Some Thoughts on "Digital Bibliography"

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Digitization of research materials, especially in the field of social science and humanities, promises the development of new kinds of research methods, and new possibilities for collaborative research. But dependency on digitized material may lead to less attention to—and therefore loss of—the original materials that are digitized. And because digital storage of data is dependent on particular hardware and software, and because that hardware and software quickly become obsolete following technological changes and market demands, it is risky to expect digital storage to be long-lasting.

If scholars are to be responsible for introducing new research techniques and methods of access to research data, then they must also accept the responsibility of understanding the current fragility of digital media and attempt to find an proper way of handling digitized materials and data in terms of transmitting it intact to future generations.

To do so, my suggestion is that it will be efficient to apply the analogy of "critical bibliography" to such digital material. I refer to this as a "digital bibliography" in my paper. I try to define digital material from various perspectives and to point out issues of hardware — and software — dependence from a practical point of view.

I also refer to "cinema bibliography," meaning techniques that should precede the digitalization of moving picture material.

Finally, I describe the various aspects of human error that might occur during the process of digitization by taking an example how the Toyota Foundation currently handles grant database system. I mention, too, a new trend toward Web archiving as an extension of local databases. And, as an appendix, I introduce the "Album Tools" that I created to handle a database of images.