



# Preserving Electronic Literature

Mariah Gwin, Curator and Web Designer  
Moneca Roath, Videographer  
Kathleen Zoller, Webrecorder and Scalar Specialist  
Faculty Sponsor: Dene Grigar, PhD



## Problem to be Solved

What are the best methods for preserving born-digital, interactive literature for accessibility by future audiences?

## Project Description

Frequent advances in digital technology cause born-digital artifacts to become inaccessible. As scholars become increasingly aware of this phenomenon, it is vital for researchers to come up with methodologies for digital preservation to ensure future access to critical works. In doing so, we preserve both the conventions and cultural attitudes towards digital technology for study and enjoyment.

## Methodologies

In the Electronic Literature Lab, we encounter a variety of digital works in need of preservation. This variety requires careful consideration of the tools and methods we are using. Over time, we have come to rely on pre-existing methodologies that we have built upon to be applicable to born-digital artifacts.

## Code Studies

We analyzed the works' code and strategized how to update it to open standards.

## Platform Studies

We migrated works created in obsolete platforms to modern ones, adjusting back-end code while preserving the original experience and functionality.

## Interview Studies

We captured authors and artists traversing through fragile works of electronic literature on the intended hardware.

## Archival Research

We referenced and maintained physical archives held by the lab to retrieve accurate metadata.

## Feminist Methodologies

We examined works by a diverse range of authors, preserving their knowledge and experiences.

## Textual Studies

We analyzed the original versions of digital files in order to restore missing or altered content.

## Translation Studies

We maintained the original aesthetic and interactivity of various works by translating their behavior using modern web standards.

## Action Research

We performed preservation theories and practices, ensuring that the processes we created were replicable.

## Pathfinders Methodology

We utilized a technique called "Traversals", which involves video documentation of participatory walkthroughs that preserve both the work and a user's experience with it.

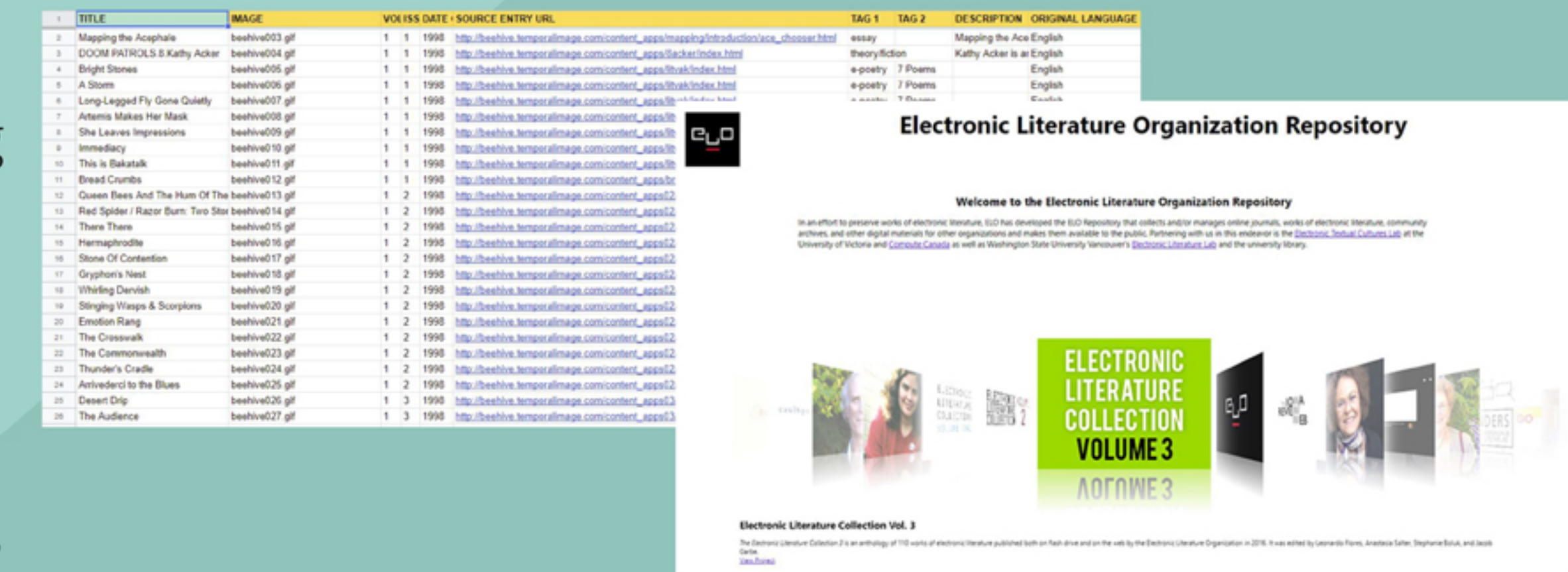
## Case Studies and Findings

We have had the opportunity to work on a number of significant born-digital artifacts within the Electronic Literature community and beyond. Different methodologies were applied to these works and findings were made for each.

### ELO Repository

The ELO Repository contains collections of born-digital works either owned or managed by the Electronic Literature Organization. The goal is to make Electronic Literature discoverable and accessible to the public. We've created metadata spreadsheets to document the works in each collection using the MODS (Metadata Object Description Schema) taxonomy. However, we have found that this is inadequate for classifying digital objects, and have developed a new taxonomy called ELMS (Electronic Literature Metadata Schema) that builds upon MODS but expands the vocabulary. New marc relators such as "VR Developer," "3D Modeler," and "Front-end Developer" that are more applicable to digital artifacts are being incorporated as more work is done on the repository.

<https://hyrax.elo-repository.org>

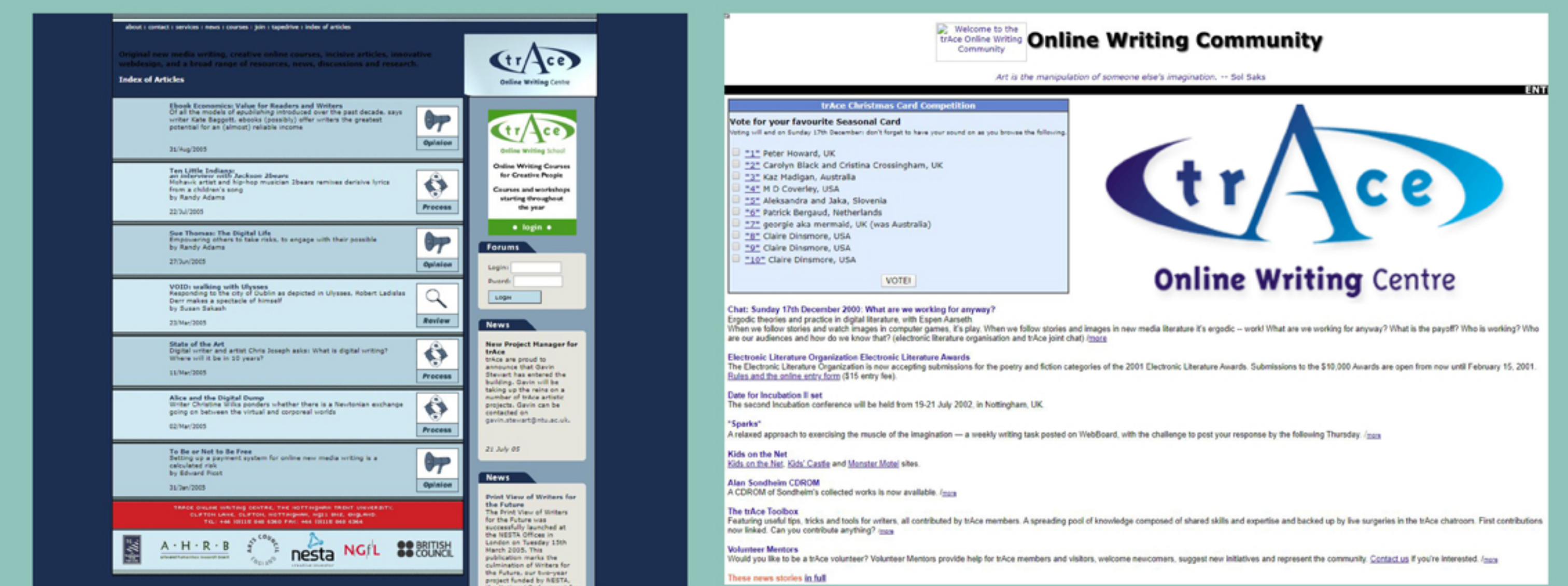


### Action Research

### trAce Online Writing Center

trAce was an online writing community that also published many works of Electronic Literature, and served as a virtual meeting space for scholars and artists. Founded by Sue Thomas, it defined what it meant to be an "online community" when the World Wide Web was only just emerging, allowing participants to explore the new and exciting medium of digital writing. We have used the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to compile the website over a ten-year period, and have obtained the website's HTML for public access. Scholars can view these pulls from the Wayback Machine and analyze the community's growth from over a decade.

<http://dtc-wsuv.org/wp/ell/2020/04/06/conserving-community-the-trace-online-writing-centre/>



### Archival Research

### Code Studies

### Platform Studies

### Feminist Methodologies

### Textual Studies

### Action Research

### Dead Tower

Dead Tower is a 3D experience built in Adobe Flash by Andy Campbell and Mez Breeze. Because Adobe Flash is no longer supported, we utilized Rhizomes Webrecorder tool to convert the piece into .WARC (Web Archive) files, a format used for storing web crawls that will stay supported on the web. Dead Tower is a significant "explorable poem" because it allows users to delve deep into the text and glean meanings they might not have had if presented in a 2D environment. Our efforts have ensured that the work will survive after Adobe Flash is no longer supported.

<http://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=dead-tower>

### Platform Studies

### Feminist Methodologies

### Action Research

### Translation Studies



mariah.gwin@wsu.edu  
moneca.roath@wsu.edu  
kathleen.zoller@wsu.edu