

Brügger, Niels. (2018). *The archived web: doing history in the digital age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018, 185 pp., \$30.00, ISBN: 978-0-262-03902-4

Scholars endeavoring to do web history research need to appreciate the nature of the “archived web.” The archived web is not digital in the same way that other media are digital, and thus it has its own “digitality.” *The archived web* attempts to convey an understanding of the challenges involved in using the archived web as a source for serious research. The author, Niels Brügger, is Professor and Head of the Centre for Internet Studies at Aarhus University, Denmark, and Head of NetLab.

In the first chapter, the author discusses the history of the web and history in the web era in the larger context of digital history. In Chapter 2 the concept of “digitality” is presented, i.e., “the specific ways in which the digital bits are materialized and combined in a concrete media artifact and in concrete texts” (p. 19). The five analytical web strata (web element, web page, website, web sphere, and web as a whole) are introduced in Chapter 3. These five strata are expressed both as being visible in the browser and as being hidden in the underlying HTML code. Chapter 4 details a number of case histories on each of the five strata from the third chapter. Chapters 5 and 6 take the point of view of the organization preserving the web and the point of view of the researcher studying the archived web, respectively. Chapters 7 and 8 further explore how scholars can use the archived web in their research. Chapter 9 includes six approaches for evaluating versions of the archived web. In Chapter 10 the author compares web history with the histories of other digital media (e.g., email, newsgroups, social media, etc.). The concluding chapter recalls some of the main points of the book, and also outlines challenges for the future of web history. In addition, the book includes extensive notes, references, and an index.

While reading *The archived web* the reviewer had to continually remind himself of what Brügger stated in the introduction, that this book “is not a practical how-to book” but rather it takes “a more general and theoretical approach” (p. 8). Despite the theoretical nature of the book, the reviewer felt that it was severely lacking in figures and tables that could have better illustrated what the author was trying to convey. Also, at several points it seemed as if the author was repeating information that had been covered in earlier chapters. After a quick glance through the book the reviewer noted almost ten paragraphs that began with the phrase “as previously mentioned,” leading him to conclude that *The archived web* might have been just as effective, or even more so, with a condensed and better organized writing style.

The reviewer found little in this book that could be useful to most library web professionals. Perhaps library archivists may find some of the material interesting. This reviewer thinks the primary target audience for *The archived web* is academicians in the web history field.

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