

Promises and pitfalls of crowdsourcing based on COVID-19 digital archives in Latin America

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Abstract: This paper reflects on crowdsourcing by analyzing the creation of digital archives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America. In doing so, the paper contributes to existing literature by demonstrating empirical evidence that highlights two important shortages in the crowdsourcing literature within the humanities – namely issues of representation and digital preservation. Both aspects relate to global inequality, which is why the Latin American scope is so important for understanding these deficiencies. The first part of the paper debates the stakes of crowdsourcing within the humanities. Additionally, it problematizes the guidelines and principles previously used to evaluate crowdsourcing’s outcomes in the field of born-digital archives regarding unpredictable and disruptive events. The second part of the paper briefly presents the COVID-19 archives in Latin America as an applicable case study, which is especially important when it comes to debating representation, diversity, and preservation of born-digital records.

Keywords: Crowdsourcing; COVID-19; Digital Humanities; Memory; Archives.

1. Introduction

“So those memories won't be lost”, replied Kelli Schmiguel when asked in an oral history interview why she started to collect testimonies of teachers, students, and parents in Brazil at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Schmiguel is one of the managers of the project *Escola em quarentena* (‘School in quarantine’), which used social media to reach out to school communities to contribute to a digital archive that has aimed to preserve memories regarding life under COVID-19. This project is only one among more than a hundred similar initiatives in Latin America which, although they vary in terms of agents and strategies, share the intention of using digital technologies to collect memories regarding the pandemic in real time. If one examines these efforts, one method of collecting has emerged as a preferred choice: crowdsourcing. This paper reflects on crowdsourcing by analyzing the creation of digital archives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America. In doing so, the paper contributes to existing literature by demonstrating empirical evidence that highlights two important shortages in the crowdsourcing literature within the humanities – namely, the issues of representation and digital preservation. Both aspects relate to global inequality, which is why the Latin American scope is so important for understanding these deficiencies. The first part of the paper debates the stakes of crowdsourcing within the humanities. Additionally, it problematizes the guidelines and principles previously used to evaluate crowdsourcing’s outcomes in the field of born-digital archives regarding unpredictable and disruptive events. The second part of the paper briefly presents the COVID-19 archives in Latin America as an applicable case study, which is especially important when it comes to debating representation, diversity, and preservation of born-digital records.

¹ Juliane Bazzo / Kelli Schmiguel, *Escola em quarentena | Arquivamento Digital da COVID-19 no Brasil #9*, Interview geführt von Amanda Montezino, (2022).

2. Defining and evaluating crowdsourcing

Although crowdsourcing originated in the business world², scholars have argued that cultural heritage institutions should not emphasize its association with profit and material results.³ Most of the definitions of crowdsourcing within the humanities tend to focus on the process as a collective way of producing knowledge, whether in material or immaterial forms.⁴ “At its best”, argued Terry Owens, “crowdsourcing is not about getting someone to do work for you, it is about offering your users the opportunity to participate in public memory”⁵. Around the early 2010s, projects like *Transcribe Bentham* (UCL), *Search the Collections* (Victoria and Albert Museum); *Remember Me* (United States Holocaust Museum), *What’s on the Menu?* (New York Public Library), and *DigitalKoot* (National Library of Finland), among many others, began using digital tools to implement crowdsourcing techniques to collect records from people online.⁶

The technical possibility of people sending records via the internet has opened a way for what Anacleto Pons called an “archiving earthquake”, as the possibilities of collaboration online have increased the number and types of archives in an unprecedented fashion.⁷ Of particular interest for this paper are crowdsourced rapid response archives dedicated to collecting memories in the wake of unexpected, catastrophic, and collective events.⁸ This phenomenon is similar to the *September 11th Digital Archive*, which is commonly referred to as an “iconic project”⁹ that has influenced a number of rapid response projects that have archived “vernacular memories”¹⁰ worldwide.¹¹ Moving to the present, crowdsourcing has been a dominant method of building digital archives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale.¹² According to the database of the Brazilian monitoring project Coronarchive, crowdsourcing has been used by approximately 65% of digital archives documenting the pandemic in Latin America.¹³

² In the beginning of the 2010s, crowdsourcing was commonly described as a “production model”, a “process of organizing labour”, and a “paradigm that assumes firms can commercialize both their own ideas as well as innovations from other firms” Enrique Estellés-Arolas / Fernando González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, Towards an integrated crowdsourcing definition, in: *Journal of Information Science* 38 (2012) 2, p. 189–200.

³ Trevor Owens, *The Crowd and The Library*, Trevor Owens, 2012, <http://www.trevorowens.org/2012/05/the-crowd-and-the-library/> (16. 9. 2022); Jason A Heppler / Gabriel K Wolfenstein, *Crowdsourcing Digital Public History*, in: *Criss Library Faculty Publications* 27 (2015), p. 4.

⁴ Mark Hedges / Stuart Dunn, *Academic Crowdsourcing in the Humanities: Crowds, Communities and Co-production*, 2017; Melissa Terras, *Crowdsourcing in the Digital Humanities*, in: Susan Schreibman / Ray Siemens / John Unsworth (Eds.), *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, 2016, S. 420–439.

⁵ Trevor Owens, *Crowdsourcing Cultural Heritage: The Objectives Are Upside Down*, Trevor Owens User Centered Digital Memory, 2012, <http://www.trevorowens.org/2012/03/crowdsourcing-cultural-heritage-the-objectives-are-upside-down/> (17. 11. 2022).

⁶ Terras, *Crowdsourcing in the Digital Humanities*.

⁷ Anacleto Pons, *The Historiographical Foundations of Digital Public History*, in: Serge Noiret / Gerben Zaagsma / Mark Tebeau (Eds.), *Handbook Digital Public History*, Boston 2022, pp. 19–34, here p. 32.

⁸ Sheila Brennan / T Mills Kelly, *Why Collecting History Online is Web 1.5*, in: *Center for History and New Media*, 2009.

⁹ Serge Noiret, *Sharing Authority in Online Collaborative Public History Practices*, in: id. et al., *Handbook Digital Public History*, pp. 49–60, here p. 58.

¹⁰ Aaron Hess, *In digital remembrance: vernacular memory and the rhetorical construction of web memorials*, in: *Media, Culture & Society* 29 (2007) 5, pp. 812–830.

¹¹ Examples are the *Hurricane Digital Memory Bank*, the *Japan Disasters Digital Archive*, and *Our Marathon* among others.

¹² Ian Kisil Marino / Thiago Lima Nicodemo, *COVID-19 and Digital Archives in Latin America*, in: id. / id. (Eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, 2022; Tizian Zumthurn, *Crowdsourced COVID-19 Collections: A Brief Overview*, in: *International Public History* 4 (2021) 1, pp. 77–83.

¹³ Ian Kisil Marino et al., *Coronarchive database*, *Repositório de Dados de Pesquisa da Unicamp*.

The popularization of crowdsourcing has been accompanied by expectations that it would be a key factor in introducing democratized practice/research methods (tools) to the discipline of history.¹⁴ Crowdsourcing is frequently compared to the notion of “shared authority”¹⁵, which express the belief that such a method would be able to reach one of the long-standing goals of public history – that of reshaping the practice and theory of history as a publicly meaningful and engaged field.¹⁶ Crowdsourcing is also related to the notion of ‘citizen science’ which implies the active contribution of lay people to scientific development.¹⁷ In this vein, some scholars seem to have translated the notion of “wisdom of the crowds”¹⁸ to humanities interests, as crowdsourcing has also been described as a method that expresses a “decentring expertise”¹⁹ and Pierre Lévy’s concept of “collective intelligence”.²⁰ Accordingly, crowdsourcing has been considered a ‘core method’ of digital public history, and even the discipline’s *raison d’être*, as Serge Noiret has argued.²¹ As a result, such optimism has also been applied to the capabilities of crowdsourcing for the rapid response archives regarding the pandemic.²²

On the other hand, the literature has expressed that not every contribution coming from the public/laypersons can be considered a sample of citizen science.²³ This criticism has also accompanied other concerns regarding the quality of the information collected online.²⁴ For example, recent observations regarding the documentation collected by rapid response archives regarding the pandemic have offered empirical evidence that such archives may reproduce content and offer limited diversity and representation.²⁵ Even still, the belief in the potential of crowdsourcing as a core method for history and the humanities in general has persisted.²⁶ Owens summarizes the argument that despite misgivings, “when done well, crowdsourcing offers us an opportunity to provide meaningful ways for individuals to engage with and contribute to public memory”²⁷. But how does one implement a crowdsourcing project so that it is ‘done well’? In addition, how can scholars evaluate the outcomes of a crowdsourcing process?

The trajectory of crowdsourcing during the 2010s shows sophistication in terms of implementation and evaluation guidelines, going from superficial ‘checklists’ to more reflective assessing methods.²⁸ In

¹⁴ Mathieu Andro, *Digital libraries and crowdsourcing*, London 2018; Mia Ridge (Ed.), *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage*, Burlington 2014; Stewart Dunn / Mark Hedges, *Academic Crowdsourcing in the Humanities*; Despoina Valatsou, *Crowdsourcing digital history online*, in: *Historiein* 14 (2014) 2, p. 30; Serge Noiret, *Digital History 2.0.*, in: Jean-Phillippe Genet / Andrea Zorzi (Eds.), *Les historiens et l’informatique : Un métier à réinventer. Etudes réunies par Jean-Philippe Genet et Andrea Zorzi*, Rome 2011, pp. 235–288; Noiret et al. (Eds.), *Handbook digital public history*.

¹⁵ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, 1990.

¹⁶ Serge Noiret, *Historia digital e Historia pública*, in: Tiago Gil / Juan Andres Bresciano (Eds.), *La historiografía ante el giro digital : reflexiones teóricas y prácticas metodológicas*, Montevideo 2015, pp. 57–112.

¹⁷ Terras, *Crowdsourcing in the Digital Humanities*.

¹⁸ James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, 2005.

¹⁹ Valatsou, *Crowdsourcing digital history online*, p. 36.

²⁰ Amanda Grace Sikarskie, *Citizen Scholars: Facebook and the Co-creation of Knowledge*, in: Jack Dougherty / Kristen Nawrotzki (Eds.), *Writing History in the Digital Age*, Ann Arbor 2013, pp. 216–221.

²¹ Serge Noiret, *Crowdsourcing and User Generated Content: The Raison d’Être of Digital Public History*, in: id. et al. (Eds.), *Handbook Digital Public History*, p. 48.

²² Noiret, *Sharing Authority in Online Collaborative Public History Practices*; Tizian Zumthurm / Stefan Krebs, *Collecting Middle-Class Memories? The Pandemic, Technology, and Crowdsourced Archives*, in: *Technology and Culture* 63 (2022) 2, pp. 483–493.

²³ Alana Piper, *Digital crowdsourcing and public understandings of the past: citizen historians meet Criminal Characters*, in: *History Australia* 17 (2020) 3, pp. 525–541; Mia Ridge, *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage: Introduction*, in: id. (Ed.), *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage*, Burlington 2014, pp. 1–16.

²⁴ Valatsou, *Crowdsourcing digital history online*; Noiret, *Digital History 2.0.*; Niels Brügger, *The Web as History*, 2017.

²⁵ Zumthurm; Krebs, *Collecting Middle-Class Memories?*

²⁶ Julia Noordegraaf / Angela Bartholomew / Alexandra Eveleigh, *Modeling Crowdsourcing for Cultural Heritage*, in: *Museum & the Web: Selected Papers from Two International Conferences*, Baltimore 2014, pp. 25–37.

²⁷ Owens, *Crowdsourcing Cultural Heritage: The Objectives Are Upside Down*.

²⁸ Rose Holley, *Crowdsourcing: How and Why Should Libraries Do It?*, in: *D-Lib Magazine* 16 (2010) 3/4; Ridge, *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage: Introduction*; Hedges; Dunn, *Academic Crowdsourcing in the Humanities*.

spite of this, scholars have shown scepticism regarding product-oriented assessments when evaluating crowdsourcing outcomes, thereby understanding them as too related to the business productivity thinking.²⁹ Instead of looking to numbers of achievements, scholars have suggested that one should focus on the level of engagement and on the meaning of the activity for the participants, emphasizing issues such as the interaction with complex heritage and historical content, the development of research skills, and the cognitive empathy with historical subjects.³⁰ Still, strategies of eliciting public participation via rankings and progress reports, rewards for productivity, and public acknowledgement for high achievers can also create complications, as the experience of the German project *Coronarchiv* has shown.³¹ Moreover, the perspective of crowdsourcing as an inclusive and democratizing method faces another issue, which is how to shape archives that include diversity and representation.

3. Crowdsourcing and representation

One of the largest initiatives of mapping digital archives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale is *Mapping Public History Projects about COVID-19*, carried out by the International Federation for Public History (IFPH) in partnership with the organization Made By Us (Figure 1). Although the project adopts a global map to collect and display its content, the results more than two years after its inception show a remarkable discrepancy in the number of initiatives registered in the Global North in comparison to the Global South. In Latin America, only Brazil has more than five displayed initiatives. Recalling the *Coronarchiv*'s data for Latin America, one can see that the region has a considerably larger number of initiatives identified. When looking at Africa, the situation is even worse: there is only one initiative marked on the IFPH map. To some extent, the project carried out by the world's major international association of public history thus reproduces old and criticized patterns of unequal representation in terms of a global historiography.³² How can one explain such issues in representation?



Fig. 1: Mapping Public History Projects about COVID 19.³³

²⁹ Owens, *Crowdsourcing Cultural Heritage: The Objectives Are Upside Down*; Heppler; Wolfenstein, *Crowdsourcing Digital Public History*.

³⁰ Jane Winters, *Digital History*, in: Marek Tamm/Peter Burke (Ed.), *Debating New Approaches to History*, London 2019, pp. 277–300; Tim Causer / Melissa Terras, *Crowdsourcing Bentham: Beyond the Traditional Boundaries of Academic History*, in: *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 8 (2014) 1, pp. 46–64; Piper, *Digital crowdsourcing and public understandings of the past*; Owens, *Crowdsourcing Cultural Heritage: The Objectives Are Upside Down*.

³¹ Tizian Zumthurn / Stefan Krebs, *COVID-19 digital memory banks: challenges and opportunities for historians of education*, in: *Paedagogica Historica* 58 (2022) 5, pp. 781–801.

³² Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?*, New Jersey 2017; Marino; Nicodemo, *COVID-19 and Digital Archives in Latin America*; Zumthurn, *Crowdsourced COVID-19 Collections*.

³³ International Federation of Public History, *Mapping Public History Projects about COVID 19*, Billet, IFPH-FIHP, 31. 8. 2020, <https://ifph.hypotheses.org/3276> (7. 3. 2023).

The literature on crowdsourcing has not properly addressed the challenges of internet accessibility. Conditions preventing robust internet access are a central issue for crowdsourcing. Recent data regarding internet access show that most people with precarious accessibility to the internet are in the Global South, which could explain part of the global representation issues in the IFPH project.³⁴ One should also consider how proficiency in the use of digital tools, levels of interest, and even the awareness regarding the existence of a crowdsourcing project influence representation.³⁵ Additionally, one should think about how algorithms and search engine features affect the scope of an open call for a crowdsourced project.³⁶ Nadia Saito-Fairbrother, manager of the Brazilian crowdsourcing project *Reconfigurações socioculturais em tempos de pandemia* ('Sociocultural reconfigurations in times of pandemic') reported that, at first, team members expected that the mere publishing of the project's information on social media pages would be enough to leverage the project. However, after frustrating results in the first weeks, they started to directly add the topic into group-chats that the members of the project were part of in order to spark interest in the project (such as dancing classes groups, sports groups, theater crews, for example).³⁷ The case of the project *As margens da pandemia* ('The margins of the pandemic'), an initiative that focused on testimonies of mothers during lockdown, is similar.³⁸ Camila Volker and collaborators reflect that the project has aimed to "listen to the mothers that would not have time or access to an open call program". Thereby, they decided to directly "go to these mothers and collect their testimonies"³⁹.

Another issue concerning representation is social class bias.⁴⁰ The Chilean project *Memoria COVID-19* ('Memory COVID-19') has collected a large number of photographs and videos that register middle-class quotidian life during lockdown.⁴¹ Similar content was displayed in the video collection of the Costa Rican *Archivo CR Covid 19* ('Archive CR Covid 19').⁴² In both cases, however, scenes of rural communities or of marginalized urban people that could not afford to stay home or access the projects are basically nonexistent. The case of the Brazilian project *Arquivos da Pandemia* ('Archives of the pandemic') is also remarkable in this sense: 66% of the contributions have come from people working remotely whereas only 5% represent people that could not afford to adopt the home-office approach.⁴³ Another variable that shows the limits of representation includes gender and age. The considerable majority of their contributions received by the projects *Relatos do cotidiano durante a pandemia* ('Reports of the quotidian during the pandemic'), *Escola em Quarentena*, and *Documentando a experiência da COVID-19 no Rio Grande do Sul* ('Documenting the COVID-19 experience in Rio Grande do Sul') have come from women.⁴⁴ Moreover, the *Reconfigurações socioculturais em tempos*

³⁴ Daren C. Brabham, *Crowdsourcing*, Cambridge 2013 (The MIT Press essential knowledge series); Mark Graham, *Inequitable Distributions in Internet Geographies: The Global South Is Gaining Access, but Lags in Local Content*, in: *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization* 9 (2014) 3–4, pp. 3–19; Rong Chen, *A Demand-Side View of Mobile Internet Adoption in the Global South*, in: World Bank Group (2021).

³⁵ Hedges / Dunn, *Academic Crowdsourcing in the Humanities*; Shawn Graham / Guy Massie / Nadine Feuerherm, *The HeritageCrowd Project: A Case Study in Crowdsourcing Public History*, in: Jack Dougherty / Kristen Nawrotzki (Eds.), *Writing History in the Digital Age*, 2013, pp. 222–232.

³⁶ Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*, 2012; Ed Finn, *What Algorithms Want: imagination in the age of computing*, Cambridge 2017; Stephen Ramsay, *Reading machines: toward an algorithmic criticism*, Urbana 2011 (Topics in the digital humanities).

³⁷ Nadia Saito-Fairbrother / Eydi Semoto, *Reconfigurações socioculturais em tempos de pandemia | Arquivamento Digital da COVID-19 no Brasil #3*, Interview geführt von Ian Kisil Marino und Amanda Montezino, (2021).

³⁸ Ana de Fiori / Camila Volker, *As margens da Pandemia: Relatos sobre a maternidade | Arquivamento Digital da COVID-19 no Brasil #4*, Interview geführt von Ian Kisil Marino und Amanda Montezino, (2021).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴⁰ Zumthurn / Krebs, *Collecting Middle-Class Memories?*

⁴¹ Biblioteca Digital U. de Chile, *Memoria COVID-19*, <https://bibliotecadigital.uchile.cl> (7. 3. 2023).

⁴² The videos of the *Archivo CR Covid 19* are no longer available for public access, what will be discussed in the following section.

⁴³ Luciana Heymann / Bernardo Bortolotti, *Arquivos da pandemia: memórias da comunidade Fiocruz. Possibilidades e desafios de um acervo colaborativo*, in: Ian Kisil Marino / Thiago Lima Nicodemo (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19: iniciaivas de memória da pandemia no Brasil*, Vitória 2022, p. 35.

⁴⁴ Paulo Rodrigues Gajanigo / Rogério Ferreira de Souza, *Relatos do cotidiano durante a pandemia: diário coletivo em um grupo no Facebook*, in: Marino et al. (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19* pp. 69–88; Juliane Bazzo /

de pandemia has received very few materials from elderly people, as a possible reflection of inability or absence of habits of using the internet.⁴⁵ Finally, many of the COVID-19 digital archives in Latin America have shown a large prevalence of participants with higher education degrees.⁴⁶

4. Crowdsourcing and digital preservation

“What will be remembered after the corona pandemic has passed?”, Astrid Erll has asked in the first months of the pandemic. “In terms of sheer sources, one is tempted to say: everything. Instant history-making abounds. Every second of pandemic time seems to be recorded on digital media, distributed, and shared via social networks”⁴⁷. One must think carefully about such a claim. The literature has praised the potential of crowdsourcing for agents who lack institutional support, staff, and funding stability.⁴⁸ However, when looking at the preservation stage of digital archiving a more careful approach is required.⁴⁹ Guaranteeing digital preservation and access for born-digital records is a complex process that involves infrastructure, data management, metadata normalization, backup routines, and trained staff.⁵⁰ The ephemeral nature of born-digital documents from social media, for example, lacks stability and requires even more attention to be properly preserved.⁵¹

The literature on crowdsourcing only perfunctorily mentions that relevant crowdsourced digital archives such as the *September 11th Digital Archive* and *Our Marathon* have had support from established institutions, which provided proper conditions for digital preservation.⁵² Such a shortage of attention could be explained by the fact that almost the entirety of cases that the literature on humanities crowdsourcing has been working on so far is in the Global North. For most of these cases, institutional support from universities or cultural heritage institutions is implied.⁵³ Nevertheless, when looking at the history of digital archives’ management in Latin America, one can say that the standard practice is marked by a shortage of policies regarding data management, unreliable funding, and poor infrastructure, all of which seem to apply to the digital preservation of the pandemic collections.⁵⁴ In contrast, recent studies regarding COVID-19 archives in Europe point out that the use of an appropriated platform such as Omeka is common.⁵⁵ Such proficiency remarkably differs from Latin American projects’ reality, in which even archives hosted by universities and cultural heritage institutions are characterized by precariousness. It is not an anomaly for recorded oral testimonies to be archived on

Kelli Schmiguel / Mana Suarez, Projeto Escola em quarentena: aflições, memórias e devires da educação na pandemia, in: Marino et al. (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19*, pp. 89–110; Rodrigo Weimer / Clarissa Sommer, Documentando a experiência da COVID-19 no RS | Arquivamento Digital da COVID-19 no Brasil #2, Interview geführt von Ian Kisil Marino und Amanda Montezino, (2020).

⁴⁵ Saito-Fairbrother; Semoto, Reconfigurações socioculturais em tempos de pandemia | Arquivamento Digital da COVID-19 no Brasil #3.

⁴⁶ Carla Rodeghero / Rodrigo Weimer, Documentando a experiência da COVID-19 no Rio Grande do Sul: reflexões sobre entrevistas a distância e sobre a História Oral da pandemia, in: Marino et al. (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19*, pp. 229–246; Camila Volker et al., *As margens da pandemia: relatos de maternidades – coleta, edição e arquivo*, in: Marino (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19*, pp. 155–168; Beatriz Kushnir / Agnes Alencar, Não voltaremos a 16 de março de 2020: testemunhos do isolamento e memórias da Covid-19, in: Marino (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19*, pp. 247–262.

⁴⁷ Astrid Erll, Afterword: Memory worlds in times of Corona, in: *Memory Studies* 13 (2020) 5, p. 867.

⁴⁸ Serge Noiret / Gerben Zaagsma / Mark Tebeau, Introduction, in: Noiret et al. (Eds.), *Handbook Digital Public History*; Valatsou, *Crowdsourcing digital history online*; Terras, *Crowdsourcing in the Digital Humanities*.

⁴⁹ Ina Blom / Trond Lundemo / Elvind Røssaak (Eds.), *Memory in motion: archives, technology and the social*, Amsterdam 2017 (Recursions).

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Sheila Brennan, *Digital History – The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook*, *The Inclusive Historian Handbook*, 4. 2019, <https://inclusivehistorian.com/digital-history/> (26. 12. 2022).

⁵¹ Brügger, *The Web as History*; Beatrice Cannelli / Marta Musso, Social media as part of personal digital archives: exploring users’ practices and service providers’ policies regarding the preservation of digital memories, in: *Archival Science* 22 (2022) 2, pp. 259–283.

⁵² Noiret, *Sharing Authority in Online Collaborative Public History Practices*; Terras, *Crowdsourcing in the Digital Humanities*.

⁵³ Hedges; Dunn, *Academic Crowdsourcing in the Humanities*.

⁵⁴ Marino; Nicodemo, *COVID-19 and Digital Archives in Latin America*.

⁵⁵ Zumthurm / Krebs, *Collecting Middle-Class Memories?*

managers' and students' personal cloud service accounts or even in the collaborators' smartphones.⁵⁶ Another set of projects apparently rely only on social media private pages to present their documentation, such as the Peruvian *Archivo Peruano COVID-19* and the Brazilian *Relatos do cotidiano durante a pandemia*, which use Instagram and Facebook respectively.⁵⁷ In addition, there is the case of the Costa Rican *Archivo CR Covid-19*. The project previously had videos available for public access in the platform Vimeo; in the moment of the submission of this paper, however, the videos were no longer available, which illustrates the ephemerality and uncertainty regarding social media collections.⁵⁸

5. Conclusion

The case of Latin American crowdsourced archives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic illuminate the issues of such a method regarding its capabilities of building representative collections as well as the limitations of precarious digital preservation frameworks. Today, some of the main pitfalls regarding crowdsourcing are not sufficiently addressed. In the excitement of the method's promise, its empirical basis frequently lacks diversity and reproduces known inequalities. The reflection I proposed echoes Michael Frisch's argument that "new information modalities and capabilities are not inherently solutions, and they may actually be part of a persistent problem"⁵⁹. It is indispensable that crowdsourcing projects consider the challenges of representation when building online collections. The absence of attention regarding that may lead to unequal collections, which might reinforce previous inequalities or even create new ones. The evaluation of crowdsourcing outcomes must also include critical considerations about digital preservation, highlighting the context of infrastructure, archiving guidelines, data governance, staff, and institutional support. Barbara Göbel and Christoph Müller have warned that there is a "growing digital myopia" within digital archives in which "what is not digitized doesn't have any value, becomes invisible"⁶⁰. Without proper cautions regarding preparation and evaluation, there is a risk that crowdsourcing creates the exact opposite of what it promises to do. When considering that archives are the core of historiographical practice, as they preserve evidence that determines and justifies the work of historians, the unfolding of such representation and preservation shortages become even more serious.⁶¹ As the crowdsourced archives regarding the pandemic become important resources for the writing of COVID-19 history, historians should be aware of its challenges and limitations.

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⁵⁶ Ana de Fiori / Camilia Volker, *As margens da Pandemia*; Elisandra Barros, *Fala Parente! relatos indígenas sobre a COVID-19*, in: Marino et al. (Eds.), *Por uma história da COVID-19*, pp. 51–68.

⁵⁷ Archivo Peruano COVID-19, @archivocovid19peru, <https://www.instagram.com/archivocovid19peru/> (7. 3. 2023); Gajanigo / Souza, *Relatos do cotidiano durante a pandemia: diário coletivo em um grupo no Facebook*.

⁵⁸ Cannelli / Musso, *Social media as part of personal digital archives*.

⁵⁹ Michael Frisch, *A história pública não é uma via de mão única, ou, De A Shared History à cozinha digital, e vice-versa*, in: Ana Maria Mauad / Juniele Rabêlo de Almeida / Ricardo Santhiago (Eds.), *História pública no Brasil: sentidos e itinerários*, 2016, p. 67.

⁶⁰ Barbara Göbel / Christoph Müller, *Transformação digital, arquivos e assimetrias do conhecimento*, in: Eloísa Martín / Barbara Göbel (Eds.), *Desigualdades interdependentes e geopolítica do conhecimento: negociações, fluxos, assimetrias*, 2018, p. 137.

⁶¹ Mario Wimmer, *The Present as Future Past: Anonymous History of Historical Times*, in: *Storia della Storiografia* 68 (2015) 2, pp. 165–183; Andreas Fickers, *Towards a New Digital Historicism?: Doing History in the Age of Abundance*, in: *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 1 (2012) 1, p. 19.

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