

# Web Archiving as Sustainability

## *Preserving Information and Building Student Skills through a Collaborative Web Archiving Project*

Andrea Schuler, Digital Collections Librarian, Tisch Library, Tufts University, [andrea.schuler@tufts.edu](mailto:andrea.schuler@tufts.edu)

### **NUTRITION INFORMATION**

Increasing amounts of information regarding sustainability and the environment are available only online and can change or disappear in an instant. Subject-based web archiving offers an opportunity to preserve selected websites as they exist at a particular moment in time, creating a searchable body of information on a given topic. This collaborative semester-long project brings together students and a librarian to build a web archive, using student course-based research to illuminate themes and specific websites to capture.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Students understand the significance and volatile nature of websites as information sources for environmental topics.
- Students gain familiarity with web archives as a source.
- Students understand their role as contributors to a scholarly project.

### **NUMBER SERVED**

This recipe was tested with undergraduate classes of 10–20 students, but could apply to other student populations and class sizes.

### **COOKING TIME**

Class visit of 15–30 minutes to introduce the project, plus student work over the course of one semester.

### **DIETARY GUIDELINES**

Preserving websites through a web archiving project is itself an act that supports and increases sustainability: working now to preserve vital information for the future. It is indeed particularly urgent given the potentially volatile or controversial nature of some environmental or sustainability-related topics and the likelihood of their disappearing from the web. Engaging students with the work offers an opportunity to introduce students to concepts of web archiving and information literacy around websites. It provides them with the opportunity to directly contribute to a scholarly project, while also helping to build unique library collections.

### **ACRL FRAMES ADDRESSED**

- Information Has Value
- Scholarship as Conversation

These frames provide an experience especially important for undergraduate students who do not always have the opportunity to feel as

if they are creating, rather than consuming, scholarship.

### **INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT**

- Access to Archive-It or other web archiving service
- Pilot web archive collection created by the librarian
- Input form for student-gathered links

### **PREPARATION**

Identify a specific sustainability-related topic that is relevant to the course you are working with or that is broadly significant to your institution, campus curriculum, or existing library collection strengths. Search collections at Archive-It (<https://archive-it.org/>) to ensure that material on that topic is not already being comprehensively collected. If you do not have an existing relationship with a class, identify relevant courses and invite faculty members to partner for a semester. Create a web-based form to capture student-submitted links (an example form is included with this recipe).

## COOKING METHOD

1. **Create a pilot web archive collection.** After identifying your specific topic within sustainability or environmentalism, draft a scope for your collection: identify what types of sites you will collect and whether there is a specific topical, geographic, or temporal focus. Identify a small set of initial seeds (websites to archive) by identifying relevant search terms and following links from pages you've identified. Build a small collection in Archive-It or the web archiving service of your choice.
2. **Determine where the project fits in with the course.** Meet with the faculty member to identify the scope of students' participation and how the project fits into the course structure. Ideally, the faculty member will write a brief assignment into the syllabus. An option that can easily be incorporated into the existing framework of the course frames the assignment in this way: While doing research on their chosen topics over the course of the semester, students identify 3–5 websites that they feel would benefit from preservation. Students submit the sites to the library, along with brief meta-data and descriptions.
3. **Visit the class.** Schedule a short visit (15–30 minutes) to the class to introduce the project, the concept of web archiving, and considerations in evaluating and selecting websites.

## Environmental Justice, Security, and Sustainability

Use this form to submit websites for Tisch Library's Environmental Justice web archiving project. Please submit 3-5 sites that you have identified as being important for context or research around your topic and that should be preserved for the future.

Note that you must complete this form one time for each link you would like to submit (i.e. if you have 3 links, you will submit the form 3 times)

Any questions? Email Andrea Schuler, Digital Collections Librarian, at [andrea.schuler@tufts.edu](mailto:andrea.schuler@tufts.edu).

\* Required

1. Your name \*

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2. Website URL to archive \*

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3. Please provide a brief description of the site that could be used to describe it on the Archive-It web archive public interface (see <https://archive-it.org/collections/7635> for description examples) \*

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4. Why do you think this site is important for the EJ movement? \*

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5. Is there anything else we should know about this site?

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Figure. Input form for student-gathered links, created in Google Forms

For the “why” of the project, consider highlighting the amount of web-based content and its ephemeral nature, quick stats on link rot, and possible future uses of the collected sites. Explain the difference between the Wayback Machine and curated web archive collections. Discuss the types of sites to consider and factors to use in evaluating websites. Explain the process of submitting links, library evaluation of the submissions, and why some might not ultimately be able to be crawled. Stress that the student’s judgment and knowledge of the topic are the driving factor and that there are no “right” or “wrong” links.

4. **Students submit sites.** Share with the class a link to the submission form that you’ve created. Students will gather links and submit via the form by the date established by the faculty member. This date may be the same as the due date of their final class project.

### CLEANUP

After the students submit their chosen sites to the library, library staff evaluate the list of submitted sites for appropriateness and ability to be crawled for the archive and add to the web archive as applicable. Future library collecting efforts may focus on topics raised by the student-submitted links.

### ALLERGY WARNING

Sites submitted by students may be out of scope or unable to be crawled for technical

reasons. The sites may also become no longer accessible in the time between when they are submitted and when they are evaluated by library staff.

### CHEF’S NOTE

This recipe was tested focusing specifically on environmental justice websites, selected due to relevance to the campus community and curriculum and to build on existing library collection strengths. Selecting a more narrowly focused topic would aid in developing a scope and ensuring that sites submitted adhere to that scope.