GABRIELA ACEVES SEPÚLVEDA

[Re]Activating Mamá Pina's Cookbook

http://www.criticalmediartstudio.com/RemediatingMamaPina/

KEYWORDS archives, cooking, family, Mexico, remediation

FIGURE 1. [Re]Activating Mama Pina's Cookbook, http://www.criticalmediartstudio.com/RemediatingMamaPina/.

In the broadest sense of the term, data are bits of information gathered to inform historical, social, and scientific processes. Long before the digital era, our data was collected, classified, and analyzed to design governmental policy, influence consumer habits, and establish proper civic behavior and normative gender identities. While scholars have debated the historical roots, uses, and management of data, fundamentally data are the substance of the archive. The ways in which digital and material data are collected, read, and made available has long been a source of debate.[1] Through different modes of reading—against or along
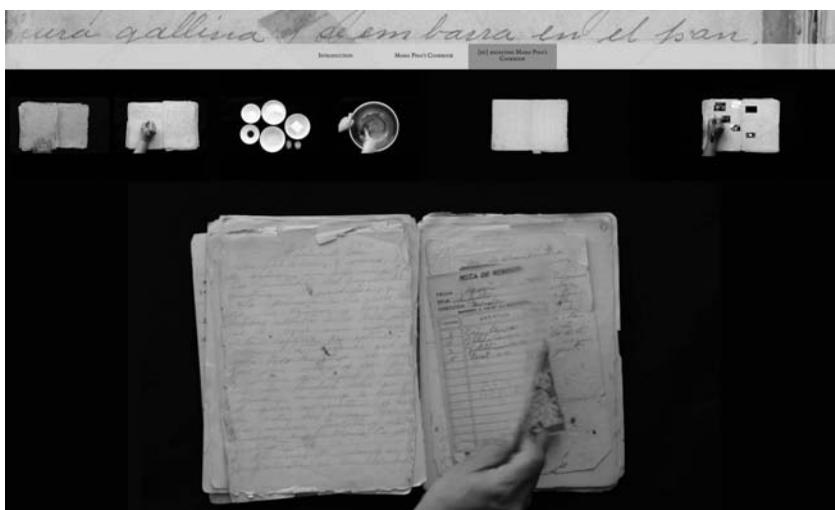
FIGURE 2. *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17, web adaptation, collaborations map.

the grain—feminist and postcolonial scholars have uncovered silenced voices, untangled hierarchies of historical production, scrutinized gender biases, and made visible how certain sexual identities are condemned in traditional archival practices.[2] Others have scrutinized the exclusionary mechanisms of the archive by expanding its limits to include oral traditions and reenactments as powerful and valid archival mechanisms in the process of knowledge transfer from generation to generation.[3] These diverse configurations of the archive have played a critical role in questioning the authority of those who determine what is historically valuable and in dismantling dominant structures that have erased diverse ways of being and oral traditions. Nonetheless, as Kate Eichhorn argues, more remains to be done to understand the role of women as agents of the archive.[4]

[Re]Activating Mamá Pina's Cookbook is a digital art project that engages with Eichhorn's interest in understanding the role of women as agents of the archive in our digital era (fig. 1). It proposes digital remediation as a strategy to reactivate forms of domestic writing that have been traditionally excluded from the archive. Specifically, it provides access to a family cookbook handwritten by three generations of women in Guadalajara, Mexico (1885–2014), in the form of digital scans and limited transcribed texts. The site also contains a web adaptation of my four-channel video art installation *Remediating Mamá Pina's Cookbook* (2015–16), which includes diverse creative responses to the cookbook (fig. 2). While the project provides some access to the source, it is not meant to be

	INTRODUCTION	MAMA PINA'S COOKBOOK	[RE] MEDIATING MAMA PINA'S COOKBOOK

CALLIGRAPHY EXERCISES	RECIPES			KNITTING INSTRUCTIONS
	DESSERTS	MEALS & DRESSINGS	SOUPS & SALADS	
1. a	1. Isla flotante	1. Pastel de Pollo	1. Sopa de papa	1. Pantalón largo con zapatos
2. a	2. Carlota Malako	2. Chartreusse de Pollo	2. Sopa de Jericalla	2. Zapatos Difíciles
3. a	3. Galletas Flamencas	3. Mayonesa	3. Salsa para Ensalada	3. Saquito para Niño
4. a	4. Trufas de Chocolate	4. Otra Mayonesa	4. Ensalada de Camarones	4. Camiseta practica para niño
5. a	5. Barquillos Flamencos	5. Filete Mexicano	5. Caldo Gallego	5. Tablillas de Arroz
6. a	6. Otros Barquillos	6. Carne	6. Sopa de Garbanzo	
7. a	7. Galletas de Higo y Nuez	7. Macarrones	7. Sopa de Pescado	
8. a	8. Pastel de Chocolate	8. Pechugas de Pollo	8. Consomé Alemán	
9. b	9. Galletas de Miel y Cacahuate	9. Meat Pudding	9. Sopa de Poro	
10. c	10. Galletas con dátil y nuez	10. Guachinango con Crema	10. Otra Sopa de Harina	
11. d	11. Galletas de pasas	11. Chicharrón de Harina	11. Sopa Alemana	
12. "el trabajo es fuente de riqueza"	12. Rollo de nuez	12. Receta de Marmon Teresa	12. Sopa de Sahagu	
13. f	13. Pasta de pie c/ Relleno de Manzana	13. Pan de Fécula de Papa	13. Sopa de Galletas	
14. "La pereza almuerza con la abundancia come con la miseria y cena con la verguenza"	14. Galletas de nuez y chocolate	14. Torta de Papa	14. Sopa de Leche	
15. g	15. Pie de Nuez #1	15. Calabacitas Rellenas	15. Sopa de Elote	
16. g	16. Pie de Nuez #2	16. Sandwiches	16. Sopa de Gallina	
17. h	17. Pie de Chabacano	17. Pollo en Crema	17. Sopa de Queso Fresco	
18. k	18. Pan de Geiger de Norma	18. Indian Pudding	18. Sopa de Bolitas	
19. l	19. Cakes para el desayuno	19. Sardine Loaf	19. Sopa de Tortilla	
20. o, p, q, r, s, t	20. Puding	20. Lomo envinado	20. Sopa de Carne	
21. o, p, q, r, s, t	21. Panque huevos magdalenas	21. Dulce de J.M.	21. Sopa de Maicena	
22. o, p, q, r, s, t	22. Magdalenas	22. Soufflé de Queso	22. Sopa de Papa y Almendra	
23. . sa, se, si, sa, su, ta, te, ti, to, tu	23. Turrón de Almendra	23. Bolitas Vino Blanco	23. Sopa de Garbanzo	
	24. Leche Imperial	24. Menudo	24. Sopa de Calabaza	
	25. Gelatina de Plátano	25. Relleno para Pavo al Horno	25. Sopa de Arroz a la Nieve	
	26. Salsa de Chocolate	26. Chiles en Frio	26. Sopa de Tortuga	
	27. Torta Arlequín	27. Estofado	27. Sopa de Tallarín	
	28. Nieve de Chocolate	28. Chiles en Vinagre	28. Sopa de Cebada	
	29. Torta de Crema	29. Manzanas	29. Sopa de Macarrones	
	30. Soufflé de Camarones	30. Coles	30. Sopa de Carne	
	31. Panecitos para té	31. Carne Molida al Horno	31. Sopa de Cabeza de Ternera	
	32. Ponche de Naranja	32. Bacalao a la Vizcaina	32. Sopa Napolitana	
	33. Flan	33. Firturas de Cholte		

FIGURE 3. [Re]Activating Mama Pina's Cookbook, cookbook index home.

a complete and accessible database of the cookbook. Rather, it offers traces and fragments for new points of departure, alternative modes of human interpretation and engagement with the digital archive, while questioning understandings of who and what the agents of the digital archive are, as well as its limits, its insufficiencies, and its potential.

The cookbook was handwritten by my great-grandmother Mamá Pina (b. Guadalajara, Mexico, 1885–1976) and was passed on to my grandmother, Gabriela Margarita (1918–1997), and her twin sister, Teresa Marcela (1918–1990), who continued to handwrite recipes in it. Eventually it was passed on to my mother, María Concepción Gabriela (b. 1944), who continued the process.[5] The cookbook also records other forms of writing, such as calligraphy exercises, possibly done by a child in the household. [Re]Activating Mamá Pina's Cookbook continues with the collaborative method of writing established in the cookbook and suggests ways to continue and reactivate the process digitally.

The website is divided into three sections. The first describes a brief history of the cookbook and the web adaptation of *Remediating Mamá Pina's Cookbook*. The second section contains a clickable index of the book (fig. 3). The index is divided into three main categories according to recipe type and other forms of writing included in the cookbook: knitting instructions,

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CARLOTA RUSA

CANTIDADES

- Almendra 375 gramos
- Mantequilla 1 cuadrito de kilo
- Azucar muy molida medio kilo
- Cocoa al gusto un poco de mermelada de fresa, 5 soletas y tantito carmin

PROCEDIMENTO

Se pone la almendra a remojar desde la víspera en agua, al día siguiente de muele por varias veces hasta que no se el levanten grumos, se bate la mantequilla hasta que este como una crema, y se le revuelve la azúcar, luego se le pone allí la almendra y se sigue batiendo un rato por ultimo se le agrega una o dos cucharaditas de vainilla; con esta pasta de hace tres partes una se tiñe con cocoa, otra se deja del color y la tercera se tiñe con el carmín vegetal. En un molde se acomoda un lienzo no mojado y exprimido que sobre de ancho para que lo cubra todo, allí se pone una parte de la almendra teñida con la cocoa, luego las soletas, paradas en medio y la otra parte teñida con carmín y la parte blanca se cubre muy bien con el lienzo y se deja en el hielo hasta la víspera.

FIGURE 4. [Re]Activating Mama Pina's Cookbook, lightbox with scanned pages and transcriptions.

calligraphy exercises, recipes. Through the index, the user can access scans of a limited number of pages from the cookbook, a transcription in Spanish, and a series of creative reactions to the recipes developed by several colleagues whom I invited to respond to some of the recipes in any media format (fig. 4). There is also the option to browse the book in its original order, but not all recipes are transcribed. The third section of the website contains the web adaptation of *Remediating Mamá Pina's Cookbook*, a series of videos that can be played simultaneously and have the possibility of live interaction (fig. 5). Each video records acts of remediation that attempt to reactivate the affective traces and lived experiences in the handwritten domestic record, as well as the absences that are introduced as the record is passed down from generation to generation.
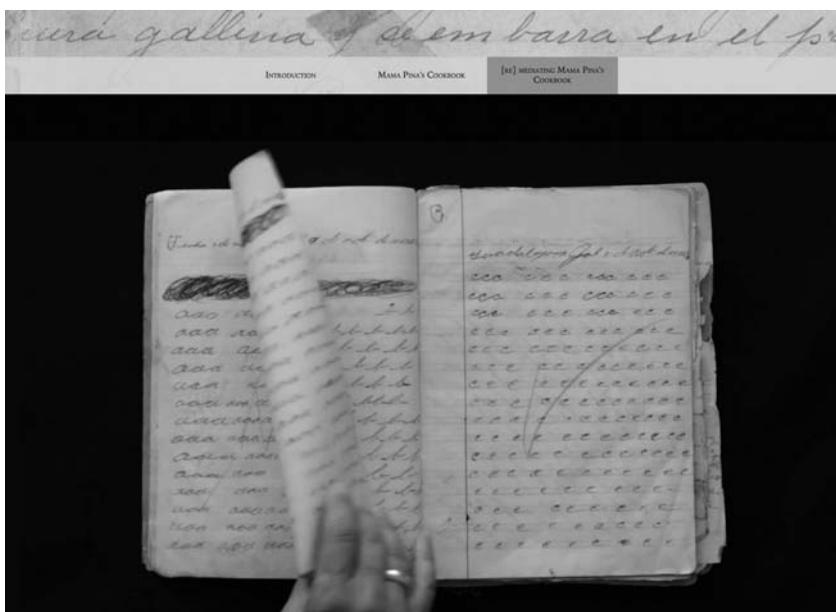
FIGURE 5. *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17, web adaptation, main navigation video.

The first video serves as a navigation device. It shows my hand turning the pages of the cookbook. As the pages turn, links to other videos appear in the pages. The second video shows my attempts to learn the different handwriting styles recorded in Mamá Pina's cookbook (fig. 6). This video remediates both the handwritten source and the performative act of turning the pages of the cookbook by producing a digital record of these two acts. The third video shows the process of cooking one of the recipes as it is read out loud by my mother via Skype. In this case, the traditional way in which these recipes were cooked in the same kitchen and enjoyed together in the same household is remediated through the use of a digital communication application that enables long-distance cooking (fig. 7).

The fourth video is an interactive channel that invites viewers' live responses to one of the recipes in the cookbook; viewers are also welcome to write a memory of a personal domestic experience using a mouse or stylus pen (fig. 8). These responses are not recorded, but slowly disappear as the user types or draws onto the image. This interaction mimics the absences inherent in the archival record and questions the stability of the digital in capturing data. The last video documents the collaborations of colleagues who were invited to respond to

FIGURE 6. *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17, web adaptation, second video.

FIGURE 7. *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17, web adaptation, third video.

the recipes from the cookbook, using a media format of their choice (fig. 9). A selection of twenty-five recipes were sent to forty people via email without translation or transcription. The responses included digital images, audio
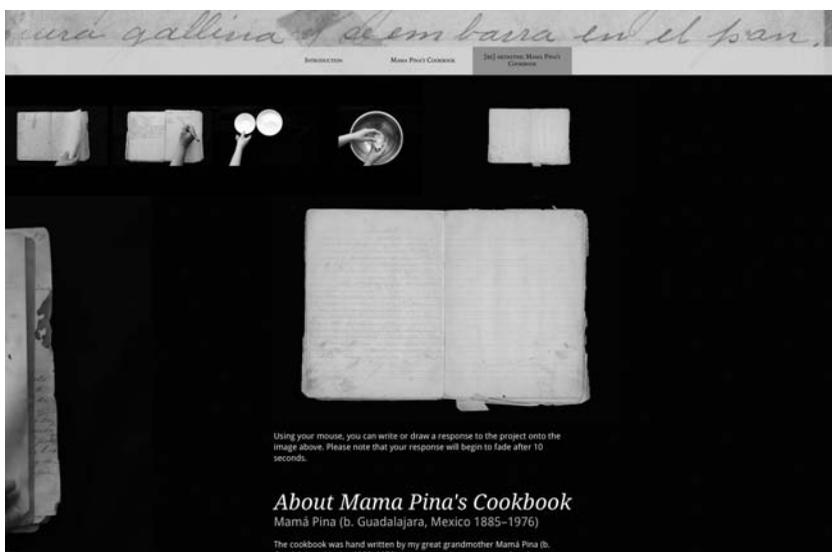
FIGURE 8. *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17, web adaptation, interactive video.
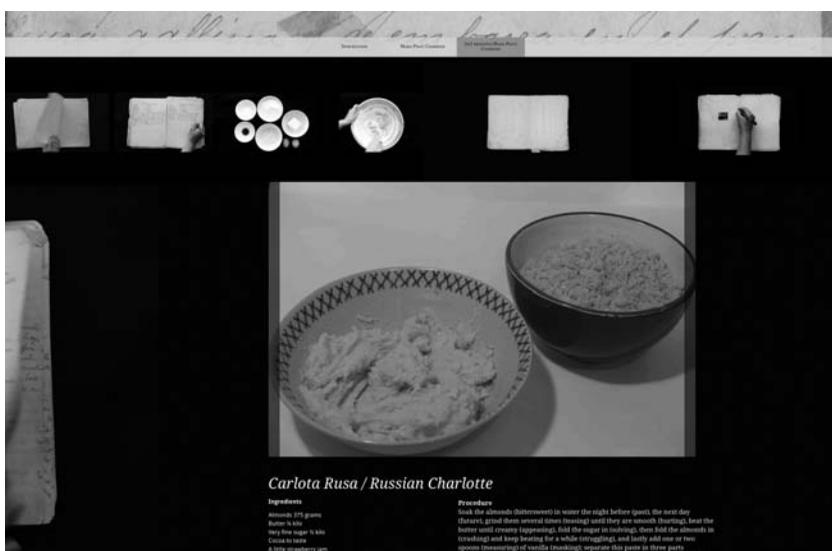

FIGURE 9. *Remediating Mama Pina's Cookbook*, 2015–17, web adaptation, individual page of collaborations, featuring work by Alessandra Santos.

recordings, videos, and documentation of family gatherings and conversations. Edited together in a single channel of video or viewable in individual web pages via a link on the main video, these collaborations reactivate the handwritten record while unpacking its absences, creating new experiences that remediate the recipes. ▪

GABRIELA ACEVES SEPÚLVEDA is an assistant professor in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University. She is an interdisciplinary media artist and cultural historian whose research focuses on Latin American feminist media and the history and practice of contemporary art and design. She is currently working on a monograph on the histories of feminist media in 1970s Mexico. Her articles have been published in *Platform: Journal of Media and Communication* and *Artelogie: Recherches sur les arts, le patrimoine et la littérature de l'Amérique latine.*

NOTES

1. See Lisa Gitelman, ed., *"Raw Data" Is an Oxymoron* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

2. See Ana Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 247–72; Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

3. See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Rebecca Schneider, "Archive Performance Remains," *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (2001): 100–108.

4. Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

5. I received the cookbook from my mother in 2014.