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Pernilla Severson. Searching for voice as democratic values in contemporary Swedish web archive initiatives

Abstract: This paper presents initial results from a study of various contemporary web archive initiatives in Sweden. Archives are subjective rather than objective, as well as methods for archiving and tracking and searching and documenting for digital material research (MacNeil & Eastwood, 2017). The purpose of the study is to analyse and distinguish what voices are made present in the web archive initiatives, how digitization matter in this voice-making and how this can be understood in relation to democratic values.

The method is a qualitative content analysis of the web archive initiatives online presence (the archive web site), including both self-decriptions and the site’s affordances. Empirically the material for the analysis consist of the following Swedish national archive initiatives:
1. Kungliga Biblioteket, Sweden’s national library, a national initiative to preserve the cultural heritage of the aftermath;
2. Rättviseförmedlingen, NGO, uses inquiries and dissemination of lists using social media to broaden the selection of competencies;
3. The Center for Business History, a non-profit association with companies as primary members, works to preserve and tell business history;
4. Platsr, Riksantikvarieämbetets site for stories and memories where anyone can contribute;
5. Kringla, collects heritage archives.

These archive initiatives have different aims, different initiators with different interaction and contributing actors, and use different (and more or less visible) archiving methods.

The analysis focuses on voice in the archive, based on Carpentier’s analysis model (2011) for participant-oriented processes. Analysis show variations of values linked to voice where technology directs attention and power to certain “voices” (themes, categories etc). These variations, this diversity, is discussed in relation to resistance and the perspective of how the archive is part of larger public (public voice). The paper concludes with a discussion of these various public voice’s implications in relation to democratic values as universal service, participation and agency.