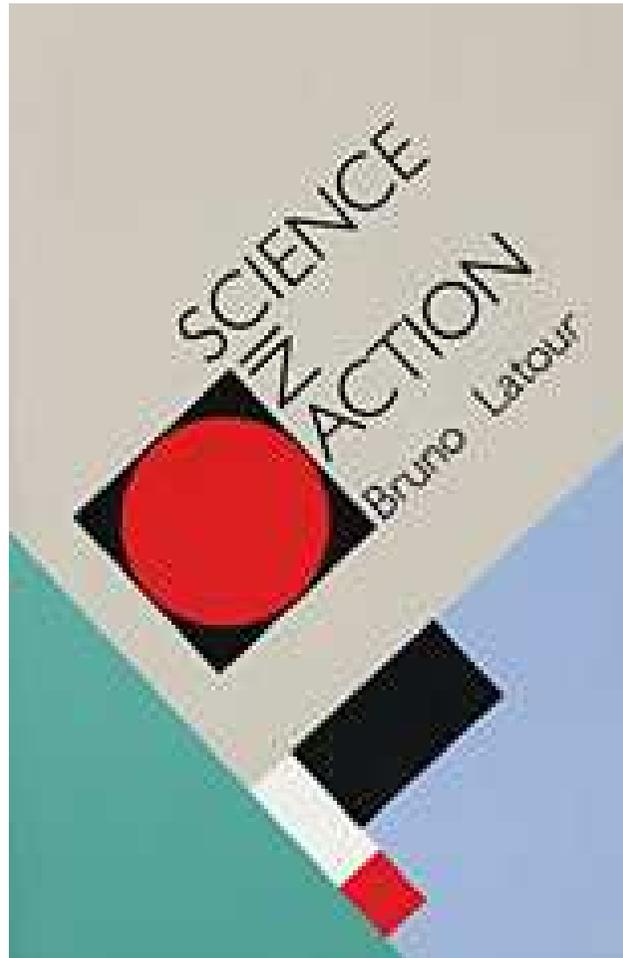# Local voices, worldwide conversations

Developing a meaningful assessment for the online dissemination of cultural heritage projects.
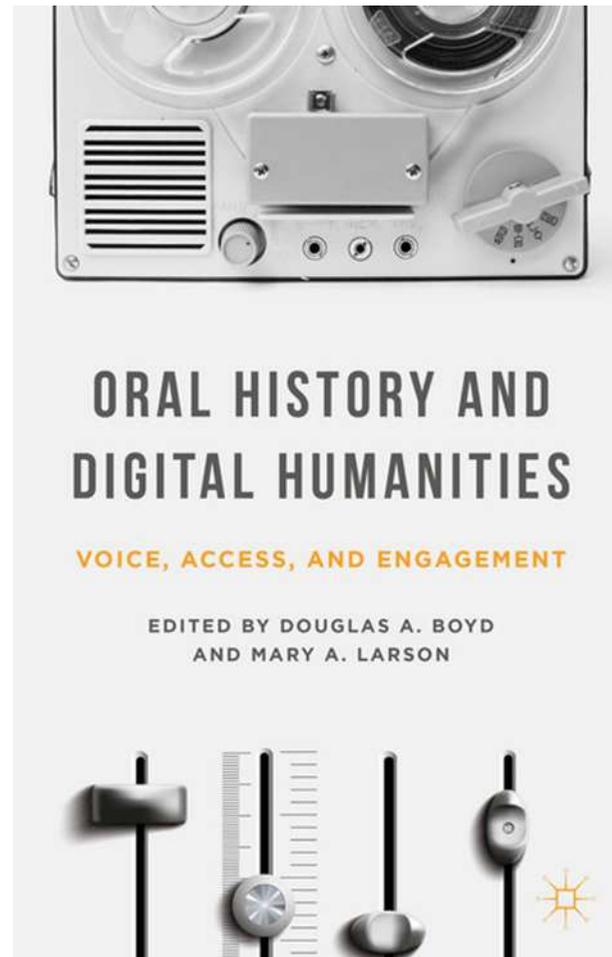
By Penny Johnston

A structured PhD in Digital Arts and Humanities

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*. Harvard University Press.

Boyd, D. and Larson, M. (2015). *Oral History and Digital Humanities. Voice, access and engagement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

"*In the Humanities, the traditional model is that of the lone scholar toiling away in the archive or library only to emerge with a fully realized article or monograph. DH is about making things and not always successfully. Yet... failure is always acceptable and often instructive. One simply pulls out the threads and starts again.*"
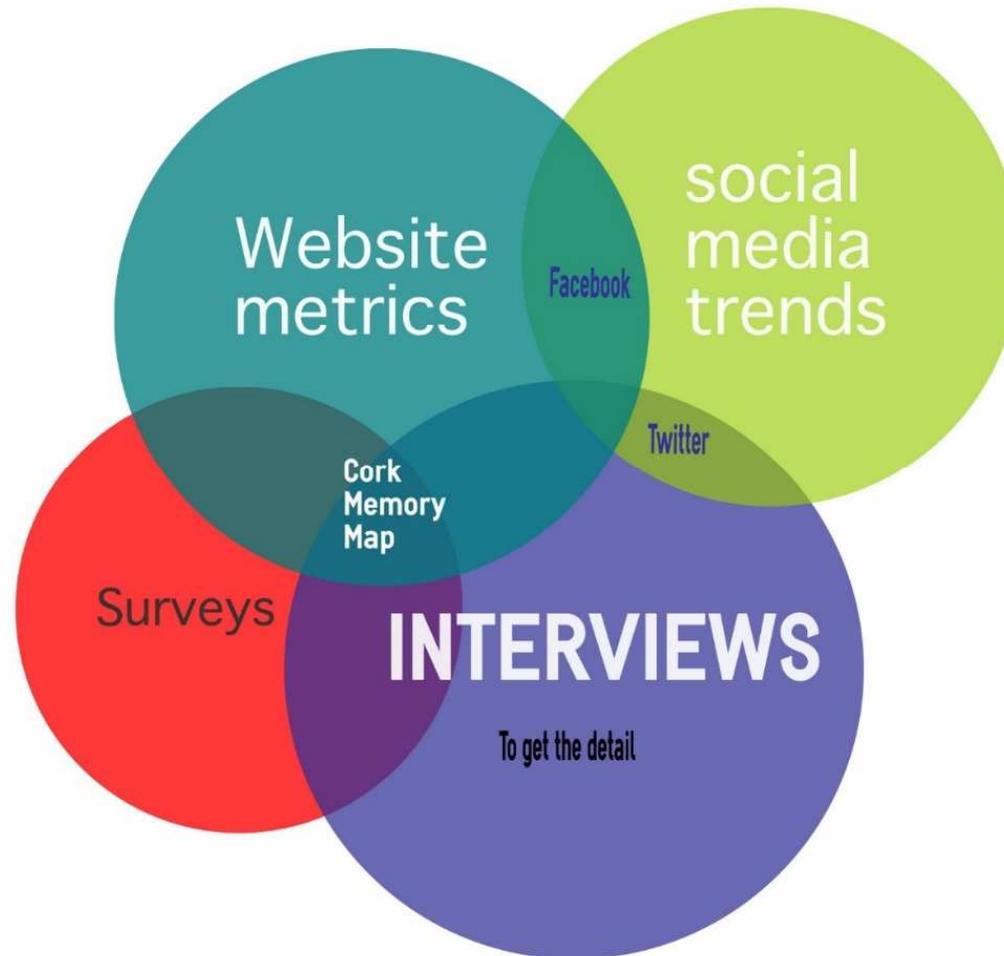(Rehberger 2015, 190).
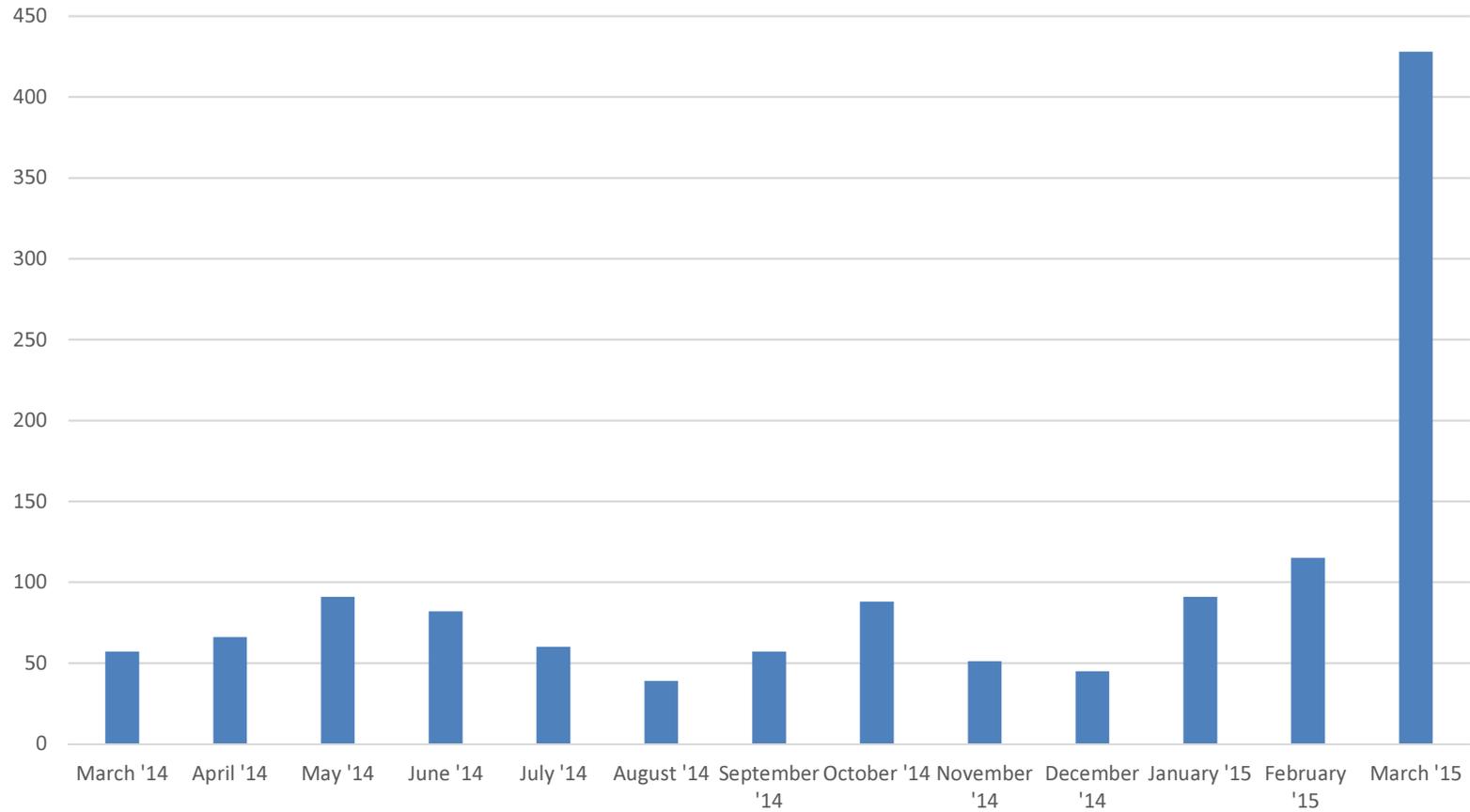
Some original goals & ideas

- Look at how small cultural heritage organisations operate online and use CFP as a case study
- Evaluating the *impact* of CFP digital projects
- Prepare a "How to" guide for digital cultural heritage practitioners
- Methods 1- website & social media metrics (quantitative)
- Methods 2 -broad ethnographic approach to assess the different meanings the project has for different people (qualitative)
- Develop a Cork Memory Map smartphone app
- Introduce a feedback mechanism for the Memory Map
- Develop an outreach programme

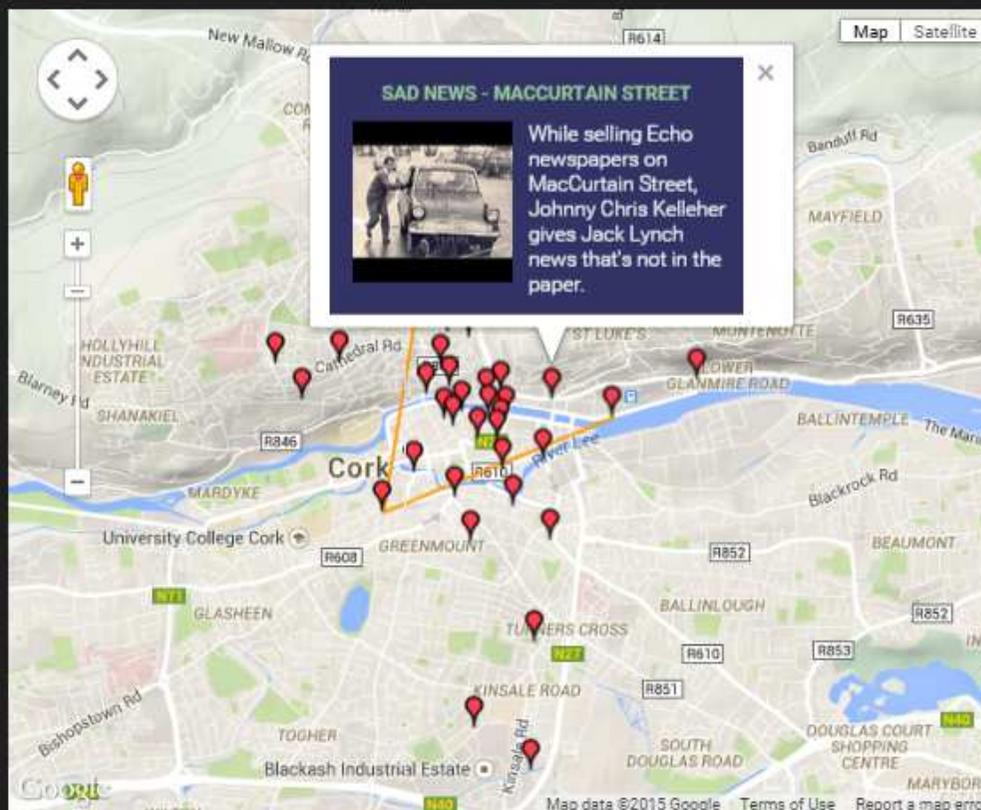# Mixed methods research

approaches to data gathering

Website metrics

social media trends

Facebook

Twitter

Cork Memory Map

Surveys

INTERVIEWS

To get the detail

Page impressions

Google Analytics results: March 2014 to March 2015

Screenshot: Cork Memory Map 16 Jan 2015 www.corkmemorymap.org

An embryonic new Memory Map
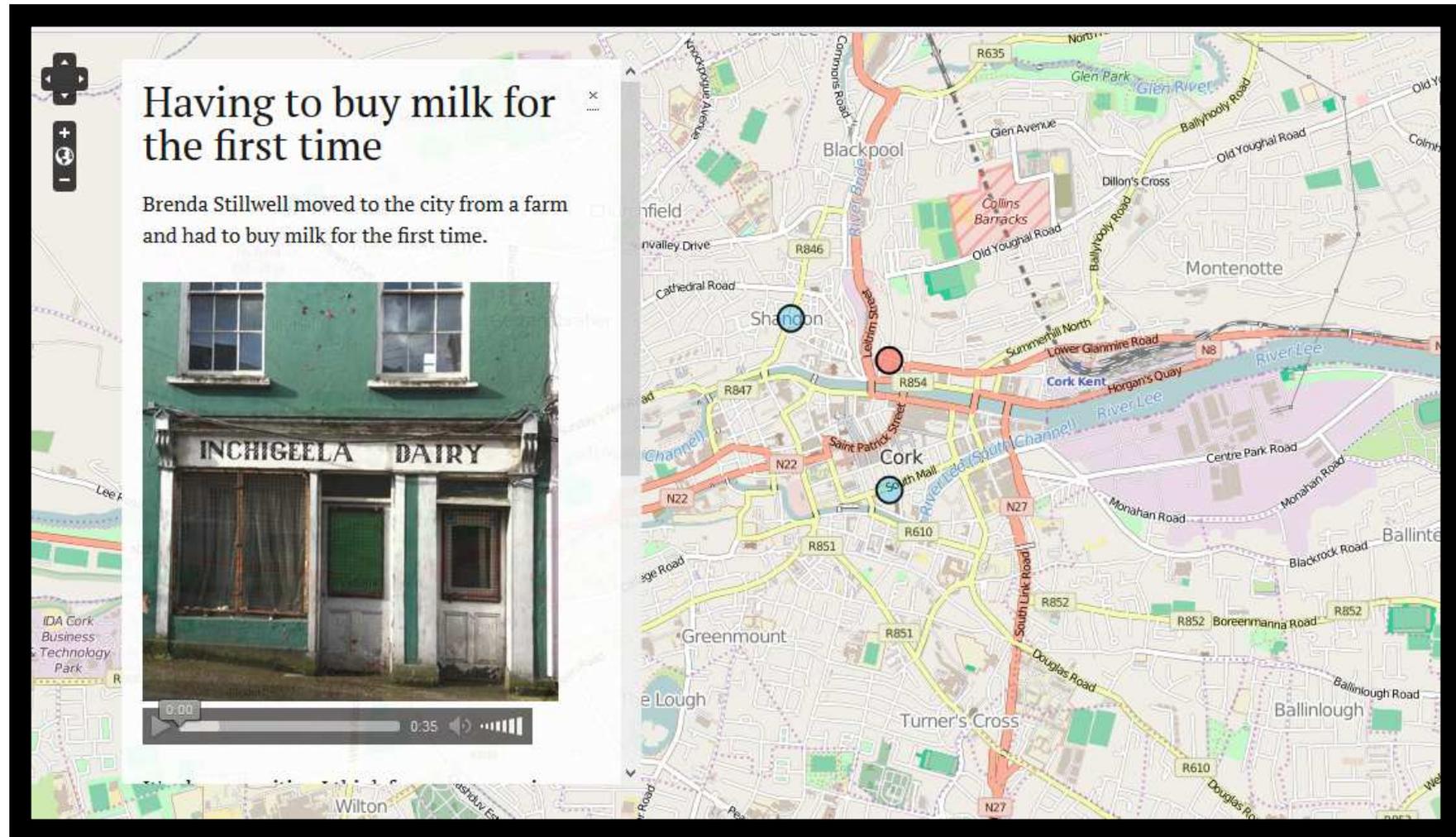
Screenshot: New Memory Map under construction 25 Nov 2015
http://www.storiesofplace.org/neatline/fullscreen/stories-of-place#records/2

Pilot project

Screenshot: Digital oral history North and South Main Streets under construction 25 Nov 2015
http://pennyjohnston.org/exhibits/neatline/show/north-and-south-main-streets

Response

"Straight off though my general sense is that I really like it, it's, like both of us have done a good number of the interviews that are here....and, seeing it this way I'm going, '**God there's loads of really good stuff there**,' so it's obviously bringing out good stuff about the material cos it's striking me even though I'm already familiar with it, so that seems like a strength." (MS)

"And it's such a different way of accessing it, like, d'you know like when I was reading the excerpts this morning it was very much like in a book, which is nice as well but **this just gives it a whole different perspective**." (DC)

Nostalgic utopianism?

Photo: Penny Johnston

- Over-indulgence in a rose-tinted view of the past (Hoberman 2001)
- When "manufacturing local pride constitutes a project goal" there's a possibility that public history can be reduced to "uncritical celebration" (Hurley 2006)
- Losing sight of the larger picture (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988, 142)

Powerful imaginative constructs

- The **good** side to looking back: idea of the place in the past can become a "powerful imaginative construct" spurring action in the present (Hoberman 2001, 39).

- Ideal of practice (in folklore, oral history and digital humanities) – often an underlying belief in the practice as an agent of social change (Rehberger 2015, 193).

OH + DH

- Good ways of narrating the past and understanding the present

- Some planners – argue that OH could be included in the planning process

- Combined OH + DH projects could become sites of "interpretation of place identity and attachment as well" (High and Sworn 2009).

Measuring impact

Impact has acquired a *"narrow and technocratic scope...in policy thinking and practice"*(Belfiore 2015, 96).

"Reframing understanding of research's benefits and impacts moves research away from the easy heuristic of the pharmaceutical spin-off to a more diverse ecological view: this is a critical challenge for academics and policy-makers alike, critical in ensuring that research investments across all disciplines continue to drive socio-economic development even beyond the latest crisis." (Olmos-Peñuela et al. 2015, 74).
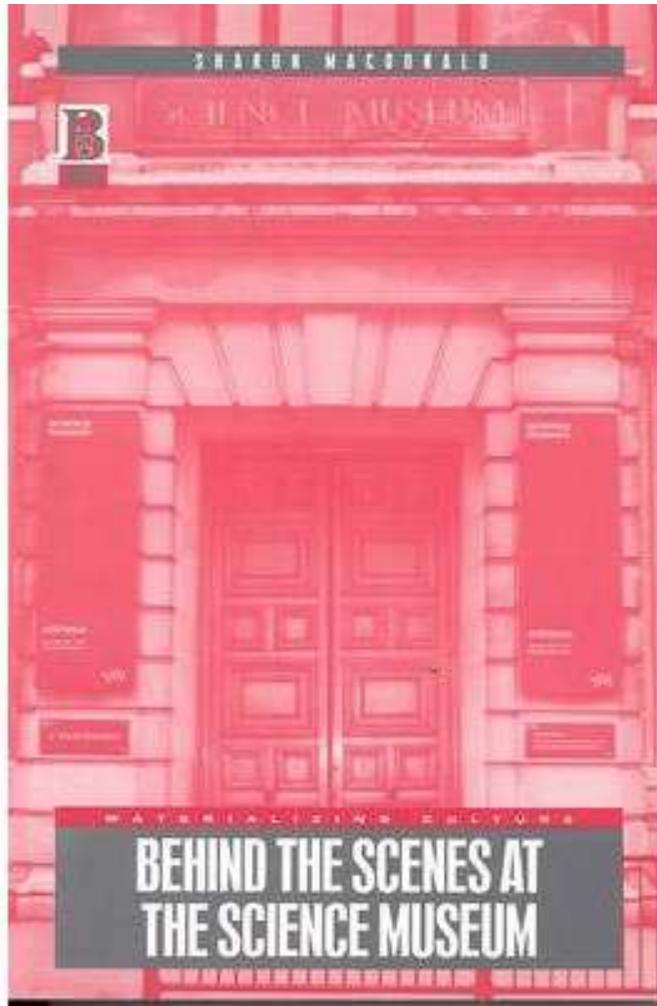
Macdonald, S. (2002). *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*. Bloomsbury Academic.
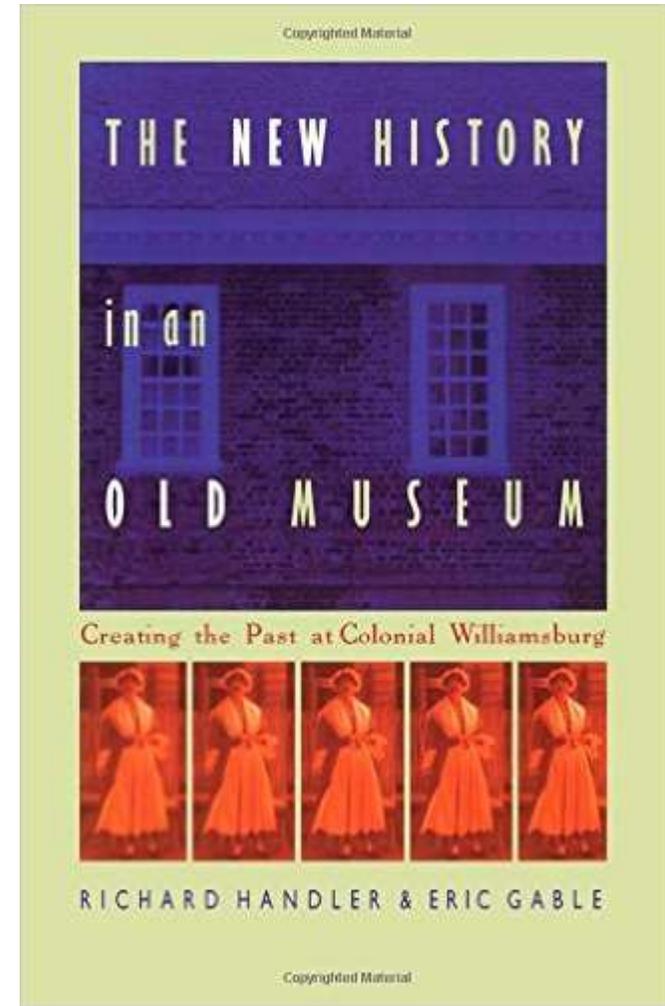
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