

The Singularity of New Media

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Singularity of New Media

GARY HALL

The metaphysicians of Tlön do not seek for the truth or even for verisimilitude, but rather for the astounding. They judge that metaphysics is a branch of fantastic literature. They know that a system is nothing more than the subordination of all aspects of the universe to any one such aspect.

—JORGE LUIS BORGES, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”

This chapter arises out of my research on specific forms and uses of new media. The particular form of new media I want to concentrate on here is that associated with open access, and my own involvement with a cultural studies open access archive called CSeARCH (which stands for Cultural Studies e-Archive).¹ For those unfamiliar with the term, open access can be defined as “putting peer-reviewed scientific and scholarly literature on the internet [in either open access journals or e-print repositories such as CSeARCH]. Making it available free of charge and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. Removing the barriers to serious research.”

Although I consider open access to be an important topic in its own right, exploring it in detail as one specific form of new media also provides me with a way of responding to two main criticisms that anyone dealing with the impact of digital technology has risked facing in recent years. The first is that too “much writing on new media [is] concerned with other writing on new media rather than new media itself.”² The second is that such writing tends to point to vague possible future consequences of new media, without examining specific material instances of it in any real detail.

Putting it all too crudely, we could say that a first phase of writing on new media, characterized by 1990s descriptions of the exciting future that was perceived as being ushered in by cyberculture, cyberspace, cyberpunk, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, artificial life, and

so on, served to introduce the field to the academy, especially the humanities and social sciences. However, as Mark Poster's criticisms of Jacques Derrida's account of new media technologies, and of virtual reality especially, attest, new media theory at this point tended to be a little on the general and indeed transcendental side. For Poster, writing in his 2001 book *What's the Matter with the Internet?*, Derrida, although he senses the "need to account for differential materialities of the media," "tends to preserve the philosopher's taste for the general over the cultural analyst's penchant for the particular," providing "strings of hyphenated terms, 'tele-technology' or 'techno-scientifico-economico-media,' that vaguely point in a direction without guiding the virtual traveller in any particular direction."⁴

In recent years there has therefore been an interesting and, I believe, at times quite useful impetus in certain strands of new media theory to move away from the broad, hyperbolic, "the future is now" tendency of the 1990s, toward the development of a more focused, detailed and specific analysis of particular media platforms (websites, cell phones, MP3 players), application programs (word processors, Internet browsers, graphic design tools) and software (compilers, program text editors, operating systems). We can see Katherine Hayles arguing very much along these lines with regard to literature in her 2002 book *Writing Machines*: "We are near the beginning of a theory of media-specific analysis in literary studies," she writes. "Many people . . . are now . . . moving from print-orientated perspectives to frameworks that implicitly require the comparison of electronic textuality and print to clarify the specificities of each."⁵ It is an approach that takes far more account of the materiality of digital media, even though it may see that materiality as an "emergent property," as does Hayles,⁶ and that engages with specific instances of media technologies rather than with new media as a general category.

Yet even though this second phase, which Hayles characterizes in terms of "a theory of media-specific analysis,"⁷ is only just beginning to emerge, I already want to make a case for the development of a third phase or generation of new media theory. I want to do so because, for all the emphasis on the "need to account for differential materialities" and specificities, it seems to me that insufficient attention is still being paid to the difference and specificity of much new media.

Let me illustrate what I mean in the following way. In *Information Please*, Mark Poster—attempting to provide precisely the kind of clear directions he sees Derrida's work as lacking—hypothesizes that it is

very much possible that in the future the sharing or gifting ethos of peer-to-peer (P2P) networks will become a prominent, perhaps even the dominant, mode of cultural exchange:

An infrastructure is being set into place for a day when cultural objects will become variable and users will become creators as well. Such an outcome is not just around the corner since for generations the population has been accustomed to fixed cultural objects. But as we pass beyond the limits of modern culture, with its standardized, mass produced consumer culture, we can anticipate more and more individuals and groups taking advantage of the facility with which digital cultural objects are changed, stored, and distributed in the network. A different sort of public space from that of modernity is emerging, a heterotopia in Foucault's term, and peer-to-peer networks constitute an important ingredient in that development, one worthy of safeguarding and promoting for that reason alone. If copyright laws need to be changed and media corporations need to disappear or transform themselves, this result must be evaluated in relation to a new regime of culture that is now possible.⁸

When it comes to digital culture, Poster is of course by no means alone in having such ideas. Many people have put forward similar hypotheses. They include the German Oekonux debate of 2000–2002, which attempted to develop the principles involved in the production of free software into a plan for the organization of society;⁹ Brian Holmes with his slogan “open source for the operating systems of the earth” and the associated discussion of “open source as a metaphor for new institutions”;¹⁰ and Michael Hardt and Toni Negri's positioning of the decision-making capacity of the multitude as being analogous to the collaborative development of the open source movement, and their arguing for a form of “society whose source code is revealed so that we can all work collaboratively to solve its bugs and create new, better social programs.”¹¹ And, to be sure, the idea that the relations of production and distribution associated with peer-to-peer networks can be scaled up to form a new regime of culture, or new kinds of networked institutions, or even a plan for the future organization of society in which cultural, political, and economic decisions are made in an open, distributed, participatory, cooperative, networked fashion, is a seductive one. No doubt grand historical narratives of this sort—in which the relatively fixed and stable imagined communities associated with classical ideas of the nation-state are regarded as gradually being superseded by more complex, fluid, and mobile networks of people that are frequently constituted strategically—also have a certain strategic value themselves. Certainly, if peer-to-peer networks and open source are to

be considered two important ingredients in the emergence of any such new regime, I would insist upon open access being another. Nevertheless, there are at least two questions I want to raise as far as any such a hypothesis is concerned.

To begin with, if a new, post-“modern” (as distinct from postmodern) regime of this kind does emerge, what will it look like? Instead of being a realm in which culture in general takes on the distributed, networked, participative, collaborative character of much new media, I wonder if it is not more likely to assume the form of a mixed and (as Poster’s reference to Foucault indeed suggests) heterogeneous economy, with different media, both “new” and “old,” and the related infrastructures, operating in a relation of coexistence and even at times convergence, but also perhaps of divergence, competition, and antagonism.

This in turn connects to a further question. Even if such a new form of “public space”—different from that of modernity and derived at least in part from the gifting ethos of digital culture’s peer-to-peer networks—is possible, would the various ingredients that go to make up this “heterotopia,” in which we could perhaps include peer-to-peer file sharing, open source, free software, open content, the creative commons and open access, all contribute to such an open, distributed, networked, regime in more or less the same way? Or, just as there are obvious commonalities and points of connection between them, would there not be areas of friction, conflict, and even incommensurability, too? What is more, this is a possibility that need not necessarily be viewed pessimistically. In fact, I would argue that the specificity of politics, in a pluralistic, liberal democracy at least, is actually marked by a certain refusal to eliminate conflict and antagonism.¹²

Now, as you might imagine, I cannot answer these questions here. If for no other reason, their future-oriented nature makes that impossible. The point I am trying to make in raising them is that, if we *are* to substitute the literary and cultural critic’s penchant for the particular for the philosopher’s taste for the general, it is not enough to take account of the difference and specificity of the digital medium of reproduction: its material form and properties. Attention also needs to be paid to the many distinctions and divergences that exist between the various ingredients that go to make up digital culture at any one time. This is something I have tried to do in my research by emphasizing that the situation regarding the digital reproduction of scholarly literature is in many respects very different from that of the peer-to-peer sharing of music files. Open access is capable of working in the manner it does because

of the specific character of both academia and open access at the moment: That is, because the majority of scholars do not expect, or need, to be paid directly or substantially for their writings (their reward comes more from the increase in feedback and recognition and enhancement to their reputation that publishing open access offers), which means they are happy to make their work available for free in a way many for-profit authors are not; and because the e-print self-archiving system enables academics to retain copyright over their work, or at least avoid infringing most publishers' copyright agreements, texts can be distributed freely, rather than being stolen or pirated, as is often the case with regard to music. In this respect one could say that the open-access publishing and archiving of academic scholarship and research constitutes a strategic use of a specific form of digital culture within particular institutional and sociopolitical contexts (although, as we shall see, it cannot be reduced to those contexts). It is not something that is necessarily generalizable or transferable to other forms and practices of digital culture—the peer-to-peer sharing of music and video files, the decentered electronic distribution of films, the digital storage of visual art, the online publication of science-fiction literature and so on—although it may be.¹³

This does not mean that all these various forms and practices are absolutely different and heterogeneous. The very weblike structure of the web often makes it difficult to determine where texts begin or end, all the cutting and pasting, grafting and transplanting, internal and external linking that takes place blurring the boundaries between the text and its surroundings, its material support, but also between other media and cultural texts, techniques, forms, and genres, making such boundaries almost impossible to determine. Indeed, many instances of digital media such as Amazon's peer-reviewing, Wikipedia's open editing, YouTube's video sharing, and Flickr's photo sharing have a number of features in common with both peer-to-peer and open access: not least that they all make use of digital networks; are dependent on an open, social process of collaboration and cooperation; are made up of user-generated content; and have the potential for the individual user to be able to create, alter, and modify that content as well as reproduce, store, and distribute it. Together with their material differences, however (as represented by the particular platform, hardware, software, operating system, programming code, graphical interface, and so on), I would argue that they also operate in different ways, situations, and contexts.

They are therefore not necessarily capable of having the same or comparable effects.

Wikipedia, for instance, in contrast to most other instances of Web 2.0, including both YouTube and Facebook, is controlled and run by a nonprofit organization (the Wikipedia Foundation), funded primarily through private donations, and releases its content under the GNU General Public License. Meanwhile Web 2.0 (including Wikipedia this time) tends to be different again from many peer-to-peer file sharing networks such as Kazaa, Gnutella, EDonkey, FastTrack, EMule, and BitTorrent, especially those that are peer-run and “pure” or decentralized in form, since the latter are distributed, commons-based systems which are not owned or controlled by anyone. This is why many more instances of Web 2.0 than peer-to-peer networking have been turned into a commodity and bought and sold by the likes of Rupert Murdoch, Yahoo!, and Google.¹⁴ In fact some have gone so far as to characterize Web 2.0 as “capitalism’s preemptive attack against P2P systems.”¹⁵ But even peer-to-peer networks are not all the same, for there are significant differences between them.¹⁶

So we cannot just say that the characteristics of much contemporary new media—their networked form, reliance on open, social processes of collaboration, use of user-generated content, and so forth—mean that it is going to lead to a new form of culture and society. Despite their similarities, Wikipedia, Web 2.0, peer-to-peer, and open access are not necessarily capable of having the same or comparable effects. Instead, those effects would have to be worked out by paying close attention to the specificity and indeed singularity of each in relation to a particular context. Obviously, this is not something I can do for all the examples of digital culture I have mentioned, not here, or even in a book-length project. That is why in the case of my recent research I have taken the tactical decision to focus on just one, which perhaps has the potential to be of most concern to the scholarly community: the open access publishing and archiving of research literature. Even here things are not simple, however, since the open access movement is itself neither unified nor self-identical. There are significant differences even among the various flavors of open access—John Willinsky has identified at least ten.¹⁷ This is why I often focus on the model that is being invented and creatively explored by the specific digital repository I am involved with.

One of the things I am particularly interested in with this research is the way in which digital texts—with their lack of fixity, stability, and

permanence relative to time and place, their undermining of the boundaries separating authors, editors, producers, users, consumers, critics/commentators, humans, and machines, and their ability to incorporate sound and both still and moving images—contain the potential, not merely to remediate older media forms, and thus deliver an unchanged and preexisting content, such as literature or cultural studies, albeit in a new way, but to transform fundamentally that content, and with it our relationship to knowledge. In this respect, the specificity of open access archiving resides for me, among other things, in the way it enables researchers to circumvent a lot of the restrictions placed on access to research and publications by copyright and licensing agreements, and thus provide a response to many of the issues and dilemmas that have been presented to scholars by an increasingly market driven and commercial academic publishing industry. Accordingly, open-access archiving is able to offer a number of advantages and benefits to academics. As far as the cultural studies repository I am involved with is concerned, these include enabling authors to:

- publish their research immediately upon completion, before it comes out in either journal or book form (which can take between nine months and two years from submission of the final manuscript, sometimes longer);
- make their work available from (almost) any desktop, in any home, university, library or school, twenty-four hours a day, to anyone who has access to the Internet;
- provide their audience, including fellow writers and researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the general public, with as many copies of their work as they need simply by supplying their readers with the URL where they can find them on the net and download them for free or print them if they prefer;
- increase the size of their readership, and hence potentially both the amount of feedback and recognition they receive and the size of their reputation. As an increasing number of studies suggest, research published as open access is far more likely to be read and cited than if it is published in ink-on-paper form only;¹⁸
- potentially increase reading figures, feedback, impact, and even sales of their paper publications: Rather than detract from them, as many commercial publishers fear, publishing on the web frequently increases sales of paper copies;
- publish books and journals that have too small a potential readership, or too long a tail in terms of sales, to make them cost-effective for a paper publisher to take on;

make their research “permanently” available, so that authors no longer need concern themselves with the thought that their work may go out of print or become otherwise unavailable;¹⁹

republish texts that are rare or forgotten, or that have gone out of print; revise and update their publications whenever they wish, so that authors need no longer be anxious about their work going out of date;

distribute their texts to an extremely wide audience, rather than reaching merely the specific audiences their publishers think they can market and sell their work to: in the case of cultural studies, often primarily the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia;

link to underlying, background, and related research featured on blogs, wikis, and individual and institutional webpages;

fulfill their obligations to funding bodies easily and quickly. In 2006 the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) followed the lead set by the likes of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, CERN, and the Wellcome Trust, who have for some time now requested researchers to make their research available on an open access platform. The ESRC made the depositing of research in such an OA repository or journal a condition for the award of funding from October of that year onwards. Indeed, only one of the seven UK research councils has not established such an open-access mandate.

The specificity of open access also lies in the way an archive of this kind determines what can be collected, stored, and preserved, and the particular nature of the questions this determination raises. It is important to realize that an archive is not a neutral institution but part of specific intellectual, cultural, technical, and economic/financial networks. An archive’s medium, in particular—be it paper, celluloid, or tape—is often perceived as constituting merely a disinterested carrier for the archived material. Yet the medium of an archive actually helps to determine and shape its content; a content, moreover, that is performed differently each time, in each particular context in which it is accessed or in which material is retrieved from the archive. An open-access archive is no exception in this respect. Its specific form, medium, and structure shape what it preserves, classifies, and performs as legitimate scholarship, in both time and scope. Consequently, a digital cultural studies archive is not just a means of reproducing and confirming existing conceptions of cultural studies: of selecting, collecting, gathering together, interpreting, filtering, organizing, classifying, and preserving what cultural studies already is or is perceived as having been. It is

partly that. But it is also a means of producing and performing cultural studies: both what it is going to look like in the past, and what there is a chance for cultural studies to have been in the future.

Interestingly, this argument also applies to standards for preparing metadata, so that texts can be easily indexed and searched across a range of archives, journals, and databases. These, too, are never neutral, but help to produce (rather than passively reflect) what is classified as legitimate scholarship—and even more important, what is not. This is why, for me, the kind of fantasy that lies behind the Open Archives Initiative, or SHERPA's DRIVER project, or indeed Google Book Search for that matter, of having one place to search for scholarship and research such as a universal search engine, global archive, or international network of fully integrated, indexed, and linked academic work that can be centrally harvested and searched, must remain precisely that: a totalizing (and totalitarian) fantasy. Instead, I would argue for a multiplicity of different and perhaps at times conflicting and even incommensurable open-access archives, journals, databases, and other publishing experiments.

The determination of content by the archive's medium is of course a feature that digital repositories share with archives of other kinds. One of the issues that is specific to open-access archiving, however, is the way in which, as a result of the profound transformation in the publication of the academic research literature that is being brought about by the change in the mode of reproduction from ink-on-paper to digital, questions that were already present with regard to the print medium and other media, but that have tended to be taken for granted, overlooked, marginalized, excluded, or otherwise repressed, are now being raised more directly. As Adrian Johns reminds us in *The Nature of the Book*, right up until the middle of the eighteenth century the book was an unstable object, with Shakespeare's first folio including not only more than six hundred typefaces, but also numerous discrepancies and inconsistencies regarding its spelling, punctuation, divisions, arrangement, proofing, and page configurations. As a result, readers had to make critical decisions regarding particular manuscripts, their identity, consistency, dependability, and trustworthiness, on the basis of "assessments of the people involved in the making, distribution, and reception of books."²⁰ Early in the history of book, then, readers *were* involved in forming judgments around questions of authority and legitimacy: concerning what a book is and what it means to be an author, a reader,

a publisher, and a distributor. The development and spread of the concept of the author, along with mass printing techniques, uniform, standard, multiple-copy editions, copyright, established publishing houses, editors, and so forth meant that many of these ideas subsequently began to appear “fixed.” Consequently, readers were no longer asked to make decisions over questions of authority and legitimacy. Such issues were forgotten. The digital mode of reproduction, however, promises to place us in a position where readers are again called on to respond and to make judgments and decisions about the nature and authority of (digitized) texts, and of the disciplines, fields of knowledge, and registers these texts are supposed to belong to (or not), precisely through its loosening of much of this fixity. In this respect, open-access archiving has for me a certain tactical quality. For, as I say, we can now see that the destabilization created by the shift from print to digital offers us an opportunity and a chance, if only it can be taken, to approach academic research and scholarship anew, as if for the first time; and thus to raise precisely the kind of responsible questions concerning our ideas of knowledge, the discipline, and indeed the institution of the university that in many respects we should have been asking anyway.

Last but not least (for now, at any rate), the specificity of open-access archiving resides with the ethical issues it raises. How is it to be decided what is to be included in such an archive and what excluded? What categories of inclusion and exclusion should govern disciplinary protocols as far as the digital publication, transmission, dissemination, exchange, storage, and retrieval of academic research and scholarship is concerned? And with what authority, according to what legitimacy, can such decisions be made?

The ethical problems that an open-access repository enables us to bring to attention and emphasize were one of the main reasons I wanted to get involved in setting up an open-access archive specifically as opposed to a journal—and this is the case, even though with *Culture Machine* I have been publishing an open-access online journal since 1999. (I should stress that I am using the term *ethics* here not according to traditional moral philosophy, with its predefined codes and norms, but in the tradition of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. Ethics here is a duty and responsibility to what the latter terms “the infinite alterity of the other” who places me in question and to whom I have to respond.)²¹ A “serious” academic journal, for instance, will primarily publish peer-reviewed articles that are recognizable as “proper” pieces

of scholarly writing or research. Yet along with e-prints of peer-reviewed essays, an academic archive can also contain monographs, edited books, textbooks, book chapters, journal editions, out-of-print books, working papers, discussion papers, theses, bibliographies, conference papers, presentations, teaching material, and lectures. And that is before we consider artifacts of a more unusual nature, which can also conceivably be collected in even the most serious of academic archives. I am thinking of drafts of work in progress, manuscripts, leaflets, posters, “underground literature,” photographs, sound recordings, film, video, multimedia resources, software, maps, letters, diaries, personal correspondence, and so on. But I also have in mind laundry lists and scraps such as one stating “I have forgotten my umbrella,” which was found among Nietzsche’s papers after his death and about which Derrida has written at length,²² or even the content of dreams, such as those of H el ene Cixous, which are detailed in her notebooks and are now included as part of the Cixous archive at the Biblioth eque National de France.²³ And that is still to restrict myself solely to examples that, though perhaps unusual, are already authorized. Compared to a journal, then, which is commonly understood to be a serious, scholarly publication, an archive, which can be understood as both the objects and documents assembled and the place they are located, is by definition far more open—at least potentially—to the unusual and the quirky: the different, the foreign, the heterogeneous, the excessive, and so forth. It thus seems to me that an archive is capable of placing us in a position where we have to make ethical decisions over what can be legitimately included in it, and with what authority, in a way a journal simply is not.

What is more, if this is true of archives generally, it is even truer of open-access repositories. This is because another of the issues that is specific to open-access archiving (or certain instances of it anyway) is the extent to which the digital technology that enables it also makes it possible to multiply the permeability of its border control, thus bringing this problem of what can and cannot be legitimately included within such a repository to attention and emphasizing it. In other words, the speed of the digitization process, together with the sheer size, number, and variety of texts that can be produced, published, archived, preserved, and stored, the geographic range over which these texts can be distributed and disseminated, and the relative ease and low cost of doing all this, means that the need to make such ethical decisions

becomes much more apparent—as does the difficulty involved in doing so. By providing us in this way with an opportunity to raise questions of academic legitimacy and authority that are often otherwise kept hidden and concealed (and in the process be potentially far more open, radical, and experimental when it comes to making responsible decisions about the quality and value of a piece of writing or research, and ask, following Derrida, what if Freud, or Hoggart, or Borges, had had not just email, but the web, a blog, a wiki, text messaging, Amazon peer-reviewing, podcasting, social networking, peer-to-peer file sharing?), an open-access archive is capable of having a much larger impact than an open-access journal, it seems to me. Indeed, we can now see that it is not just a matter of remediating the literary and cultural studies research literature: rather, an open-access archive places us in a position where we have to think about what literary and cultural studies is; how we are going to decide this; and with what authority and legitimacy such decisions can be made.

The fact that an open access repository such as CSeARCH is able to include books in particular (in both prepublication and postpublication forms) is especially significant as far as the raising of such questions for our ideas of knowledge, disciplinarity, and the institution of the university is concerned. The desire to broach issues of this nature is also why, when working on developing an open access archive, it was important to me that it have a cultural studies focus. A number of the queries this project raises regarding disciplinary and institutional legitimacy and authority may be applicable to other fields. And yet, as cultural studies is arguably the means by which the university currently thinks itself,²⁴ it provides a privileged mode of access to questions of this kind, in a way that physics, or the cognitive sciences, say, or even literary studies and philosophy, do not. There is certainly something specific about a cultural studies open-access archive, for me, then.

The posing of such questions—and the potential to do so that is created by the digitization of the research literature—has radical consequences for cultural studies in turn. The latter has tended to pride itself on its interdisciplinary approach. However, as I have shown elsewhere, cultural studies tends to sustain the identity and limits of those “legitimate” disciplines it is willing to include within its interdisciplinary repertoire as much as it challenges them.²⁵ Witness, most obviously, the manner in which cultural studies still endeavors to maintain its academic authority and professional legitimacy as a field by excluding,

more or less violently, what it regards as nonlegitimate or not yet legitimate forms of knowledge, including what might be called “non-knowledge” or the other of knowledge (the apparently useless, unimportant, irrelevant, trivial or mistaken: hypnosis, for example, or projection, hallucination, illusion, transference, naughtiness, spectrality, phantomism). This is not to say there should be no limits to cultural studies (or any other field or discipline, for that matter). This is quite simply not possible. Limitation is inevitable. There are always limits. The point is rather to realize and acknowledge this process of limitation (rather than try to avoid it and thus end up repeating it unknowingly, as cultural studies frequently does now); and to think about how to assume these limits, and with what authority and legitimacy. For me, open-access archiving helps to put cultural studies in a position where it becomes more difficult to avoid addressing questions of this kind: not least because of its potential openness to the quirky, different, foreign, and heterogeneous; that which is not necessarily, or not yet, legitimate; and even the apparently useless, unimportant, obsolete, irrelevant, worthless, trivial, or mistaken.

Now to have an effect on cultural studies and to raise ethical questions for its own thinking on the university, it is crucial to be able to direct these queries at one of its main sources and criteria of value. This is where the significance of books comes in. Books have an important role to play as far as the institutionally pragmatic tactical use of open-access archiving I am detailing here is concerned, since they are the main criterion for employment, tenure, promotion, and so on in the humanities in general and cultural studies in particular. We can thus see that its ability to include books bestows upon an open-access archive such as CSeARCH (which does include books) with the potential to have a far larger impact—on cultural studies especially, but also the humanities generally, and from there perhaps the institution of the university—than an open-access journal.

That said, I want to make it quite clear that the account of open access and CSeARCH I provide in this research is not a case study—that would imply I already have my theory of new media worked out and decided in advance, and that I am merely using open access and CSeARCH and this chapter, as a means of illustrating this theory. Sure, such a media-specific analysis would enable us to detail the specificity of open-access archiving—and in the process point out some of the ways in which the current emphasis on the “need to account for differential

materialities” and specificities still pays insufficient attention to the difference and specificity of much new media. Such an approach certainly seems to offer a number of advantages. For one thing, it reduces the risk of producing vague, futurological generalizations about digital culture. For another, it also helps avoid falling into the trap of privileging one specific instance of digital media and assuming that a whole new cultural regime based on its particular principles and ethos is possible. As far as I am concerned, there is no system, set of principles, ethos, or philosophy that can necessarily be privileged and extrapolated out of open access—or any other example of new media, for that matter—and made to function as generally applicable to culture, or even digital culture, as a whole, either now or in the future.

Yet what is important about a cultural studies open-access archive is not merely the intended consequences and effects I can predict, foresee, and articulate on an individual level, consequences that are informed by my own theory and philosophy of new media and open-access archiving. To paraphrase Mark Poster, the way to understand the specific ethical (and political) effects of a digital archive for me is not just to analyze and critique it, but also to build the archive.²⁶ And by building it I mean devising, developing, constructing, and programming it; but I also mean inventing and creating it by using it, uploading and downloading texts and material into and from it, making the associated ethical decisions, setting “in place a series of relations,” and otherwise “doing things *with* the archive,” as Poster says, that may be unanticipated and unpredictable. Which means that there is always something that is going to resist theory and philosophy, something that can be engaged only in the archive’s performance, and that therefore escapes or is in excess of any attempt to analyze it merely in terms of its specificity.

All of which means this chapter is no doubt going to prove a bit of a disappointment to some readers. For although I may have begun by giving the impression I was going to focus on open access and describe some of my own specific work in this area, this emphasis on not providing a “case study approach” means that I cannot quite do this. Certainly, part of my ethical project with this research has been to work out as rigorously as possible a new theory or philosophy of open-access publishing and archiving based on my own experience that others can then discuss, analyze, criticize, and engage with. Moreover, it has been crucial for me to have done so. We need to have a philosophy of open access if we are going to persuade more academics and university managers, not to mention governmental, organizational, and institutional policymakers, to participate in publishing research in this fashion. To leave

it at this, however, would be to imply that I already have my new theory or philosophy of new media thoroughly worked out and in place, and am merely using open access and this chapter as a means of illustrating it. It would therefore be to fail to remain open to the possible unintended and unforeseeable consequences and effects of the cultural studies archive; and thus to what takes us beyond theory and analysis—or at least beyond what can simply be discerned, discovered, and predicted by means of theory and analysis. In particular, it would be to fail to remain open to the temporal and affective poeticity and performativity of the archive's functioning: the ways in which the ethics of open-access archiving cannot be decided in advance but have to be created and invented by its users in a relation of singularity to finite, "concrete" conjunctions of the here and now.

It is the actual, singular points of potentiality and transformation that are provided by specific instances and uses of digital media such as an open-access archive that I am interested in—which means that there is always something that is going to escape or be in excess of or beyond the attempt to analyze new media in terms of its specificity. Consequently, as I say, even though this second phase of new media criticism envisaged by Hayles and others is only just beginning to emerge, I already want to make a case for the development of a third. This "new media theory 3G," or next generation of new media theory, would involve paying far closer attention to the affective, performative aspect of particular instances of new media in that relation of singularity to finite, concrete conjunctions of the here and now that I just mentioned. It would thus operate very much in the tradition of Heidegger, Derrida, Arendt, and Nancy, as well as that of recent work on the study of literature most notably by Derek Attridge and Timothy Clark,²⁷ in which singularity is understood in terms of a literary or poetic "event" that resists theory and is engaged only in the performance of a text. In short, as well as offering a "media-specific analysis," it would understand new media in terms of singularity, and would thus move toward developing a theory of media-singular analysis.