'The Texture of the Everyday': Appraising the Values of Women's Diaries and Weblogs.
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For many people, the internet has revolutionized personal record keeping. Archivists must respond to the challenges posed by personal digital records, and soon, or risk an irreversible gap in the archival and historical record. Most of the progress that the archival profession has made over the past three decades in developing strategies and standards for archiving digital records has been in relation to those records created by large governments and corporations; much less satisfactory progress has been made with private personal records created using digital technology. One of the most fascinating of such new media is online computer weblogs. This thesis explores weblogs and, for purposes of comparison, their paper near-equivalent, the personal diary. The analysis demonstrates the values that weblogs hold as potential archival records, in and of themselves and in comparison to their diary "equivalents," and then suggests appraisal concepts and strategies for archivists in collecting weblogs. The emphasis of this study is on women's diaries and weblogs, and gender analysis is incorporated into the discussion.

The research and analysis on women, diaries, blogs, and archives is presented in three main chapters in this study. The first chapter discusses traditional paper-based diaries and their importance to their creators, historians, and other researchers. The reasons women make diaries and the different forms that they take are examined, and these arguments are illustrated with examples from women's diaries held in Manitoba archives.

The second chapter focuses on the phenomenon of the weblog: establishing a definition, discussing different types of weblogs, and identifying ways in which weblogs are similar to and different from traditional diaries. The chapter suggests that while blogs can play the same role in their creators' lives that diaries once filled, they also possess characteristics of other web-based genres that allow them to fill some fundamentally different needs from those that have been addressed by paper-based diaries. The characteristics of weblogs and motivations of their creators will likewise be demonstrated with examples from blogs written by Manitoba women.

The third chapter of the thesis explores the archival appraisal of diaries and weblogs, discussing the literature relating to how archivists have thought of diaries, and personal records more generally, in terms of their evidential, transactional, and informational values, and suggesting additional types of value that weblogs hold for their creators and contemporaries. Such values archivists should be incorporating into the appraisal criteria and acquisition policies.

This thesis concludes by suggesting a possible approach to appraising weblogs and formulating an acquisition and preservation strategy that archives could apply to these records, including a discussion of the technical, legal, logistical, and theoretical challenges that blogs pose for archivists.