

# **artistic shadow libraries**

**Creating Commons**

**20 – 24 March 2019**

**Find the File Festival  
Haus der Kulturen der Welt  
Part of The New Alphabet**



Kenneth Goldsmith  
*The Poetry of Archiving*  
(28:13)  
Project: [ubu.com](http://ubu.com)  
Link video:  
[vimeo.com/60377169](https://vimeo.com/60377169)



Sean Dockray  
*Practices of Sharing Knowledge* (28:16)  
Project: [aaaaarg.fail](http://aaaaarg.fail)  
Link video:  
[vimeo.com/325021102](https://vimeo.com/325021102)

Kenneth Goldsmith is a New York-based poet, writer, editor and founder of Ubu Web, a massive online repository of avant-garde art. His artistic practice is based on the idea that nothing new needs to be created, which is why for him 'uncreative writing' and building archives are similar practices. Ubu-Web comprises of thousands of works of concrete poetry, sound poetry, sound art, experimental film, multimedia archives, video, dance, and a variety of other genres and formats. Most of the content on Ubu is hard to find elsewhere, being out of print, or simply never been made available for wide dissemination. The project is as much about the legal and social ramifications of its self-created distribution and archiving system as it is about the content hosted on the site.

Sean Dockray is an artist and initiator of the knowledge-sharing platforms ThePublicSchool and aaaaarg. aaaaarg is an online library and open source platform for freely sharing books and texts. It has its origin in collaborative working groups where resources were gathered in 'online bookshelves.' The project eventually evolved as part of the self-organized educational project known as 'The Public School' where it served as a repository for shared study materials. From there it grew to become a major online resource for publications in the field of philosophy, art and political theory with tens of thousands of users, containing material in many different languages. The underlying infrastructure as well as the contents are the result of a collaborative effort to which various programmers and the users and editors of the site regularly contribute.



Marcell Mars  
Tomislav Medak  
*Caring for the Public  
Library* (32:41)  
Project:  
memoryoftheworld.com  
Link video:  
[vimeo.com/325000943](https://vimeo.com/325000943)

Marcell Mars (researcher and programmer) & Tomislav Medak (philosopher) work together on the project Memory of the World. They use the concept of the public library as a narrative device to address questions of general access to knowledge and how this has shifted in the digital age. As everyone has the tools to build their own library, they advocate for a new form of public library, which consists of interconnected private libraries. This mobilization of individual actors would help to generate a necessary discourse on the limiting aspects of intellectual property. Apart from their work on creating technical infrastructure for their project, they organize digitization campaigns for endangered knowledges, develop tools for sharing books and discursive formats such as exhibitions and texts.



Jan Gerber  
Sebastian Lütgert  
*Expanding Cinema*  
(30:19)  
Project: [0xbd.org](http://0xbd.org)  
Link video:  
[vimeo.com/324979970](https://vimeo.com/324979970)

Sebastian Lütgert & Jan Gerber are two artists and programmers who developed the movie database 0xbd and its underlying software [pan.do/ra](http://pan.do/ra). The more than 15,000 films in the database are objects that cover films hard to find online. 0xbd is not just a database for films but treats film as a veritable digital object, which allows new ways of dealing with films. The project offers a number of special features such as the visualization of the timeline, time-based annotations, additional information and interlinking with other objects and information, and allows for in-depth search. The project stands in the tradition of autonomous archives and other critical media practices and has collaborated with artists and political activists worldwide. The software as well as the movies are available for free.



Dušan Barok  
*From Notepad to Cultural  
Resource (27:36)*  
Project: [monoskop.org](http://monoskop.org)  
Link video:  
[vimeo.com/324968617](https://vimeo.com/324968617)

Dušan Barok is a researcher, artist and cultural activist based in Amsterdam. His practice involves networked media, participatory events and experimental publishing, and he runs and edits Monoskop. Monoskop is a media wiki that evolved from linking and contextualizing information on Eastern European experimental and media arts to host relevant files, such as books, texts, documents and media files, and thus became a publishing initiative in its own right. Due to its constant growth, Monoskop has transformed from a special interest archive to become a significant cultural resource. Today the wiki comprises of 6,744 entries and 13,616 documents, and the related wordpress log introduces new publications on a regular basis. Increasingly, Monoskop also triggers off-line events, frequently with cultural institutions that have come to appreciate the unique resources of this autonomous archive.

## Creating Commons

The interviews have been conducted as part of the research project *Creating Commons* that explores specific contemporary cultural practices. The investigated archive projects provide access to cultural resources by building technical infrastructures, develop communities around the resources and negotiate the terms of us as part of the commoning processes. In this way, they care for specific cultural goods and make sure these goods remain widely accessible, which is seen as a response to the development of increasing cultural enclosures. Due to the various issues the projects address and their working methodology, they also have an essential discursive value.

The projects take their inspiration from shadow libraries, an ecosystem of large-scale peer-produced pirate libraries such as LibGen and Sci-Hub that provide unauthorized and free access to copyrighted publications. What the five projects have in common is that they are all initiated and run by artists who understand their related work as aesthetic practice.

*Creating Commons* is a 3-year research project based at the University of the Arts in Zürich. The project is run by Cornelia Sollfrank, Felix Stalder and Shusha Niederberger and was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF).



<http://creatingcommons.zhdk.ch>