from the publicly available platform, then the retention and use of this data “breaches participant autonomy since it does not respect their current wishes to withdraw data from availability” (Gold 2020, 6). What’s more, the public availability of data does not render any and all use of that data for research as ethical (boyd

³ For risk of engaging in the exact behavior I am problematizing here, I refrain from citing specific examples but have encountered plenty through my engagement with academics and translators on Twitter and LinkedIn.

and Crawford 2012) and we cannot conflate agreeing to a platform's terms of service as informed consent in research, particularly given that many users report not reading the terms of services thoroughly (Townsend and Wallace 2016). To protect the identity of some "unwitting participants," scholars may choose to fully anonymize social-media data quoted and referenced within research outputs to protect the anonymity of creators (Townsend and Wallace 2016). Nevertheless, even in such cases an online search for the specific wording of a given post can reveal the anonymized user with minimal effort, should that data still be available online, and extreme care must be taken when the reproduction of social media data poses a risk of harm to any participants.

Given the ethical risks involved in using social-media data, then, how might such sources be archived and accessed for future research? One answer to this lies in the viewing of social-media accounts as personal archives whereby "ordinary individuals" become "public archivists of their own histories" through the posting of historical documents such as texts, images and videos (King 2012, 23). Notably, the multimodal combination of image and text in many social-media posts presents a form of "written orality" (Stock's [2016, 217] translation of "Geschriebene Umgangssprache" [Kilian 2010, 62]) where users can add narrative to an image or video through the addition of text commentary in much the same way as going through and discussing a photo album (Hajek 2012). Consequently, social-media posts can be understood as "overtly mediated testimonies" alongside sources such as the "post-hoc accounts and interviews" (Munday 2014, 68) already accounted for in methodologies such as microhistory.

Where a translator of interest can be identified and consent for the inclusion of their social-media posts can be obtained, then, such personal archives present an exciting opportunity to gain a fuller picture of a translator's work, life and identity as performed online that goes beyond seeing translators solely through the lens of their profession. Furthermore, consensual

collaborations with translators from social groups and backgrounds who may have been marginalized in traditional archives to produce personal translator archives can empower and give visibility to these individuals and their stories. Nevertheless, the performative nature of this social media activity is the greatest challenge it presents for such research, as the choice of what an individual posts and shares online serves as an “overt mediation,” in Munday’s terms (2014), of the breadth of their lived experience. That is to say, such archives can only reveal what the user was willing to share on social media, thereby leaving many gaps and questions. The question of what aspects of their professional lives translators choose to make visible in their digital files, and so what archives comprising born-digital sources such as social media posts and email correspondence can reveal, remains an enticing avenue for future research.

4 A digital future for archives of translation and translators?

It is often assumed that digital research means big data and quantitative analysis. However, as historians such as Putnam (2016) and Laite (2020) make abundantly clear, the digitization of almost all the processes that underpin scholarly research fundamentally necessitates that we think about how the digital impacts our work. Furthermore, the ubiquity of digital and online technology across our working and personal lives means an abundance of new types of data with which to construct archives of translation and translators. As discussed throughout this article, however, the use of digitized and born-digital archives is not a neutral choice and requires further discussion and problematization in translation studies — particularly in terms of who is included in these archives, what kind of research questions and topics we are able to address in digital research contexts, and who undertakes this work. Indeed, while the disintermediation afforded by digital and online technologies allows us to use our peripheral vision as researchers more efficiently, and so presents new opportunities to reveal and

research the less visible histories of translation currently buried in the archives of the world, it also risks the colonization of local archives by scholars far removed from these local centers of knowledge, language competency and research expertise, as well as the marginalization of the very local experts who are best positioned to work with these materials.

As such, our current digital reality is a factor with which we must all contend and our own positionality as researchers working within that reality cannot be ignored. Through our use of search engines, online publication platforms and social media we are both active participants in the digital world and researchers seeking to look from the outside in. This leaves us open to new ethical challenges, as well as theoretical and methodological blind spots. Within research that aims to reveal the networks of power and agency within which our subjects were embedded, it has always been key to acknowledge the “rules of the game that the historian is following” (Levi 2012, 124). Thus, now that the rules have changed and the world has transformed into a digital one, we must again make our positions within this new reality known and wear our ideologies on our sleeves. For instance, if we claim that translation and translators have long been marginalized in history (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012: xiii–xiv) and their traces have been “hard to find in many collections” (Munday 2014, 71) then let us assert the relevance and value of translation as an object of study for the future through the digital. Indeed, it is in the digital that we find an abundance of both new and old data that we can access in innovative and exciting ways — if we can only take the time, care and responsibility to store, preserve and access these data ethically and sustainably.

References

- Akashi, Motoko. 2018. *Contesting Invisibility: Japanese Celebrity Translators and the Impact of their Fame*. PhD diss. University of East Anglia.
- Atefmehr, Zahra, and Farzaneh Farahzad. 2022. "Microhistorical research in translator studies: an archival methodology." *The Translator* 28 (3): 251–262.
- Bardet, Mary. 2021. "Literary detection in the archives: Revealing Jeanne Heywood (1856–1909)." In *Literary Translator Studies*, edited by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, 41–54. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Ben-Ari, Nitsa. 2021. "The Translator's Note revisited." In *Literary Translator Studies*, edited by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, 157–182. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- boyd, danah, and Kate Crawford. 2012. "Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon." *Information, Communication and Society* 15 (5): 662–679.
- Chesterman, Andrew. 2009. "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies." *Hermes* 42. <https://tidsskrift.dk/her/article/view/96844/145601>.
- Claus, Peter, and John Marriott, eds. 2012. *History: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice*. Harlow: Pearson.
- Constanza Guzmán, María. 2020. "(re)Visiting the Translator's Archive: Toward a Genealogy of Translation in the Americas." *Palimpsestes: Revue de traduction* 34: 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.4000/palimpsestes.5538>

Cordingley, Anthony, and Patrick Hersant. 2021. "Translation archives: an introduction." *Meta* 66 (1): 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1079318ar>

Dam, Helle V., and Karen Korning Zethsen. 2012. "Translators in international organizations. A special breed of high-status professionals? Danish EU translators as a case in point." *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 7 (2): 211–232.

Delisle, Jean, and Judith Woodsworth. 2012. "Introduction." In *Translators Through History*, edited by Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth: xiii–xxv. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Desjardins, Renée. 2017. *Translation and Social Media: In Theory, in Training and in Professional Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Feltrin-Morris, Marella. 2018. "Welcome Intrusions: Capturing the Unexpected in Translators' Prefaces to Dante's Divine Comedy." *Tusaaji: A Translation Review* 6 (1): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1925-5624.40348>

Fornalczyk-Lipska, Anna. 2021. "Translators of children's literature and their voice in prefaces and interviews." In *Literary Translator Studies*, edited by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, 183-198. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Gallagher, Catherine, and Stephen Greenblatt. 2000. *Practicing New Historicism*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Galleti, Chiara. 2013. "Four-Handed Performances in Children's Literature: Translation and Adaptation in the Italian and English Editions of Tove Jansson's Picture Books." In *Authorial and Editorial Voices in Translation 1 - Collaborative Relationships between*

Authors, Translators, and Performers, edited by Hanne Jansen and Anna Wegener, 143–164. Montréal: Éditions québécoises de l’oeuvre.

Garde-Hansen, Joanne. 2009. “MyMemories? Personal digital archive fever and Facebook.” In *Save As... Digital Memories*, edited by Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading, 135–150. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1976. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller*. Translated by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi. London: Routledge.

Gold, Nicolas. 2020. *Using Twitter Data in Research: Guidance for Researchers and Ethics Reviewers*. Accessed 28 March 2023. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/data-protection/sites/data-protection/files/using-twitter-research-v1.0.pdf>

Hajek, Andrea. 2012. *Facebook and the Digital (R)evolution of a Protest Generation*. Accessed 28 March 2023. <https://www.deliberatelyconsidered.com/2012/07/facebook-and-the-digital-revolution-of-a-protest-generation/>

Hitchcock, Tim. 2015. *Voices of Authority: Towards a History from below in Patchwork*. Accessed 20 March 2023. <http://historyonics.blogspot.com/2015/04/voices-of-authority-towards-history.html>.

Holmes, James. 2004. “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies.” In *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed, edited by Lawrence Venuti, 180–192. London and New York: Routledge.

Hu, Gengshen. 2004. “Translator- Centredness.” *Perspectives* 12 (2): 106–117.

Jaillant, Lise. 2022. “How can we make born-digital and digitised archives more accessible? Identifying obstacles and solutions.” *Archival Science* 22: 417–436.

Jakobsen, Arnt Lykke. 2017. "Translation Process Research." In *The Handbook of Translation and Cognition*, edited by John W. Schweiter and Aline Ferreira: 19–49. Hoboken, NJ and Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Jansen, Hanne. 2017. "Unraveling multiple translatorship through an e-mail correspondence: Who is having a say?" In *Textual and Contextual Voices of Translation*, edited by Cecilia Alvstad, Annjo K. Greenall, Hanne Jansen, and Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov, 133–157. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kaindl, Klaus, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, eds. 2021. *Literary Translator Studies*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kassouf, Ana Lúcia, and Lucas Ronconi. 2022. "Obstacles that Southern Researchers Face in Publishing in Economics Journals, and Why the Research Community Should Care." *Partnership for Economic Policy Working Papers Series: 2022-23*.
<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/project/20605>

Kilian, Jörg. 2010. "T@stentöne. Geschriebene Umgangssprache in computervermittelter Kommunikation. Historisch-kritische Ergänzungen zu einem neuen Feld der linguistischen Forschung." In *Deutsche Gegenwartssprache: Globalisierung, Neue Medien, Sprachkritik*, edited by Iris Forster and Tobias Heinz, 63–96. Stuttgart: Reclam.

King, Michelle T. 2012. "Working with/in the archives." In *Research Methods for History*, edited by Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire, 13–29. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Koskinen, Kaisa. 2008. *Translation Institutions: An Ethnographic Study of EU Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.

Laite, Julia. 2020. "The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age." *Journal of Social History* 53 (4): 963–989.

Lambert, Joseph. 2023. *Translation Ethics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Levi, Giovanni. 1992. "On Microhistory." In *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, edited by Peter Burke, 97–119. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Levi, Giovanni. 2012. "Microhistory and the Recovery of Complexity." In *Historical Knowledge: In Quest of Theory, Method and Evidence*, edited by Susanna Fellman and Marjatta Rahikainen, 121–132. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

López, Belén Santana, and Crispulo Travieso Rodríguez. 2021. "Staging the literary translator in bibliographic catalogs." In *Literary Translator Studies*, edited by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, 89–104. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Magnússon, Sigurður Gylfi, and István M. Szigjártó. 2013. *What Is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Magnússon, Sigurður Gylfi. 2006. "Social History – Cultural History – Alltagsgeschichte – Microhistory: In-Between Methodologies and Conceptual Frameworks." *Journal of Microhistory*.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20110727083357/http://www.microhistory.org/pivot/entry.php?id=20>

Meylaerts, Reine. 2013. "The Multiple Lives of Translators." *TTR: traduction, terminologie, redaction* 26 (2): 103–128.

- Moorkens, Joss, and David Lewis. 2019. "Copyright and the Reuse of Translation as Data." In *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Technology*, edited by Minako O'Hagan, 469–481. London and New York: Routledge.
- Munday, Jeremy. 2014. "Using primary sources to produce a microhistory of translation and translators: theoretical and methodological concerns." *The Translator* 20 (1): 64–80.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. 1992. *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Putnam, Lara. 2016. "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast." *The American Historical Review* 121 (2): 377–402.
- Pym, Anthony. 1998. *Method in Translation History*. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Pym, Anthony. 2009. "Humanizing Translation History." *HERMES - Journal of Language and Communication in Business* 22 (42): 23-48.
<https://doi.org/10.7146/hjlc.v22i42.96845>
- Romein, C. Annemieke, Max Kemman, James Baker, Michel De Gruijter, Albert Meroño-Peñuela, Thorsten Ries, Ruben Ros, and Stefania Scagliola. 2020. "State of the Field: Digital History." *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* 105 (365): 291–312.
- Roser, Max, Hannah Ritchie, and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina. 2020. *Internet*. Accessed 20 March 2023. <https://ourworldindata.org/internet>.
- Schlager, Daniela. 2021. "Translators' multipositionality, teloi and goals: The case of Harriet Martineau." In *Literary Translator Studies*, edited by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, 199–214. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Sharpe, Jim. 1991. "History from Below." In *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, edited by Peter Burke, 25–42. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Stock, Mechtild. 2016. "Facebook: A Source for Microhistory?" In *Facets of Facebook: Use and Users*, edited by Kathrin Knautz and Katsiaryna S. Baran, 210–240. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Stowe, Anna. 2021. "Archive, narrative, and loss." *Meta* 66 (1): 178-191.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1079326ar>
- Tachtiris, Corine, and Priscilla Layne. 2023. "Special Focus Introduction: Centering Black Cultural Production in Translation." *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* 47 (1). <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.2257>
- Townsend, Leanne, and Claire Wallace. 2016. *Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics*. Accessed 28 March 2023. https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_487729_smxx.pdf
- Turkel, William. 2006. *Methodology for the Infinite Archive*. Accessed 20 March 2023. <http://digitalhistoryhacks.blogspot.com/2006/04/methodology-for-infinite-archive.html>.
- Vanacker, Beatrijs. 2021. "Mediating the female transla(u)t(h)orial *posture*: Elisabeth Wolff-Bekker." In *Literary Translator Studies*, edited by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager, 215–232. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 1995/2008/2018. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wakabayashi, Judy. 2019. "Digital approaches to translation history." *Translation and Interpreting* 11 (2). <https://www.trans-int.org/index.php/transint/article/view/977>

Walker, Callum. 2022. *Translation Project Management*. London and New York: Routledge.

Williams, Caroline. 2008. "Personal Papers: Perceptions and Practices." In *What are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader*, edited by Louise Craven, 53–70. Aldershot & Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Address for correspondence

Peter Jonathan Freeth

London Metropolitan University

Guildhall School of Business and Law

Tower Building

166-220 Holloway Road

London

N7 8DB

p.freeth@londonmet.ac.uk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3169-4853>