

Telling Stories of the Web

Engaging Public Internet Histories

RESAW 2027 addresses the theme *Engaging Public Internet Histories*, bringing together theoretical, methodological, empirical, and creative reflections on the role and value of public history in shaping understandings of the web of the past. In recent years, web historical research has steadily increased. Histories have more impact when translated into forms that engage wider publics. By drawing on the practices and principles of public history, web history can move beyond academic scholarship to foster dialogue, participation, and critical reflection on the internet's cultural, social, and political significance. Ideally, as [Faye Sayer](#) put it, 'public history in action acts to [...] help communities to understand their place in modern society and the world around them' (Sayer, 2015, p. 3). The conference therefore explores how the stories of the web can be researched, interpreted, communicated, and co-created with diverse audiences, ensuring that internet histories become meaningful public histories.

'The public' in public history should not be seen as monolithic. Therefore, this conference urges scholars to take up the question of how to write not just *about*, but *for* and *with* specific audiences, to do justice to the multivocality of the past. This is increasingly happening amid rapid technological innovation and global conflicts. Phenomena such as polarisation and generative AI increasingly reshape how heritage data is accessed, owned and controlled, and definitions of 'access,' 'memory,' and 'publicness' become blurred. What does it mean to engage in public web history in such contexts, where topics are often highly contemporary and may provoke public debate or backlash? 'The web' is not a fixed object; it means different things at different times for different people, invoking different practices. To adequately preserve digital heritage and write public history, we need to bring together various approaches and perspectives from the field. How can researchers navigate their own positionality and potential vulnerability, particularly for early-career scholars? How do we do justice to personal experiences of (everyday) people without disregarding established narratives of designers and pioneers? Ideally, this call benefits a more lively, representative, and inclusive understanding of web history.

Based on this central theme, we invite scholars, archivists and other professionals to reflect on topics including, but not limited to, the following:

1) Contemporary challenges and technologies

- Impact of societal tensions and developments, such as polarisation and geopolitical conflicts, on public web history.
- Emerging questions concerning the usage of generative AI (e.g. accessibility, surveillance, ownership, research).
- Forms of crisis archiving and the inclusion of citizens in bottom-up processes.
- Potential and blind spots of technostalgic initiatives and collections.

2) Inclusive public histories

- Regional and local histories.
- Marginalised communities, for example, LGBTQ+ communities, the role of women in building the web.
- Non-Western perspectives, particularly from the Global Majority.
- Age and generational experiences of and on the web.

3) Sources and methods

- User-generated content across different timelines (early web, social media, metaverse).
- Reflections on common or novel methods in doing public web history research.
- Including the public: community-driven initiatives, citizen science, participatory action research, oral history.

4) Narrative Forms and Formats

- Data stories (e.g. interactive timelines, emulations, visualisations, interactive interfaces).
- Storytelling and narration (e.g. documentaries, personal reflections, micro-histories or grand-narratives).
- The inclusion of personal sources or private/domestic archives.
- Presentations and exhibitions.

Possible formats

- Individual papers of 15 minutes (500-word abstract).
- Panel sessions consisting of three individual papers of 15 minutes, introduced by a chair (500-word abstract for each paper, a brief 300-word description of the purpose of the panel).
- Other unconventional proposals, such as lightning talks, roundtables, etc., are welcome (300-word abstract).
- Demonstrations and (virtual) exhibitions (500-word abstract including specific requests concerning technology or space).
- “My PhD in 5 Minutes” (300-word abstract).

Acceptance of submissions is based on double-blind peer review.

Possible formats for the pre-conference day

Submissions related to web archives are welcome from all fields and disciplines, and we would particularly encourage workshops related to tools, hands-on, as well as training sessions and demos.

- Workshops, demos or hands-on sessions (500-word abstract, specifying the expected duration).
- Q+A or discussion sessions (for example, for early-career scholars).

The deadline for submissions (including the pre-conference day) is 15 November 2026.

To submit a proposal: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=resaw2027>

See also the conference website: <https://resaw27.neocities.org/>

Timetable

- * 15 November 2026: Deadline for submissions
- * January 2027: Notifications of acceptance
- * February 2027: Preliminary Programme
- * March 2027: Registrations open (fees: 90 euros for advanced scholars, 50 euros for PhD students)
- * 9 June 2027: Pre-conferences and demos
- * 10-11 June 2027: Conference

Local Organizers

University of Groningen

Susan Aasman
Nathalie Fridzema
Marije Miedema
Rik Smit
Jesper Verhoef