The Role of Digital and Public Humanities in Confronting the Past: Survivors' of Ireland's Magdalene Laundries Truth Telling

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9.1 Introduction

The Magdalene Laundries[1] are a prominent part of Irish social history, which operated as philanthropic, lay institutions in the 1700s. The Religious Orders took ownership of the institutions in the mid-1800s until the last Laundry closed in 1996. Over time, the running of the institutions became increasingly punitive, ensuring psychological and physical control of the "penitents" through strict regimes to encourage compliance. The Magdalene Laundries were used by the Irish State and Religious Orders to incarcerate girls and women who were deemed to be immoral, including unmarried mothers, victims of sexual assault, and girls referred through the criminal justice system. The Irish State and Religious Orders are gatekeepers of the "official" archives related to the Magdalene Laundries, restricting all access to the data, which has contributed to an ongoing silencing and marginalization of the women's experiences (O'Mahoney-Yeager and Culleton 2016).

Magdalene institutions were initially established in the mid-eighteenth century in Ireland (and across Europe, the US, Canada, and Australia) as asylums for poor and destitute women, primarily run by religious orders to

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provide opportunities and training to the women (Luddy 2007; Smith 2007). The symbolism of a repentant Mary Magdalene was adopted by the institutions, emphasizing the role of work and penance in the forgiveness of sins. British rule ended in Ireland in 1921, after which the ten remaining Magdalene institutions in the new independent Ireland were afforded a role in contributing to the identity of the new national Irish discourse, which emphasized the moral and puritanical supremacy of Ireland in contrast to her former colonizers (Howell 2003; O'Rourke et al. 2021). The complicity of State and Church in Ireland was established from the 1920s, when the newly constituted Irish State formed its national identity based on a strong Gaelic and Catholic ethos; this complicity was formalized by the Irish State granting the control and daily operations of education, health, welfare entitlements, and religious life to the Catholic Church (O'Mahony and Delanty 2001). The complicity of Church and State in Ireland was further sanctioned by documents such as the Carrigan Report (1931), which established a state-sanctioned precedent criminalizing sex outside marriage, thus establishing a clear State attitude towards sexual immorality which targeted young women while exculpating young men (Smith 2007). Magdalene Laundries, then, provided a powerful mechanism for patriarchal control by the Irish State and Religious Orders, which deemed sexuality the primary cause of immorality in society. After 1922, the Magdalene Laundries were run solely by Catholic orders in Ireland, with the final Laundry closing in 1996.

Testimony collected by The Magdalene Oral History project (O'Donnell 2012) and the Waterford Memories Project[2] (O'Mahoney 2015) demonstrates that girls and women incarcerated in the Laundries were frequently victims of incest and sexual violence, and only a minority had given birth outside wedlock. This testimony is in stark contrast to the national narrative, which maintained that the Laundries existed to rehabilitate "fallen" women. Some had intellectual disabilities, while others had committed minor crimes or were destitute, sent to the Laundries via the criminal justice system, religious orders, or their families (O'Donnell 2012; O'Mahoney 2015; O'Rourke et al. 2021). The McAleese Report (Department of Justice 2013) confirms that the youngest to enter the Magdalene Laundries was nine years old, the oldest 89, with a median age of 20.[3]

Within the Laundries, the regime and living conditions were harsh and punitive; the girls and women were locked in, forced into hard labour (typically Laundry work) without pay, and returned by police if they escaped. The girls had their given names changed, wore a uniform, and spent the day in silence, often only permitted to vocalize in prayer. They slept in cold dormitories with no privacy, poor sanitation, and meagre food rations. Visitors were strictly discouraged and friendships forbidden, and inmates were frequently disappeared (to another Laundry, psychiatric institution, or affiliated Catholic institution) with no warning (O'Donnell 2012).

In response to lobbying the government of Ireland for two years for an investigation into Ireland's Magdalene Laundries, advocacy group Justice for Magdalenes took the case to the United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT), arguing that the exploitation of the girls and women amounted to violations of their human rights. In 2011 the UNCAT requested that

the Irish State investigate the allegations. The Irish Government ratified a committee, chaired by Senator Martin McAleese, to establish the facts of the Irish State's involvement with the Magdalene Laundries. The committee's report was published in 2013, and found significant State involvement in the running of the Laundries between 1922 and 1996.

The McAleese report places little import on survivors' testimony, stating that "the Committee did not make specific findings in relation to [the living and working conditions in the Magdalene Laundries], in light of the small sample of women available" (Department of Justice 2013, 50). This finding was made in the final 2013 report, despite a submission made to the McAleese Committee in August 2012 by the Justice for Magdalenes Research group consisting of a 145-page document collating evidence of State complicity, supported by 796 pages of survivor testimony (JFMR 2012). Furthermore, the archive created by the Committee for the purposes of this investigation is embargoed and not available to the general public or scholars. The Religious Orders which ran the institutions similarly refuse to release their records. This heavy restricting of the archives "points to the role of the Irish state and religious orders as gatekeepers of information and key participants in gendered violence toward survivors" (O'Mahoney-Yeager and Culleton 2016, 134–35). The archival restriction ensures that our knowledge of the Laundries continues to be fractured, as we lack a comprehensive narrative which encapsulates the interconnected cultural, social, and economic trends, which allowed the Laundries to exist in Irish society until 1996.

9.2 The Waterford Memories Project

The Waterford Memories Project (WMP) began in 2013, after the release of the "Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries" by the Department of Justice and Equality (the "McAleese Report"). The report was heavily criticized for being too narrow in scope, as it focused solely on establishing the facts surrounding the extent of the State's involvement with the Laundries. WMP is an oral history driven study in digital humanities, publicly documenting survivor narratives of the Magdalene Laundries in the South-East of Ireland. The project initially aimed to capture and examine the oral histories of those who lived and worked within the Magdalene Laundries and Industrial Schools located in the South-East of Ireland to address the continuing silencing of the Magdalene women and the lacuna of their experiences available to the public (O'Mahoney 2018; O'Mahoney-Yeager and Culleton 2016). The College Street Campus of the South East Technological University (my employer) was purchased in 1994, and is the former site of a convent of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers (commonly known as the Good Shepherd Sisters), as well as the St. Mary's Good Shepherd Laundry and St. Dominick's Industrial School.

Two events occurred around the same time in 2013, which led to the development and launch of the WMP. Firstly, I was engaged in research examining the longitudinal impact of sexual violence and met two women who described their experiences in the Magdalene Laundries. Both had been "penitents" in the Waterford Laundry, in the very building I was now working in. While I knew an Industrial School existed on the premises I never realized that the Laundry also existed on the campus. At the time, news of the the release of the McAleese Report was dominating the media. I felt compelled to understand more about the Laundries and to contribute to shining a light on what these women had experienced in these buildings where I work, which was not memorialized in any way in Waterford. I began by interviewing one of the women I met in my previous research journey. From there, participants reached out to me through word of mouth or in response to hearing me speak about the project. The project's development has been organic, in response to what survivors highlight as important. As a result, there has never been a traditional call for participants, and the recording of the women's stories is ongoing.

The project began as a minimal computing digital humanities project. I am a psychologist by training with no background in technology. I began the project with the relatively simple aim of creating a platform to amplify the women's voices and stories according to their wishes. Chen (2019) suggests that when a novice user is confronted with needing technology for a purpose they should limit to what they need to achieve, use as little infrastructure as possible, and focus on establishing the minimum viable product so that the product can be progressed quickly. Minimal computing strategies made introducing the women's stories to the public simpler. At this stage, there was no financial support for the project and I needed to record and publicly disseminate the stories of survivors. I had to displace my reliance on expertise and learn how to produce, disseminate, and preserve scholarship digitally. Over time, this minimal computing approach to the project has provided the groundwork to apply for financial support for various project outputs.

At its core, the WMP is about aiding the survivors to advance social change; as a result, digital humanities projects like the WMP are contributing to a larger discussion about how technology alters our social and cultural existences (O'Mahoney, 2022). The project brings together both the digital and public humanities to understand the Magdalene Laundries and their relevance to Irish heritage. The humanities broadly consider how we understand and document the human experience, while digital humanities considers this investigation through a digital lens. This chapter will consider the role of the WMP in contributing to affording agency to the Magdalene survivors by providing a public platform for their truth-telling efforts. The methodology of oral history narratives will be critically considered in the context of a digital humanities project. The survivors' narratives demonstrate how the oral histories have a dual purpose of providing both a way for the women to understand the meaning of their experiences, while simultaneously creating a permanent and

public record of these first-hand accounts. Oral histories demonstrate a clear aim to bring history to the public which is of considerable import in addressing the absence of survivor testimony in official histories of the Laundries (Ritchie 2015, 28).

Derrida (1995) has argued that archives can be locations of violence, existing as manifestations of state power which perpetuate the silencing of marginalized voices. In this way, the inaccessibility of both the State and Religious Orders' archives act to perpetuate gendered violence against the survivors, while motivating public forgetting of the Magdalene Laundries. Developed at the intersection of oral history and digital humanities theory and practice, the WMP aims to address this gendered violence, silencing of the women's narratives, and motivated forgetting. In conjunction with other oral history work on documenting Ireland's institutions, this project will contribute to what Stuart Hall has called a "living archive of the diaspora" (Hall 2001, 89). The concept of a living archive for the WMP is one that recognizes that the project exists in perpetuity and will not reach a completion date. A living archive further encourages continued interaction and new ways of thinking about and analysing the digitized project data (as well as the rich information stored within the data itself), while protecting the data against destruction.

The concept of a living archive is not restricted to the continued use of the data in textual analyses, but also in its potential to inform arts and advocacy work. For instance, in 2016 the survivor oral histories were used as a basis for a one-day, multidisciplinary event recognizing the history and memory of the Laundries and Industrial Schools in the South-East of Ireland titled "When Silence Falls: Exploring bodily and literary memory in the Waterford Laundry." This event incorporated a live art durational performance and audio/visual installations in the former Laundry buildings, contextualized by academic talks about the Laundries. Performing arts students and professionals used the oral history testimony as a basis to design individual live performances based on themes identified in the narratives (such as incarceration, silence, etc.), focusing on how site-specific performance can be used to interpret the history of the Magdalene Laundries, revealing the social constructions of that history (O'Mahoney et al. 2021) (Fig. 9.1).

Oral histories can act to "fill in" the historical record, and the events can be recounted decades after they occur, or immediately after an event, to facilitate people's understanding of experiences of events or periods of time (Leavy 2011). But oral histories offer a lot more to scholars. Having worked in the field of Narrative Psychology for many years, I am drawing on this perspective since it affords rich opportunities to examine how people construct stories and meanings of their experiences. As a method, oral history similarly emphasizes the process of meaning-making, and is particularly appropriate for examining "subjective experiences of shifting historical periods" (Leavy 2011, 23). Survivor oral histories therefore provide powerful challenges to the official silencing of the Magdalene story. Oral histories also provide a method for considering how survivors make sense of their past by making both micro-

Fig. 9.1 The College Street Campus of the South East Technological University

and macrolevel connections between their individual memories and collective experiences of the other survivors, and to the mechanisms of the state and religious orders (O'Mahoney-Yeager and Culleton 2016). As Paul Thompson (2000, 6–7) maintains, "Once the life experience of people of all kinds can be used as its raw material, a new dimension is given to history."

However, it is what an oral history methodology offered the women who tell their stories which was of highest import to the WMP. The Magdalene women have experienced a range of physical, psychological, and financial sequelae as a result of their incarceration in the Laundries. Telling their stories publicly is "a subversive act, especially in light of powerful…forces working against it" (Sloan 2014, 273), as the women resist the collective forgetting and continued silencing of their experiences. The oral histories reflect an organized collaboration between the WMP and survivors to address the omission of survivor testimony in the official histories of the Irish State, and are maintained to bring these testimonials to the public. Gathering and analysing these oral histories was essential to documenting Ireland's cultural heritage, which is better achieved by locating the women's stories within a larger social and historical narrative.

9.3   Digital Humanities and Oral Histories in the WMP

From the outset, the Waterford Memories Project was conceptualized and contextualized as a digital humanities (DH) project, "interven[ing] in the way knowledge is produced and constituted at the particular sites where a localized power-discourse prevails" (Harvey 1989, 46). The WMP is a DH project in social justice activism. Rather than using the internet to disseminate essays,

petitions, blogs, etc. regarding the experiences of the survivors of the Magdalene Laundries, the project was designed to marry scholarly investigation with activism, to "build advocacy work into the ordinary work of the humanities" (Liu 2012, 497). The project is premised on the belief that academic scholarship exists for public use and consumption. It becomes the responsibility of DH to translate the academic jargon and abstractions into intuitive, rich, and compelling projects demonstrating the public relevance and value of the humanities and DH. In emphasizing the communication (and import) of the public, the WMP has used multiple digital formats and approaches to bring the academic findings to the public, such as survivor testimony, public performances, academic articles, and educational packs for use in schools. In developing these materials, the WMP emphasizes the co-production of all materials with survivors and other stakeholders. For instance, the educational pack was launched in 2020. The first step of this project involved bringing together stakeholders to deliberate about the format and content of these multi-media resources. The group was comprised of survivors of the Magdalene Laundry; academic experts in education, psychology, culture, and media; student body representatives; a Deputy Principal/secondary school history teacher; a founding member of Justice for Magdalenes; a Librarian/archival expert; Vice-Chair of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society; and local artist/theatre-maker. Co-production and co-design with survivors and other stakeholders are at the heart of the project's work.

DH's emphasis on public scholarship and dissemination of digitized data afforded a framework which directly correlates with my own work in survivor advocacy and activism. It was always essential that the project was (and is) survivor-centred, ensuring that the survivors' voices inform the research project, with the centrality of ethics at all stages of the project. As Eichmann-Kalwara et al. (2018, 75) have argued, "By centering marginalized voices, scholarly institutions have the ability to send messages about who belongs in academia. The same applies to the digital humanities community." My role as Principal Investigator of the project is best perceived as platforming the women's stories and voices and promoting what Boyer (1996) calls the scholarship of engagement, where scholarship is measured by its service to the community and nation. The project website and digitization of the women's stories is a direct action towards social change, challenging the void of archival data restricted by the Irish State and Religious Orders (O'Mahoney 2018).

An extensive amount of literature has debated the meaning and parameters of digital humanities. The broad, comprehensive description of digital humanities by Hughes et al. (2020, 556) explains that digital humanities encapsulates approaches by humanities, arts, and social science scholars and a recognition that engagement with digital tools, techniques, and media can impact and alter how we produce, analyse, and disseminate research and knowledge, all of which is essential in digital humanities scholarship. While this definition emphasizes that digitization has changed how we interact with data, the role of the cultural critique embedded in digital humanities work must also be

considered at all stages of a research project. Culture can be understood "as a unique meaning and information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations, that allows the group to meet basic needs of survival, pursue happiness and well-being, and derive meaning from life" (Matsumoto and Juang 2013, 15).

Culture surrounds us, informing and framing all aspects of our lives. By extension, digital humanities work must consider the cultural context of a project (and its data) in all stages of a project. The oral history interviews of the WMP, for instance, cannot be appreciated without being framed by the culture which surrounds the stories; the economic, political, and social context of life in Ireland. Technocultures are, by extension, "the various identities, practices, values, rituals, hierarchies, and other sources and structures of meanings that are influenced, created by, or expressed through technology consumption" (Kozinets 2019, 621). The study of technocultures, then, examines the nexus of technology and culture, and the expression of that nexus in the patterns of economic and social life.

Since the 2000s, digital humanities has emerged alongside significant cultural changes and advances in technological infrastructure, which facilitated these cultural shifts. Jones (2013, 16) explains that "In this sense, the digital humanities is the humanities everted," the humanities turned inside out, where "the institutional and disciplinary changes are part of a larger cultural shift, a rapid cycle of emergence and convergence in technology and culture" (Jones 2013, 31). In other words, the digital humanities and culture are inseparable, both in theory and practice. The core potential of digitizing the humanities, then, is in the way that "the digital reshapes the representation, sharing, and discussion of knowledge" (Sample 2014, 256). The digital humanities offer a powerful method through which a wide array of data can be both represented and disseminated in a multitude of ways. Mullen (2014, 237) takes this point further, arguing that all scholars exist at some point of a digital humanities spectrum, using digital practices and concepts to some degree, where moving into the digital humanities is a "difference of degree, not kind…we're all digital humanists now."

It is clear that the development of DH is heavily interconnected with cultural, social, and economic trends, the significance of which should be considered as part of any DH project. An emphasis on culture as part of the design (and subsequent analysis and dissemination) offers the most salient framing of digital humanities for work with survivors of Ireland's Magdalene Laundries. The remainder of this chapter will consider the role of digitization in public humanities in confronting a difficult and contested past, namely, that of Ireland's Magdalene Laundries, through the survivors' own oral history testimonies. As Tam (2019, v) explains, "the advent of digital technologies has greatly impacted the way society functions and how culture is (re/)mediated, (re/)produced, consumed, interpreted, and manipulated." This chapter will therefore consider how knowledge of the Laundries is (re/)produced and disseminated in the digital age, and the relevance of this digital dissemination for confronting a difficult past through (digital) truth-telling.

9.3.1   The Benefits of a Digital Humanities Approach for the WMP

The benefits of a digital humanities approach to the project are threefold (Hughes et al. 2020): it enhances existing knowledge about the Laundries through digital tools; it enables new research which would not have been possible without digital methods; and it galvanizes new research questions and possibilities which are only possible through digital methodologies. The following will discuss each of these benefits in turn.

Firstly, a digital humanities approach to the project enhances existing knowledge about the Laundries through digital tools. In the case of the WMP, enhancing existing knowledge primarily focuses on promoting user interaction via different platforms (i.e. audiorecordings of testimony, a visual photographic tour of the former buildings, links to academic analysis, etc.). Put simply, scholars want the public to access recorded oral histories. In the majority of contexts, the participants want their stories heard. It is, therefore, essential for scholars to continue to respond to problems and adapt to new technologies which facilitate user access. Access to digitized data has become greatly facilitated by free (or low cost) programmes, website builders, and the Internet. "The Internet has, quite frankly, blown the hinges from doors of the archive, and *access* has come to have a completely different meaning" (Boyd and Larson 2014, 4). The core data of the WMP focuses on audio-visual recordings of interviews with survivors, visitors, and scholars of the Magdalene Laundries, which can be accessed publicly via the project website. Potential interviewees are given the option to have their oral histories recorded in audio-visual (.mp4) or audio format (.wav), or only in transcribed format (PDF). In my experience, participants have chosen overwhelmingly an audio-visual format. Fourteen years ago, Frisch (2006, 102) commented that scholars universally recognize that due to the data's inaccessibility, the audio-visual components of oral history data are underutilized, "unlistened to and unwatched" due primarily to issues of accessibility of the data. Fourteen years later, scholars can disseminate and make available data at the click of a button. There is a distinct advantage to seeing a person's expressions and hearing their voice, encouraging engagement from listeners. Reading a transcript does not provide us with the plethora of context associated with seeing and hearing the speaker. The richness of the audio-visual interview is a clear example of what Boyd (2014, 79) has called "the digital empowerment of the audio and video in the oral history user experience." As a method for capturing people's stories, oral histories have changed depending on what tools and technology have been available to the scholar to collect, preserve, and retell these stories (Boyd and Larson 2014). These digitization methods have helped to emphasize the importance of the role of voice in considering history and culture and, more importantly, provided a way to preserve survivor stories in times of contested histories (Fig. 9.2).

Since the WMP interviews are recorded as video files the dissemination of the oral histories via the website acts to both preserve the recording,

Fig. 9.2 The landing page and projects page of The Waterford Memories Project website

while maintaining the integrity of the video interview as a primary source. Respecting the integrity of the videos as a primary source has additional and essential relevance to scholars' examination of the work, as we share equal access to the same data and format. This is often not the case in disseminated interview scholarship, which typically provides brief excerpts without access to the full interview conducted. Open access to the full remit of data analysed by a scholar will allow for increased public visibility of data and analysis,

increased opportunity for scholarly debate, and (ideally) increased reliability of results and findings as a result. The question of which form of recording has primacy has merit (e.g. the original audio-visual format, audio format, or transcript generated from the recording), but potentially misses the essential need for context when considering a participant's story. In the case of the WMP, it is the survivor who chooses whether the story should be audio-visual, audio, and/or text format, and not the scholar. The survivor also chooses whether to release the data immediately or to hold the interview for a predetermined amount of time, as well as whether they will use their name or a pseudonym. These are important distinctions and contribute to the preservation of the project metadata as it provides context information.

In June 2018, a two-day event in Dublin called "Dublin Honours Magdalenes" brought together 230 survivors of the Laundries. As part of this event, a formal listening exercise was held to gather views from survivors on how the Laundries should be remembered by future generations. The summary report from the exercise clearly demonstrated the women's desire to have their stories heard, so that we might learn from the past and ensure the coercive confinement they endured does not happen again (O'Donnell and McGettrick 2020, 21). Similarly, the centering of the survivors in all aspects of the WMP is essential to respecting the wishes of the survivors, and the advocacy and activism agenda of the project. Survivors have told the WMP:

> It'll take more than me to speak out because I think it's too hidden. Since I've come back, I've realised now bout us Irish, we love to think that we're loved around the world. We give a false impression about ourselves, we can't accept that we're corrupt, we're immoral…so wrong about human rights, right across the board, and then on top of it women and children's human rights. (Elizabeth)

> Well, I'd like the public to know what happened, and to know the truth, and hopefully it will never happen to any of them, or their children. Because with knowing what went on you don't know if it's still going on, because it's hidden. And that's what I think. They still kept doing it until the 70s and the 80s because it was all hidden. So when it comes out in the open, hopefully, hopefully it will never, never, never happen again. (Kathleen)

> Well, I love that it's highlighted… It's them people out there, highlighting, giving out to people out there, there is that side to it that we're grateful to, that we're thankful for. (Maureen)

It is in responding to this desire expressed by the survivors that the WMP focuses strongly on public scholarship. Today, access and usability of various interview recording formats is primarily a matter of preference rather than effort. However, recording and preserving the context of why a particular format is used contributes to preserving information which is related to interpreting the survivor narratives into the future. The project's informed consent

documentation asks survivors which format they prefer (audio-visual, audio; and/or written transcript), as well as how they wish to be identified (real name versus pseudonym). Survivors are encouraged to take time to think through these options carefully as once an interview is disseminated online we cannot guarantee that someone unknown has not saved or made a copy of the recording. For this reason, the project currently has a small number of recordings which are being held (but not yet publicly released) as per survivors' wishes. Careful, protected storage of this data is essential but is also an added lens through which to understand the lifetime effects of coercive confinement, and the perpetuation of feelings of shame associated with these institutions. Thus, the benefits of a digital humanities approach to the project is clearly demonstrated in its use of digital tools to enhance stakeholder interaction with the project outputs.

The second and third benefits of a digital humanities approach to the project highlighted earlier by Hughes et al. (2020) enable new research which would not have been possible without digital methods and galvanize new research questions and possibilities which are only possible through digital methodologies. These two benefits are highly interrelated in the WMP, which has involved continued collaboration with other humanities disciplines, as well as computational and information technology fields. Two examples of project strands (an educational resource pack and an interactive map of the Waterford Laundry) to demonstrate these benefits will be considered.

A secondary aim of the WMP is to create useful educational material in order to facilitate the primary aim of recording and disseminating the survivors' narratives. The focus on the development of inclusive educational tools, which should be openly and freely available, has formed how dissemination is viewed by the project. Simply recording the narratives and placing them online does not meet the survivors' desire for "Public education, and in particular the education of school children," which was a consistent theme in the Dublin Honours Magdalenes Listening Exercise (O'Donnell and McGettrick 2020, 33). A focus on the life-long impact of a lack of education is consistent across the women who have told their stories to the WMP:

> Well I left and I didn't, I couldn't read. I used to copy like someone would be in front of me and look over but I never received an education. I was too frightened. Frightened the whole time I was there. No, I couldn't do nothing, nothing. (Martha)

> They deprived us of an education. We worked the Laundries instead of getting an education… it's very humiliating when you're sitting there with your child and they're trying to do homework and you can't do it. You cannot do it. (Deirdre)

> I wanted to be a nurse, but God help me, I thought I was a nobody, I had no confidence at all. 'Cos the nuns used to say you were a nobody, and you'll never be anything at all. They used to say it to the other poor girls, like we

were orphans, like, they used to say that to the poor girls, you know what I mean? You'll never be anything, your mother was a prostitute. (Marina)

Returning to the concept of a living archive, much digitized dissemination of the work of the WMP is about creating a repository for cultural resource materials on the study of institutional abuse, but it is also the goal of the WMP that these resources are proactively used as educational pedagogical tools. Many of the strands of the project have been publicly funded and should be openly publicly accessible, as a method of honouring the survivors' experience of being excluded from education and their emphasis on its importance.

While all aspects of the project could be deemed to have educational value, a specifically developed educational activity and resource pack designed for 16–18-year-old students and their teachers was launched in March this year[4] (O'Mahoney and McCarthy 2020). This pack uses the former Magdalene Laundry in Waterford as a case study for students and the public to explore local culture and heritage through a set of research-informed, multi-media resources. The activities in each section are designed for students to discuss, consider, question, reflect on and respond to the experiences of women in the Waterford Laundry. The pack was developed based on discussions with 13 stakeholders representing academic experts in education, psychology, culture, and media; student body representatives; a Deputy Principal/secondary school history teacher; expert in Magdalene Laundry history/member of Justice for Magdalenes; survivors of the Magdalene Laundry; a Librarian/archival expert; Vice-Chair of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society; and local artist/live art facilitator. The stakeholders considered the format and inclusion of primary sources (oral history interviews with survivors, podcasts with experts, etc.); secondary sources (historical records, Justice for Magdalenes Research archive, local and national library and museum archives, media coverage, etc.); and academic analysis (peer-reviewed journal articles and books, media content, etc.). The final 60-page resource pack launched on the project website in March 2020 incorporates best practice across multiple domains in education, history, psychology, and humanities and addresses many important themes such as human rights and social change via the case study of Waterford's Magdalene Laundry. The pack incorporates a range of resources from academic texts, exercises, video links, survivor testimony, music, poetry, etc., as well as appendices containing tasks for teachers to facilitate their role in engaging with the materials.

The format and design of the pack would not have been possible without new, low-cost digital methods. The pack is available in HTML5 "Flipbook" form (which can be downloaded in PDF form). A flipbook is an interactive, online publication that is designed to "look and feel" like a physical book or magazine (complete with page-turning sound effects, page shadows, etc.). The benefit for the user is the book is free and available to download from the website. Media and embedded items are clickable right from the Flipbook, which allows for a more interactive (and linked) user experience. For example,

in Fig. 9.3, the user has activities to complete on the left page (where live links will take them to the assigned task material) before listening to a clip from a survivor's oral history on the right (which will play when clicked) (Fig. 9.3).

The stakeholders were involved in the process of co-creating the educational resource pack; after all, "digital Humanities = Co-creation" (Presner and Schnapp 2009, para. 23). A shared goal of oral historians and digital humanists (and, indeed, the Magdalene women themselves) is recognizing that data and information is a social asset, which should be shared and consumed by the public. Digital humanities and oral histories demonstrate a clear aim to provide public access to historical information, which is of considerable import in addressing the dearth of survivor testimony in official histories of the Laundries. In doing so, the project contributes to making visible the content of the project and a cultural heritage collection which has been hidden and inaccessible, and which continues to be contested.

A third and final example of Hughes et al.'s (2020) benefit of a digital humanities approach to the project galvanizes new research questions and possibilities which are only possible through digital methodologies. I have recently joined the Centre for INformation SYstems and TEchno-culture (INSYTE) research group at the South East Technological University as a Senior Researcher. At my initial meeting with the group I presented the work I have been doing with the Waterford Memories Project and a discussion developed about a number of architectural master plan schematics I had recently come across, mapping out the planned building changes when the Waterford
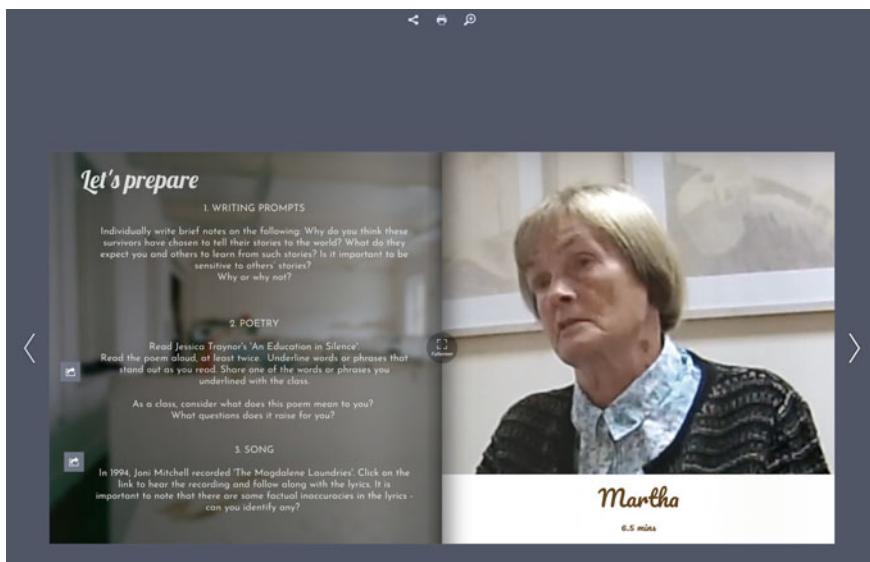

Fig. 9.3 Sample screenshot from the *Exploring Waterford's Magdalene Heritage: An activity and resource pack*

Laundry was purchased by the Waterford Institute of Technology (currently the South East Technological University) in the mid-90s. This initial discussion has now developed into a piece of research (which has been funded by the Irish Research Council), which will use Interactive Mapping to explore what Smith (2007) has called "the architecture of containment" in Waterford's Magdalene Laundry. The project brings together expertise in digital humanities (Cultural Studies, Psychology, and Information Technology), in order to develop an educational tool for learning about Waterford's former Magdalene Laundry, highlighting the import of our social history, cultural and built heritage in an interdisciplinary STEAM project. The project involves creating high definition scans of three architectural images of the footprint of the complex in Waterford. These scans will be further programmed to allow the user to interact by "clicking" on various rooms and locations on the map. This will open various resources (ranging from textual data to audio clips) for the user, providing historical information and data about the building and people who lived there. The digital map will be free and publicly available from the Waterford Memories Project website in 2021. Before engaging with IT expertise via INSYTE I would have been unable, as a solo scholar, to generate the methodology and procedure to achieve the goal of digitizing the images and encoding them into an interactive map. Digital humanities can address the intersections between society and culture with technology at multiple points, offering exciting innovations through the galvanizing of new research questions and possibilities in humanities, which are only possible through digital methodologies.

In both educational project strands discussed here, the emphasis on collaboration and interdisciplinarity in the WMP is paramount in delivering on the ethos of public scholarship and offers new and innovative methodologies for how we are to answer the survivors' calls to "protect younger generations from a similar fate" through education (O'Donnell and McGettrick 2020, 33). "It should be under social history…It should be compulsory…I'd like them to read the whole history of the Magdalene Laundries" commented one of the survivors (ibid.). However, Boyd (2014) warns us that if we do not create an enhanced user experience and adapt to accommodate changing user demands and expectations our digitized audio-visual will not be used, echoing the benefit of a digital humanities approach to the WMP, which considers the user experience offered by the interface itself. Even today, despite the availability of digitized audio-visual material, scholars prefer a transcript as the ability to seek and find specific information is expedited (Boyd 2014). An enhanced user experience is reinforced by connecting listeners to the voice (and, ideally, image) of the speaker where possible. However, rather than an "either or" situation, transcripts of the interviews, alongside the audio-visual interview, can further facilitate text-based analysis to complement other forms of scholarship.

A word of warning is required about the creation of a set of digital data for educational purposes; ease of access to digital information should not equate

to an unconditional acceptance of the validity or reliability of the information. Archiving the silenced testimony of the Magdalene women is important. However, this archive is not final and complete, and does not purport to ever be complete. In this way, the WMP replicates at least some of the hierarchies and exclusions exemplified in the controlled State archives. We select and prioritize information as "experts" in order to maintain some logic on the project website and rely on our academic training and expertise, as well as financial support from funders in order to do so. The contrast of this, however, is an archive where there are no selection processes for materials uploaded and deposited, no commitment to preserve the materials, and no process to ensure validity or reliability of materials or data. As a core aim of the WMP is to make the invisible or hidden visible, the project works to ensure that the content can be shared and used in a variety of contexts, but we must remain cognizant that scholars involved in the storage of data and creation of archives will shape those archives. It is acknowledging that my role as Principal Investigator is inextricable from the project, which led to conceptualizing the WMP as a living archive. Recognizing the ongoing and open-ended nature of the work means that the project (and its metadata) is available to scholars in the future who may challenge the shaping of data and analyses, presenting alternative interpretations. As Hall (2001, 90) maintains, "it is this ongoing dispute that is the stuff of a discursive tradition." In order to meet these living archive (future) goals, the significance of recording the metadata of an archive as essential contextual information for interpretation of stored data becomes clearer.

The WMP has recently turned its attention to the value of the project's metadata, both as an avenue for additional analysis, as well as to future-proof the project data. In the context of a research project, metadata is typically created at project level and data level. The project level metadata contains the "who, what, where, when, why," providing context to understand why the data was collected and how it was utilized, while the data level includes more granular information such as the data type and acquisition details (Lorente and Castillo 2021). The WMP is in the process of working with South East Technological University Libraries to archive the WMP with the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI). We intend to maintain the ethos and objectives of the WMP in a new digital environment, while taking advantage of the DRI's ability to disseminate its digital collections to international repositories (specifically Europeana). These steps ensure that the WMP is safely preserved and made available to a wider international community.

Clearly, metadata is an essential indicator of people's behaviour and engagement with the project's educational resources going forward. For instance, website data from April 2021 demonstrates that visitors to the site spend the most time on the recordings page, with a large rise in traffic to the activity and resource pack (very likely the result of a talk on the resource hosted by Waterford Libraries held in the same month). Almost half of the site visitors

were direct referral to the website, followed by 17% from Google. Furthermore, the academic publications from the project are beginning to receive citations in academic publications, demonstrating research engagement with the materials.

Metadata is becoming increasingly important in human rights advocacy, particularly when documentation, images, and video contribute to a bank of "evidence" and access to official data is restricted. For instance, metadata about how the interviews are being used (and by who, when, and where) adds value to the original recording, and informs about how people are engaging with the project website. With this in mind, we are in the process of identifying new ways to capture and query the project metadata. For example, project student volunteers are being asked to document their experiences of working with the data and project to contribute to the overall picture of the research and archival process for future generations to consider. While the primary focus of the WMP is to safely store and provide access to the survivor testimony, metadata provides us with a guide for how to further disseminate and highlight the project and outputs, and, importantly, how to more completely capture and store the processes of the project.

9.4 Concluding Comments

The WMP was developed in response to the release of the 2013 McAleese report as a direct challenge to many of the assumptions on which Governmental digital archives are built and communicated. However, the digital and digitization of cultural phenomena have raised many complex questions about memory, knowledge production, and dissemination where "technologies offer new futures for our pasts; [and] the past and present are increasingly thought through in terms of future access and preservation" (Taylor 2010, 2). What is clear is that digital culture and digitization of the humanities have revolutionized how we produce, present, interpret, and research (Tam 2019). Some cultural texts, forms, and practices are transformed through this process, while other new cultural forms and interactions are created.

However, as Taylor (2010, 3) reminds us, "we have always lived in a 'mixed' reality' [where] the embodied, the archival, and the digital overlap and work together and mutually construct each other." Highlighting the (often neglected) central role of cultural criticism in the digital humanities is premised on interdisciplinary scholarship "so as to extend reflection on core instrumental technologies in cultural and historical directions," which at least partially involves facilitating research outside and beyond the academy in advocacy work, especially when the arts and humanities are at risk of continued systematic defunding. Examining sociocultural meaning-making is essential to the analysis of the Laundries and the digitized data of the WMP. The culture of the WMP is embedded within the wider local and national Irish culture, and understanding these various levels of embedded cultural context allows

for a more informed engagement with internationally relevant issues such as institutionalization and human rights violations.

There is a time sensitive demand to record narratives of the Magdalene survivors, as the women are elderly. Our "anxiety about loss and forgetting," as Taylor (2010, 15) calls it, might explain "our current obsession with archives and the nostalgia both for embodiment and for the object…—the need to preserve not just *things* (documents, bones, fossils) but ways of *thinking* and *knowing*—sociability, affect, emotions, gestures, memories, etc., and *processes*— i.e. the ways in which we work, select, transmit, access, and preserve." Hall (2001, 92) maintains that the activity of archiving is always critical, historically located, contested, open to future challenges, and disruptive as we "re-open the closed structures into which they have ossified." The opening of any archive to continue contributions or analysis involves bearing witness to the experiences documented therein. As such, individuals visiting the digitized collection of the WMP "become part of the collective discourse of the Magdalene story" as they bear witness to the historical trauma documented in the archive (O'Mahoney 2018, 13).[5] This is essential both to challenge and grow the data in the archive, the subsequent analyses by scholars, and to ensure the women's stories do not remain "unlistened to and unwatched" (Frisch 2006, 102).

A continued analysis of the project metadata will increase our understanding of the reach and impact of the archive. These oral histories demonstrate a clear aim to bring "meaningful history to a public audience" (Ritchie 2015, 28), where the digital feeds back into the traditional textual scholarship of research and dissemination. In documenting survivor narratives, the WMP challenges the withheld archives of the Irish Government and Religious Orders and lacuna of survivor testimony, countering the continued silencing of the Magdalene women in a direct action towards social change.

NOTES

1. The institutions referred to as "Magdalene Laundries" take their name from St. Mary Magdalene, whose name is associated with both contrasting histories (i.e. a reformed prostitute versus a companion of Jesus) as well as different spellings (i.e. Magdalene versus Magdalen). The image of Mary Magdalene as a "fallen" woman inspired the institutions which were initially named "Magdalen Asylums." The additional "e" in the name has dominated contemporary references to the saint and is the preferred spelling used by Justice for Magdalenes Research, a leading survivor advocacy group. This chapter has therefore adopted the spelling of "Magdalene."
2. The Waterford Memories Project site can be accessed from www.waterfordmem ories.com.
3. The McAleese Report data is based on "8,852 girls and women for whom this data is available" where the largest concentration of girls and women were aged between 15 and 21 (16.5% of entrants were aged 15–16; 20.1% aged 17–18; and 19% aged 19–21) (Department of Justice 2013).

4. *Exploring Waterford's Magdalene Heritage: An activity and resource pack* is available from https://www.waterfordmemories.com/activity-and-resource-pack.
5. Naturally, this process of bearing witness has ethical implications. There is a complex debate about whether "trigger warnings" are necessary or helpful, but the WMP errs on the side of caution. We provide a content warning on the webpage for the recordings, including a link to a list of international supports.

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