

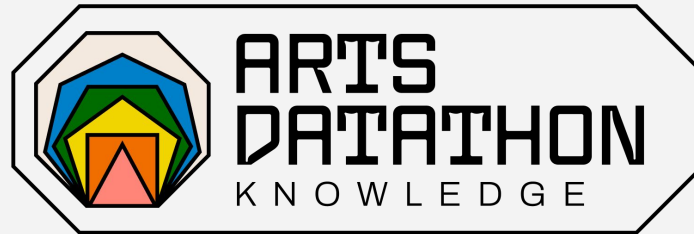
# Welcome to the Filling Archival Silences breakout session!

Check-in at the front with us to access to the breakout session activity.

If you have not yet done so, please open a free Canva account.

Please have Canva pulled up on your computer for after the presentation.

# Session 5: Filling Archival Silences





# Introductions

# Session Overview

- Introductions
- About the Wende Museum
- What are archives?
- What is archival silence?
- BRAINSTORM: How are archival silences are created?
- BRAINSTORM: How do we combat archival silences?
- Introduction to resources
- Session activity

# The Wende Museum



The Wende is an art museum, cultural center, and archive that preserves history and brings it to life through exhibitions, scholarship, education, and community engagement.



# The Collection

- Consists of more than 200,000 objects (archives, artifacts, ephemera, photographic images, newspapers, films, etc)
- Prioritizes at-risk collections



# What are archives?

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) defines archives as “permanently valuable records—such as letters, reports, accounts, minute books, draft and final manuscripts, and photographs—of people, businesses, and government. These records are kept because they have continuing value to the creating agency and to other potential users. They are the documentary evidence of past events. They are the facts we use to interpret and understand history.”

# What is archival silence?

from Society of American Archivists:

*n.* a gap in the historical record resulting from the unintentional or purposeful absence or distortion of documentation

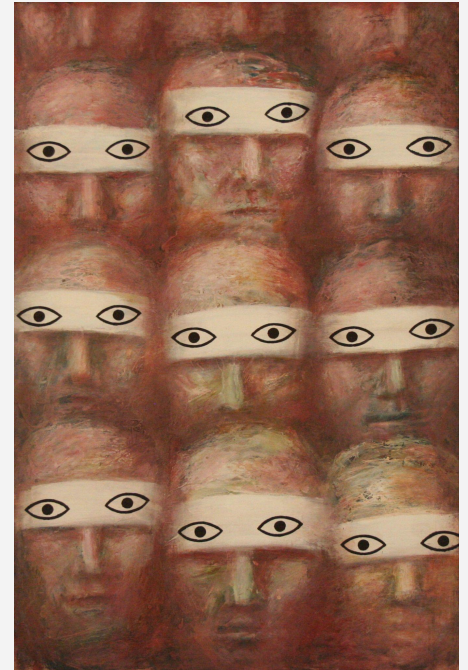
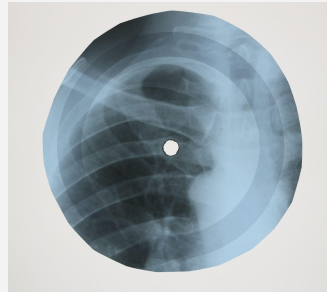
- Creation of sources
- Assembly of the archive
- Accessibility of items within the archive
- Consent from communities

How are archival silences created?

How are archival silences created?

## Censorship (examples from the Wende collections)

- Literature, radio, and music bans in the Soviet Union
- Creation of artist unions that gave the State control over who made art and the type of art that was created
- Stalin's Great Purge



How are archival silences created?

## Censorship (today)

- Pepperdine University removing artwork from galleries that are deemed as “overtly political”
- States like Idaho, Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and 15 others prohibiting the teaching of critical race theory in schools
- Texas Tech ban on programs associated with gender identity and sexual orientation
- Various government bans of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok world wide



How are archival silences created?

## Cult of personality (examples from the Wende collections)



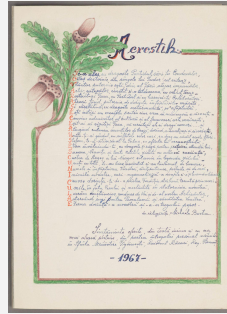
Common techniques:

- Per historian Jan Plamper from *The Stalin Cult*
  - Secular and grounded in populism
  - Male figures
  - Targeting of entire population
  - Usage of mass media
  - Exist in an environment where media is controlled
- Other techniques:
  - Proliferation of propaganda
  - Control of the arts
  - Tying patriotism to the figure
  - etc.

How are archival silences created?

## Cult of personality (examples from the Wende collections)

Leaders depicted in artwork and everyday objects:



Vladimir Lenin

Josef Stalin

Chairman Mao Zedung

Erich Honecker

Nicolae Ceaușescu

... and others



How are archival silences created?

## Cult of personality (today)

Current leaders depicted in media and everyday objects:

- Donald Trump
  - America the Beautiful National Parks pass for 2026
- Vladimir Putin
  - *Superputin* comics
  - Song, “[I want] A man like Putin”
- Kim Jong Un
  - Painting, Kim Jong Un ascending Mount Paektu on horseback
- Xi Jinping
  - Xi Jinping Thought -or- Xi-ism
  - Censorship of Winnie-the-Pooh (2017)



2026 Winning Image

2026 Parks Pass



How are archival silences created?

## Cult of personality (today)

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How are archival silences created?

## Rewriting history (examples from the Wende collections)

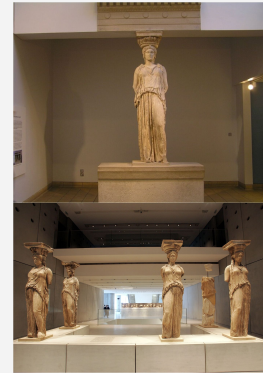
- Communist heroes and their mythologies
- Cultural erasure of religion and language
- The destruction of the Four Olds by Mao Zedong and the resulting struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution
- Nicolae Ceausescu's *Systemization*



How are archival silences created?

## Rewriting history (today)

- Reframing the January 6th insurrection to make it seem more peaceful
- The Trump administration's attempt at removing "gay" materials from government websites
- Book bans
- The decontextualization of objects that result from museums refusing to repatriate materials from their collection



How are archival silences created?

## Why it matters

- Historians rely on archives and documents to create narratives about the past
- Archives are not neutral
- Distrust

**How do we combat archival silences?**

How do we combat archival silences?

## Crowdsourcing (examples from the Wende collections)

- Soviet Jews exchanging information through letters to learn more about cultural heritage
- Soviet hippies trading photographs, texts, and music with each other to share information and create a sense of community
- Polish Underground Collection:
  - Individual documents instruct readers to copy and pass along



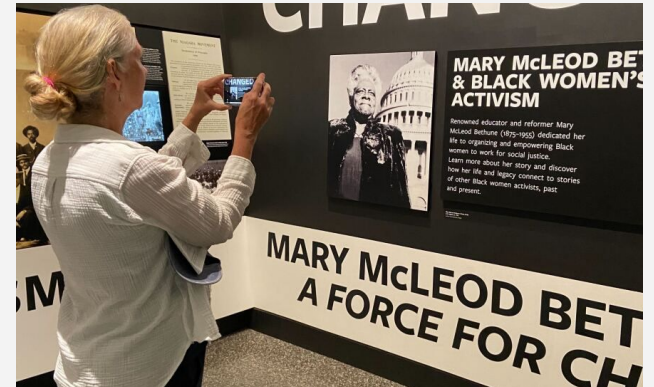
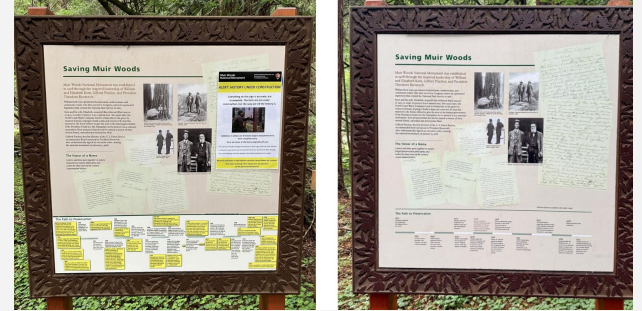
NIE NISZCZ! PRZEPISZ I PODAJ DALEJ!

Don't destroy it! Copy and pass it on!

How do we combat archival silences?

## Crowdsourcing (today)

- Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons
- Wayback Machine (Internet Archive) allows volunteers to upload materials and save disappearing websites
- The Data Rescue Project and the Save Our Signs initiative
- Citizen Historians for the Smithsonian



How do we combat archival silences?

# Self-publishing / Samizdat (examples from the Wende collections)

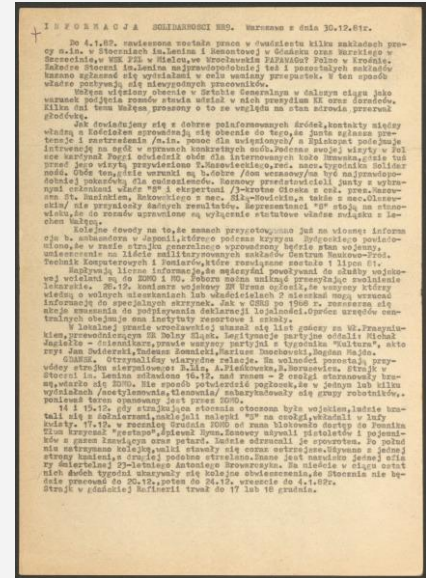
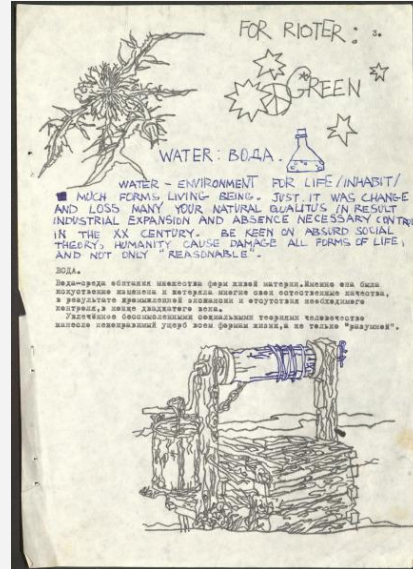
What it is and how it fills archival gaps

Samizdat is a portmanteau of sam- (self) and -izdat (publish) meaning “self-published”

Published outside of official channels

Created and distributed clandestinely

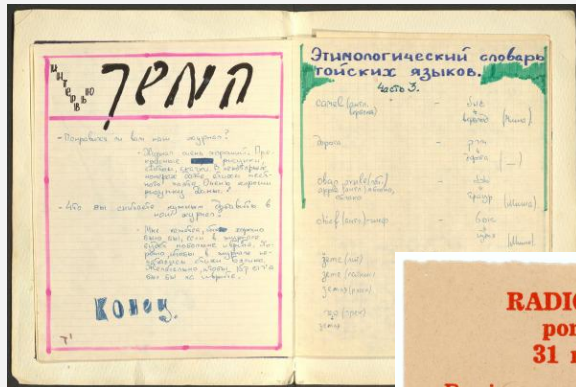
Presents information that has been censored or has gone unreported by the media



How do we combat archival silences?

# Self-publishing / Samizdat (examples from the Wende collections)

What it is and how it fills archival gaps



Generally, it subverts censorship by:

- Reporting events not covered by the media (e.g. disappearances)
- Discussing and covering topics not aligned with the state's values
- Teaching outlawed subjects
- Providing information for subversive events
- Satirizing the powers that be
- Decentralizing production helped to ensure its survival

How do we combat archival silences?

## Self-publishing / Samizdat (today)

Zines

Blogs/Vlogs

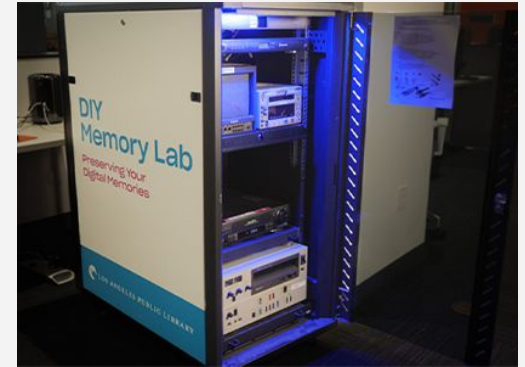
AO3

GitHub

Makerspaces as part of pubic library services



OctaviaLab  
Creativity Within Reach



How do we combat archival silences?

## Access

- The value of access to information
- Institutions working with people to break down barriers
- Institutions are making it easier for the public to access materials in the collection through:
  - Research fellowships and programs
  - Digitization
  - Open access policies
  - Digital collections portals
  - Removing affiliation requirements



How do we combat archival silences?

## Community archives

- Created by individuals and groups who desire to document their own cultural heritage
- Can involve formally trained information professionals or not
- Citizen Archivists and institutions



# Session Activity: Collaborative Digital Zine

- Using Canva, we will now make a collaborative digital zine that addresses the themes surrounding archival silences that we discussed.
- Two parts to the zine: how are archival silences created? How do we combat archival silences?



HOW ARE  
ARCHIVAL  
SILENCES  
CREATED?



HOW DO  
WE  
COMBAT  
ARCHIVAL  
SILENCES?



# Canva - tips & tricks

- If you have not yet done so, please sign into or open a free account on Canva
- Scan the QR code or share your email address with Kathryn after the presentation to access the digital zine page:



# Links to activity resources

Canva

[www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)

Internet Archive & Wayback Machine

[www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) & [www.web.archive.org](http://www.web.archive.org)

Wende Museum Online Collections

[www.wendemuseum.org/collection](http://www.wendemuseum.org/collection)

Save our Signs

<https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/save-our-signs>

Wikimedia Commons

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Flickr Commons

<https://www.flickr.com/commons>

Creative Commons Search Portal

<https://search.creativecommons.org/>

Public Domain Image Archive

<https://pdimagearchive.org/>

Calisphere

<https://calisphere.org/>

Digital Public Library of America

<https://dp.la/>

Europeana

<https://www.europeana.eu/en>

UNESCO World Digital Library\*

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/world-digital-library/>

## Wrap Up & Next Steps

- What did you learn in your breakout session that can help you build and maintain knowledge?
- What is one practice or tool you learned about that you'd like to put to use?
- What is one question about building and maintaining knowledge in the arts that you're leaving with today?

# Get in Touch!

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