

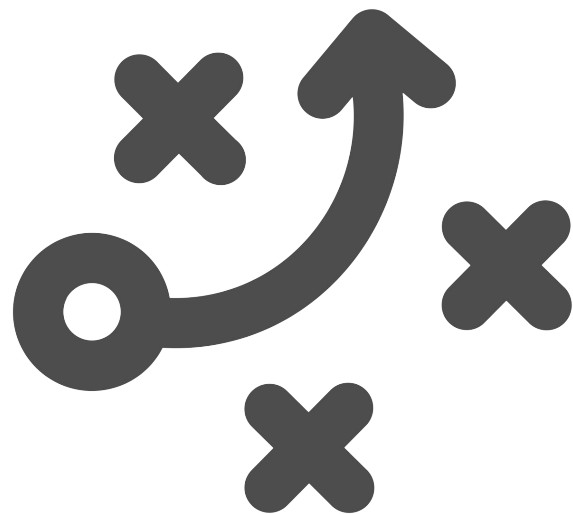
# Lowering the Barrier to Access: The Archives Unleashed Project

**Nick Ruest** (York University)  
**Ian Milligan** (University of Waterloo)



# Plan for The Talk

- Introduction
- The Problem
- Our Interdisciplinary Team
- Analysis at Scale with Archives Unleashed Tools
  - Toolkit
  - Cloud
  - Notebooks
- Caveats
- Conclusions



# The Problem



# Why should we care about web archives?



How we preserve and disseminate cultural information has dramatically changed;

Since ~1996, how we remember has dramatically altered:

- In scope
- In speed
- In scale
- And beyond...



# What opportunities do they present?

The way that we preserve our culture is changing;

- **Scale:** Internet Archive has 635 billion URLs; 40PB of unique data (and non-Internet Archive collectors probably have about the same again).
- **Scope:** Data that never before would have been collected is now being collected about people who aren't traditionally in the historical record.

Any researcher tackling post-1996 topics will realistically need to understand the vast arrays of text, image, etc. that comprise our modern cultural record.

**The Wayback Machine isn't enough; will need to explore data at scale.**



You can't study the 1990s  
without web archives.

And historians aren't ready...



# Why aren't historians ready?

- Part of the reason that historians aren't ready are **skills**;
  - **Skillset One:** Needing basics of working with data at scale (NLP, stats, basic data science skills)
  - **Skillset Two:** Understanding how data is constructed (i.e. why data was collected, why it wasn't collected, basics of cleaning/normalizing data)
  - **Skillset Three:** Everything that goes into being a historian (i.e. what keeps us busy all the time right now!)
- The other part of the reason that historians aren't ready are **platforms**;
- We need to try to help with both of these dimensions...



Let's look at the **platform problem** first...

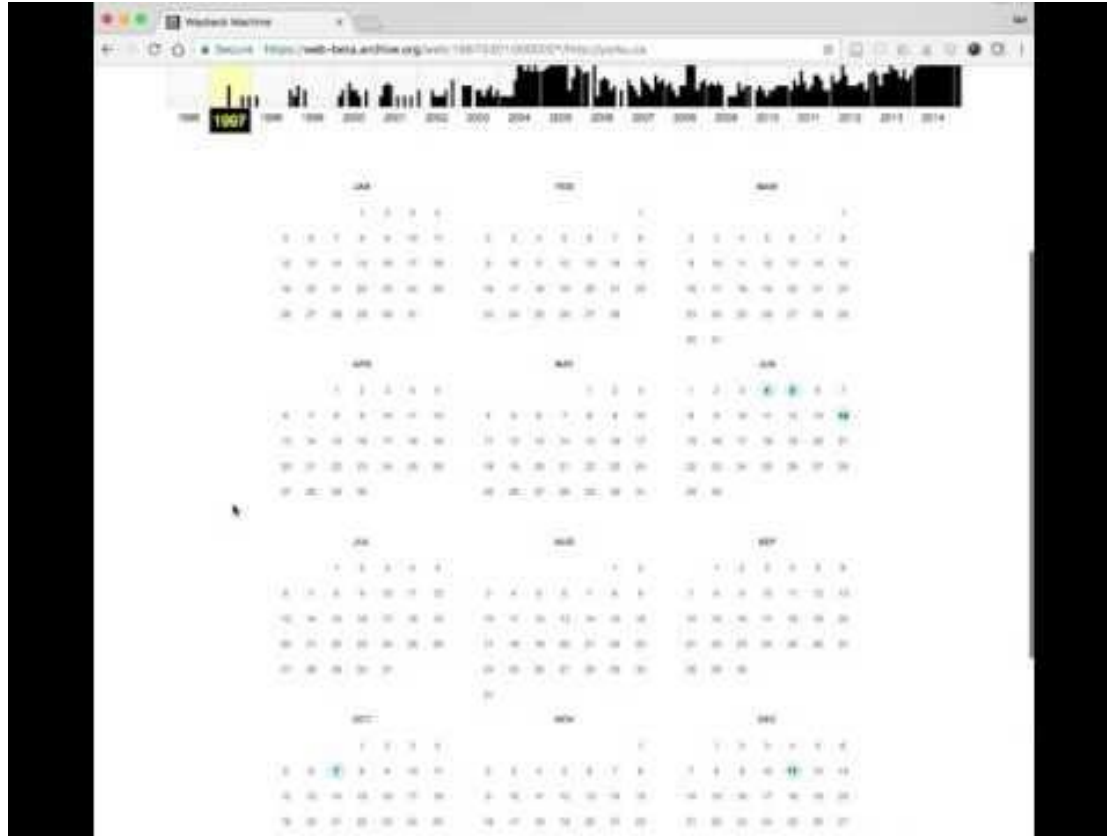




**Access at scale has lagged.**



# Option One: The Wayback Machine



# Option One: The Wayback Machine

- **Wayback Machine is great if you know what you're looking for;**
  - Ever-improving keyword search functionality
  - Represents a great stride in accessibility more generally
- **But it necessarily isn't suited for more detailed research queries:**
  - (and it would be overkill for it to do so)
  - You may want to do complicated queries (i.e. websites that say X and link to Y);
  - You may want to do exploratory text mining;
  - You may want to work with images en masse;
  - Etc.



So to work with web archives at scale, you're then turning to WARC files...



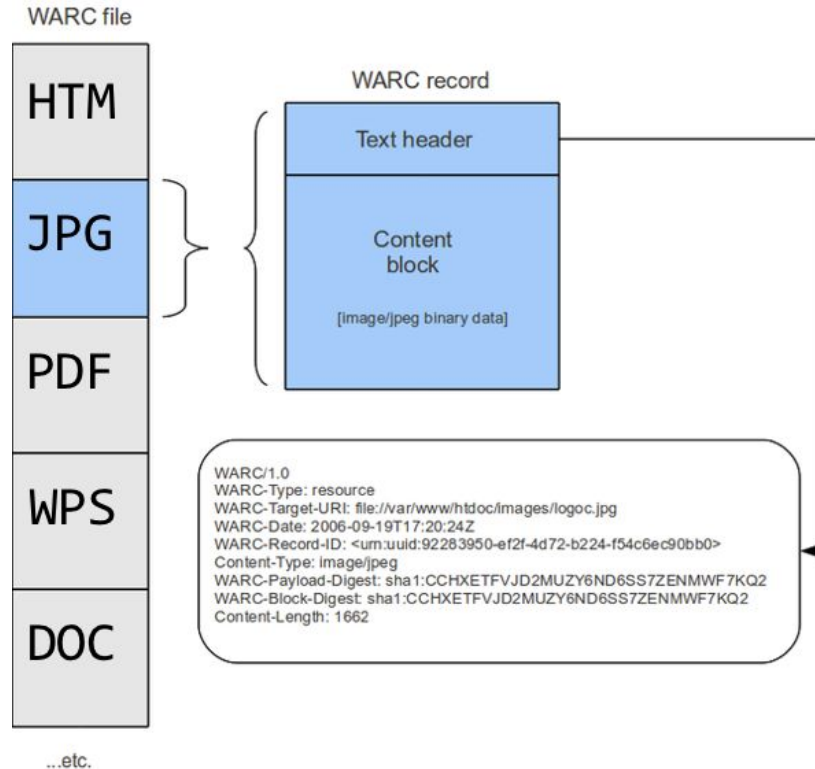
# Option Two: Working with the Underlying Data



**WebARChive (WARC) File**



# Option Two: Working with the Underlying Data



# Option Two: Working with the Underlying Data

## ● Potential

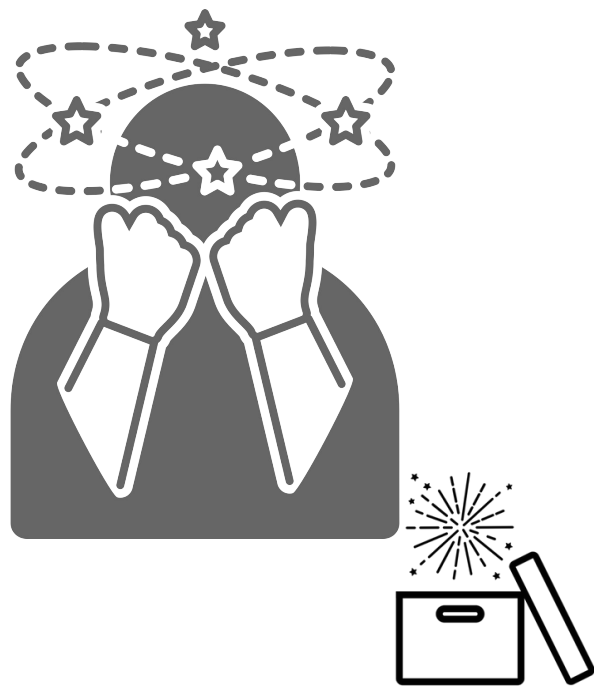
- Text analysis at scale;
  - Finding particular mentions of keywords, people, organizations, concepts, etc. over time
  - Finding patterns over time (i.e. culturomics or other forms of cultural analytics)
  - Other text mining applications
- Network analysis at scale;
  - Leveraging hyperlinks to see how people link to each other differently over time;
  - Finding pages of interest through historical applications of PageRank and other network concepts;
- Moving between “distant” and “close” scales



# Option Two: Working with the Underlying Data

- **Downsides**

- Difficulty of tools to work with WARCs (humanists might be used to working with text at scale... they're not used to WARC files);
- Size of datasets (small web archives are in the tens of GBs; medium ones are in the 100GB-1TB range; large ones can easily begin to exceed 10TB);
- Lack of a research community.



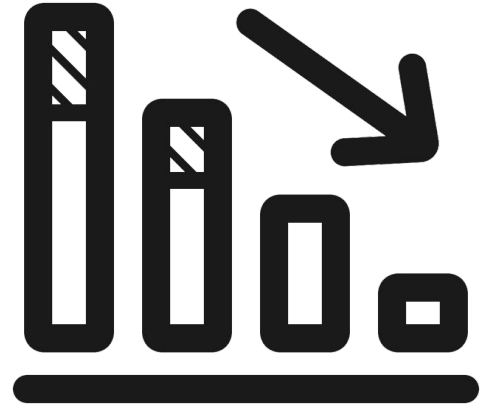


In other words, researchers need to explore web archives beyond the Wayback Machine... **but the tools and infrastructure aren't there.**



# ... and neither are the skills.

- Studies of our introductory historiography textbooks show this diminishing.
  - John Tosh, Pursuit of History
    - 1st, 2nd edition: “History by Numbers” (entire chapter)
    - By 5th edition, no quantitative history at all.
- **“Nevertheless, it is curious that at a time when both the use of and the breadth of humanities data is growing, quantitative skills ... seem to no longer form a core component of our undergraduate history programmes.”**  
(James Baker)

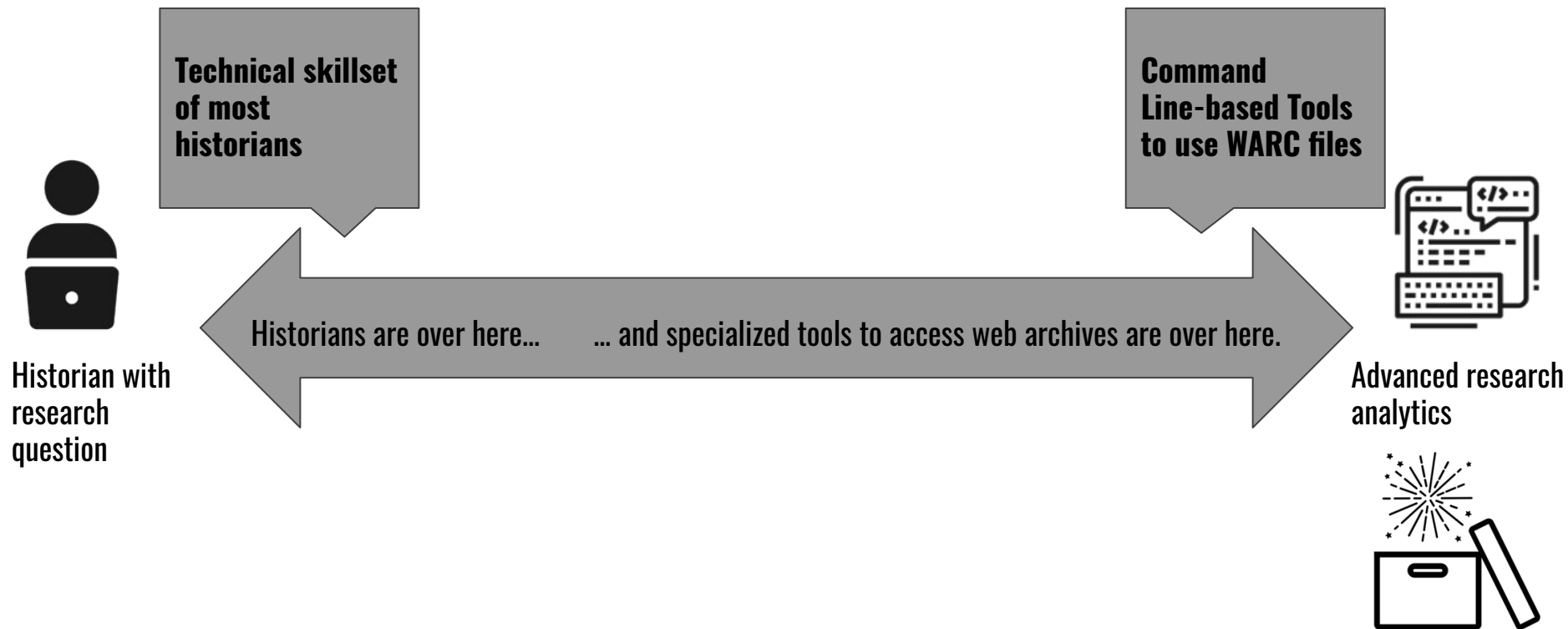


# So let's take stock...

- **Historians will need to understand and study the Web** in order to come to grips of history after the mid-1990s – not just for history of the Web, of course, but for the history of our society and culture as reflected on the Web
- **Existing tools like the Wayback Machine aren't enough to tackle this problem**
- **Historians will need new skills** for working with and understanding data, plus their traditional competencies



# In other words



Tools need to change and develop to move towards our users... **but what does that look like?**



**Enter the Archives  
Unleashed Project**

**Archives**   
**Unleashed**

# Our Team



**Ian Milligan**

Historian, University of Waterloo



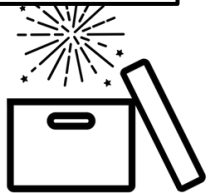
**Nick Ruest**

Librarian/Archivist, York University



**Jimmy Lin**

Computer Scientist, University of Waterloo



# Our Mission Statement

**Archives Unleashed aims to make petabytes of historical internet content accessible to scholars and others interested in researching the recent past.**





# In other words

Technical skillset of most historians

Let's move tools towards our users..



Historian with research question



Advanced research analytics



So how do we aim to do this?



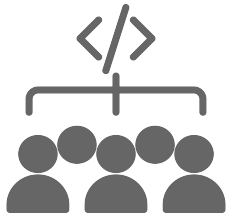
# Archives Unleashed Projects



**Archives Unleashed Toolkit**



**Archives Unleashed Cloud**

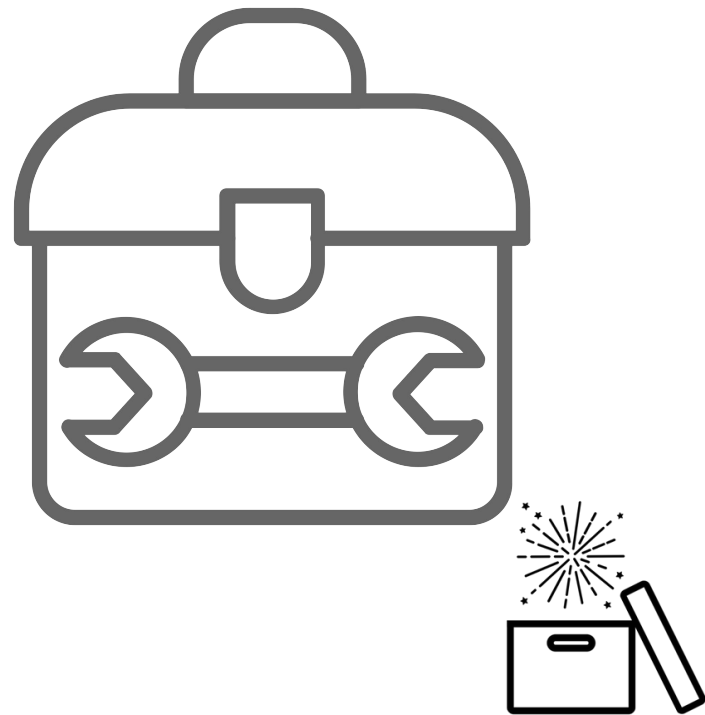


**Archives Unleashed Datathons**



# Archives Unleashed Toolkit

- An open-source platform for analyzing web archives with Apache Spark;
- Scalable
  - Can work on a powerful cluster
  - Can work on a single-node server
  - Can work on a laptop (on MacOS, Linux, or on Windows with a Linux VM)
  - Can work on a Raspberry Pi for all your personal web archiving analysis needs 😊



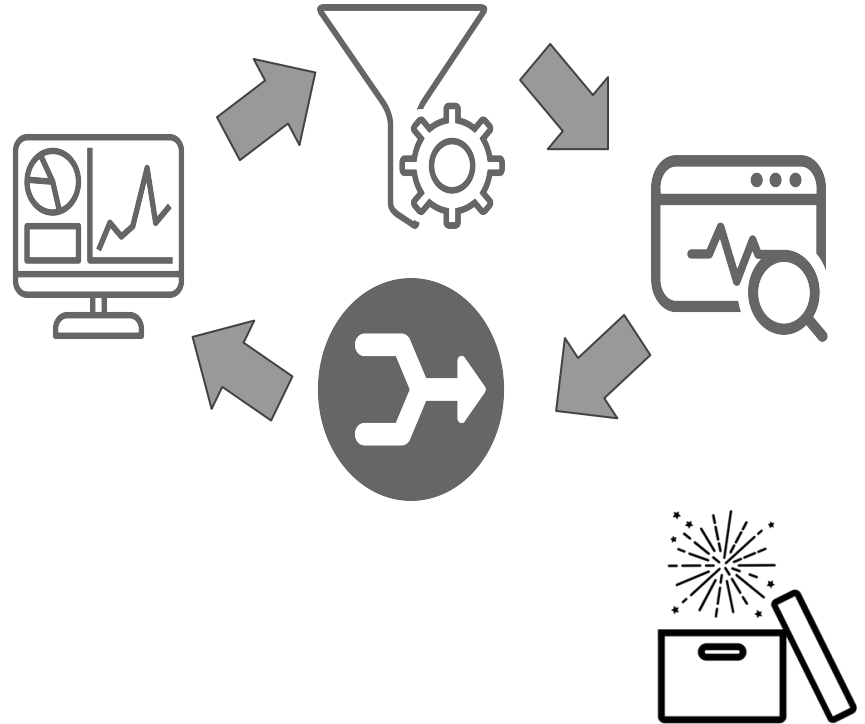
Using the Toolkit is based on the  
**Filter-Analyze-Aggregate-Visualize** (FAAV) Cycle



# The FAAV Cycle

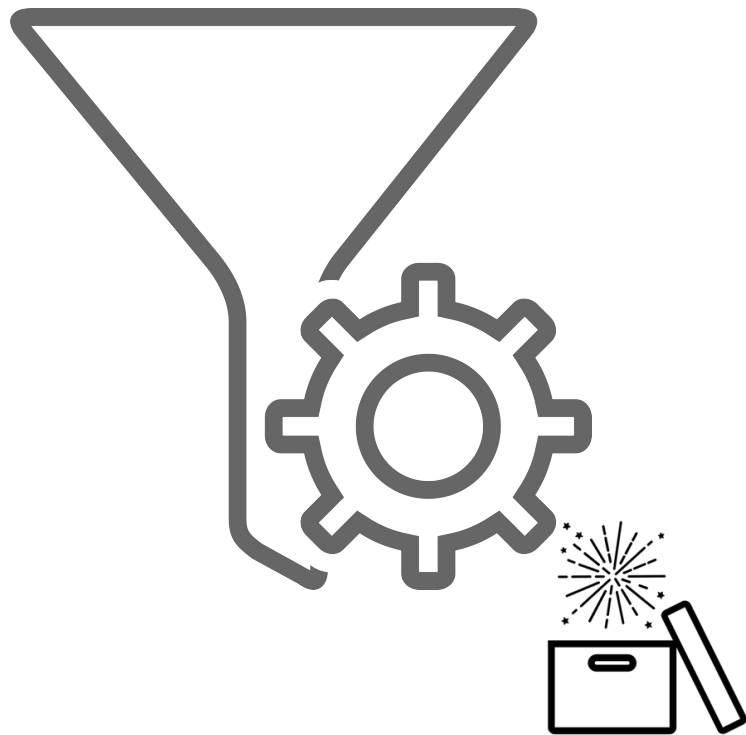
Beginning to conceptualize the workflow for historical work to do two things.

1. Inform tools development (to speak to the **platform** problem);
2. Inform pedagogical workflows and resources (to speak to the **skills** problem).



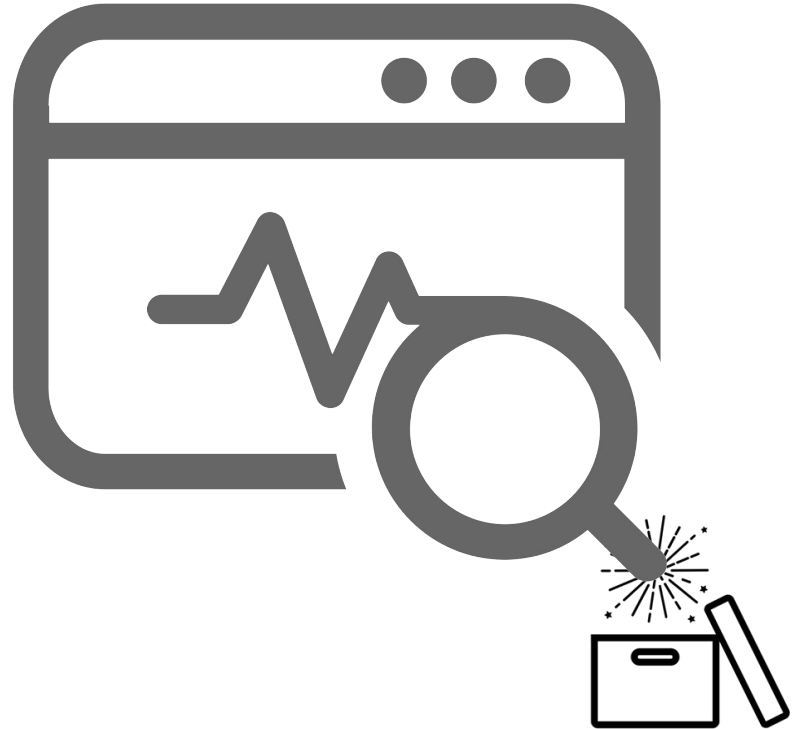
# Filter

- **Filter down content**
  - Focus on a particular range of crawl dates;
  - Focus on a particular domain;
  - Content-based filter (“global warming”) or those who link to a given site
- Can be nested - i.e. pages from 2012 from liberal.ca that link to conservative.ca and contain the phrase “Keystone XL”



# Analyze

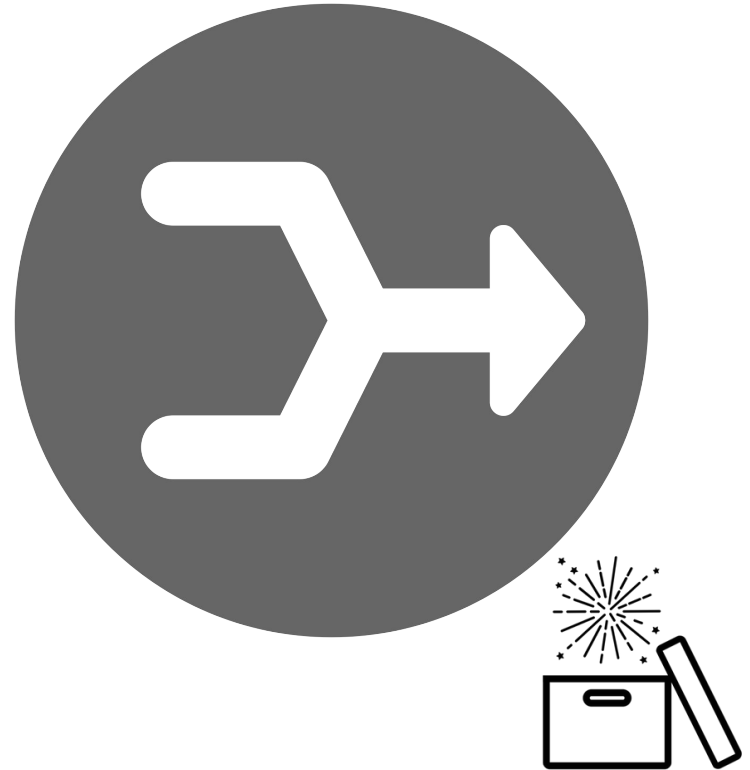
- After filtering, want to perform analysis
  - extracting information of interest.
- Such as:
  - Links and associated anchor text?
  - Tagging or extracting named entities?
  - Sentiment analysis.
  - Topic modeling.





# Aggregate

- Summarize the output of the analysis from the previous step.
  - Counting
    - How many times is Jack Layton or Barack Obama mentioned?
    - How many links are there from one domain to another?
- Finding maximum (page with most incoming links?)
- Average (average sentiment about “Barack Obama” or “Donald Trump”)

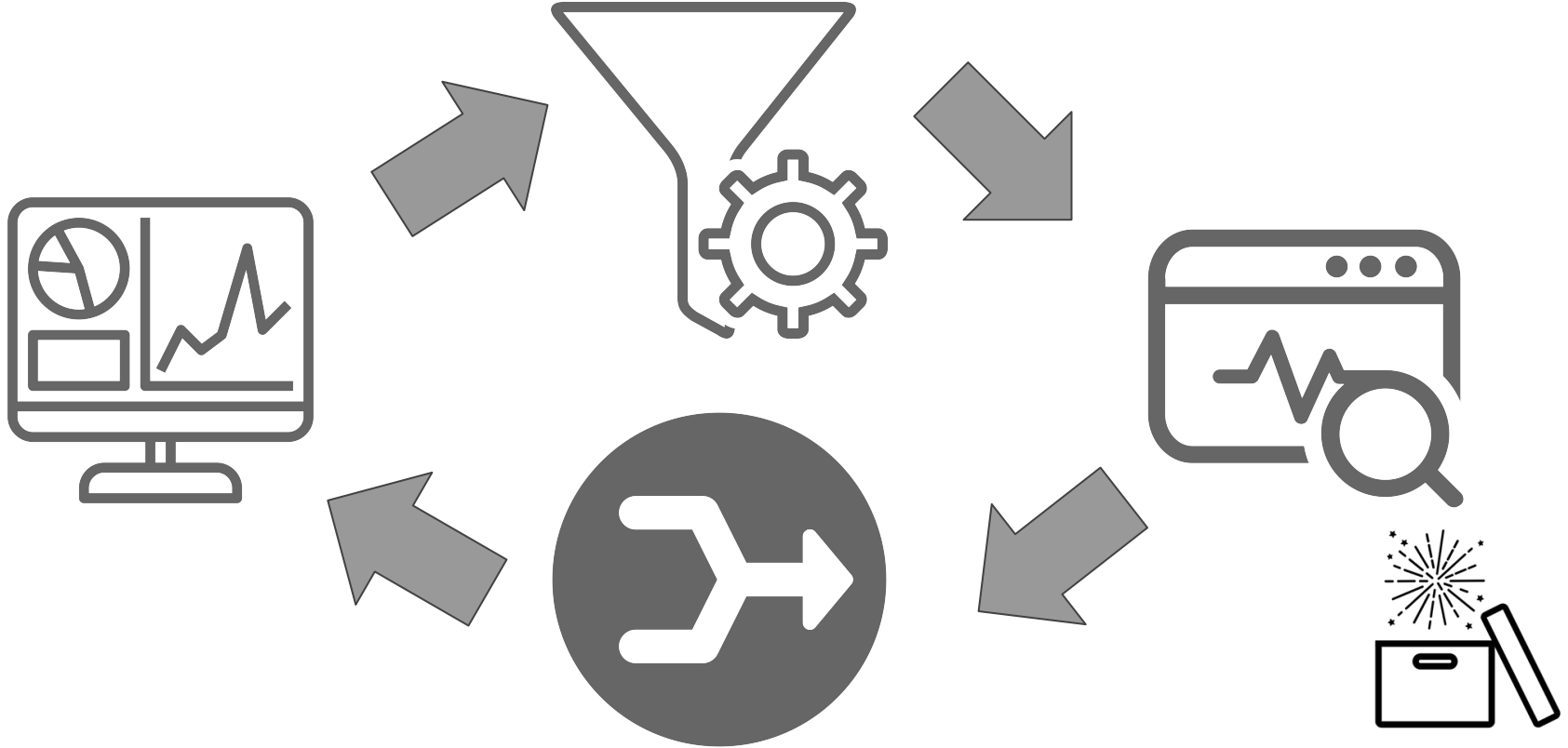


# Visualize

- **Output data as a visualization**
  - Tables of results
  - External applications (i.e. GEXF files for Gephi)



# FAAV Cycle




**Great!**

So why doesn't everybody use the Toolkit?!?!



# Our Cutting Edge Interface

```
1. ssh
x fsevent_watch #1 x bash #2 x ssh #3
our platform... using builtin-java classes where applicable
Setting default log level to "WARN".
To adjust logging level use sc.setLogLevel(newLevel). For SparkR, use setLogLevel(newLevel).
).
Spark context Web UI available at http://rho.library.yorku.ca:4040
Spark context available as 'sc' (master = local[*], app id = local-1553805629588).
Spark session available as 'spark'.
Welcome to

 version 2.3.2

Using Scala version 2.11.8 (Java HotSpot(TM) 64-Bit Server VM, Java 1.8.0_161)
Type in expressions to have them evaluated.
Type :help for more information.

scala> :paste
// Entering paste mode (ctrl-D to finish)

import io.archivesunleashed._
import io.archivesunleashed.matchbox._

RecordLoader.loadArchives("example.arc.gz", sc)
  .keepValidPages()
  .keepDomains(Set("www.archive.org"))
  .map(r => (r.getCrawlDate, r.getDomain, r.getUrl, RemoveHTML(r.getContentString)))
  .saveAsTextFile("plain-text-domain/")
```



## In other words...

We have a wonderful platform that takes **WARC files and converts them into formats that are familiar** to digital humanists, computational social scientists, systems librarians, digital archivists, and beyond..

.. but you basically **need to be a developer** to run the simplest of commands (despite ample documentation and outreach... the command line interface is a bridge too far).



# In other words...

**We didn't come out far enough for our users!!**



Historian with  
research  
question



**Archives  
Unleashed Toolkit**  
(requires dev skills)



Advanced research  
analytics



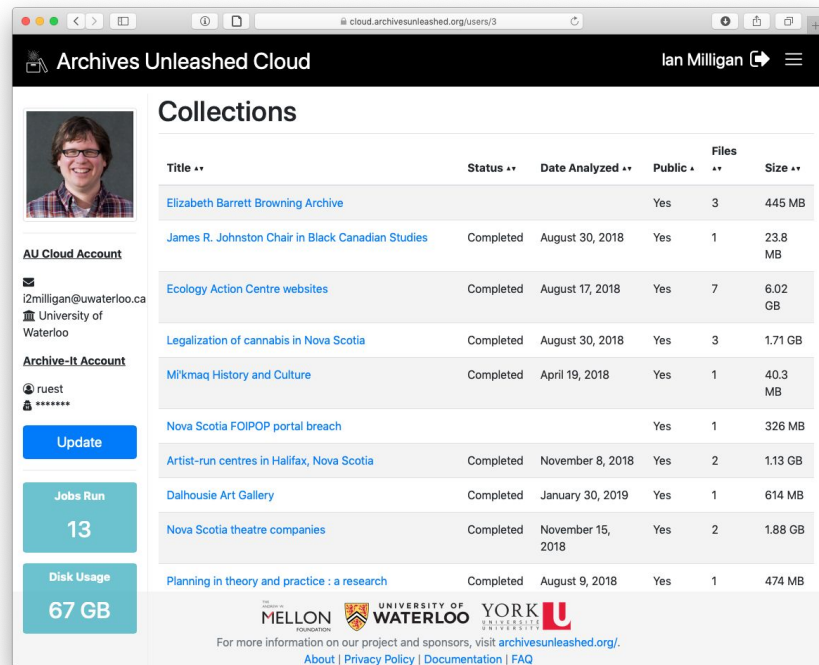
# Enter the Archives Unleashed Cloud





# Archives Unleashed Cloud

- A web-based front end for working with the Archives Unleashed Toolkit;
- Runs on our central servers or you can run one yourself;
- Uses WASAPI – Web Archives Systems API – to transfer data
  - Currently Archive-It supported;
  - We are exploring integration with WebRecorder.io and other WASAPI endpoints
- Generates a basic set of research derivatives for scholars to work with



The screenshot shows the Archives Unleashed Cloud interface for user Ian Milligan. The page features a user profile on the left with a photo, email (imilligan@uwaterloo.ca), and university affiliation. Below the profile are buttons for 'Update', 'Jobs Run' (13), and 'Disk Usage' (67 GB). The main content area is titled 'Collections' and contains a table with the following data:

Title	Status	Date Analyzed	Public	Files	Size
<a href="#">Elizabeth Barrett Browning Archive</a>			Yes	3	445 MB
<a href="#">James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies</a>	Completed	August 30, 2018	Yes	1	23.8 MB
<a href="#">Ecology Action Centre websites</a>	Completed	August 17, 2018	Yes	7	6.02 GB
<a href="#">Legalization of cannabis in Nova Scotia</a>	Completed	August 30, 2018	Yes	3	1.71 GB
<a href="#">Mi'kmaq History and Culture</a>	Completed	April 19, 2018	Yes	1	40.3 MB
<a href="#">Nova Scotia FOIPOP portal breach</a>			Yes	1	326 MB
<a href="#">Artist-run centres in Halifax, Nova Scotia</a>	Completed	November 8, 2018	Yes	2	1.13 GB
<a href="#">Dalhousie Art Gallery</a>	Completed	January 30, 2019	Yes	1	614 MB
<a href="#">Nova Scotia theatre companies</a>	Completed	November 15, 2018	Yes	2	1.88 GB
<a href="#">Planning in theory and practice : a research</a>	Completed	August 9, 2018	Yes	1	474 MB

At the bottom of the page, there are logos for The Mellon Foundation, University of Waterloo, and York University, along with a link to archivesunleashed.org/ and a footer with links for About, Privacy Policy, Documentation, and FAQ.



# What does a researcher get?

## Download Collection Derivatives

Gephi  
924 KB

Raw Network  
332 KB

Domains  
7.6 KB

Full Text  
4.93 GB

Text by Domains  
801 MB

[Learn more about these files here.](#) We also have prototype Archives Unleashed Cloud Jupyter Notebooks available.

**Gephi/Raw Network Files:** Network diagram with characteristics pre-computed (Gephi); Raw network diagram (origin/destination/weight);

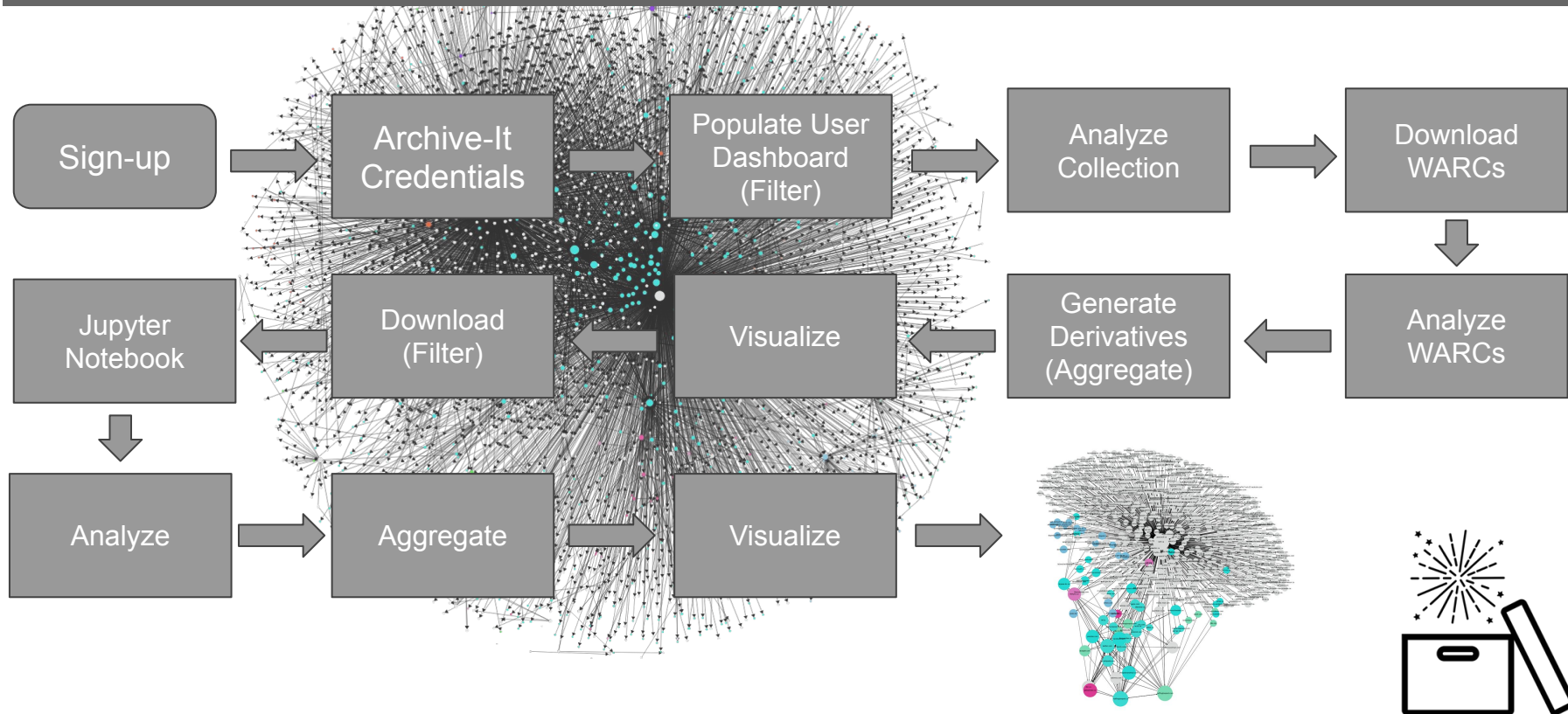
**Domains:** Statistical breakdown of what's present in a collection

**Full Text:** The full text of the entire collection (i.e. HTML pages w/ tags stripped out for analysis), in CSV format with crawl date, domain, full URL, full text)

**Text by Domains:** The plain text of the ten most frequent domains.



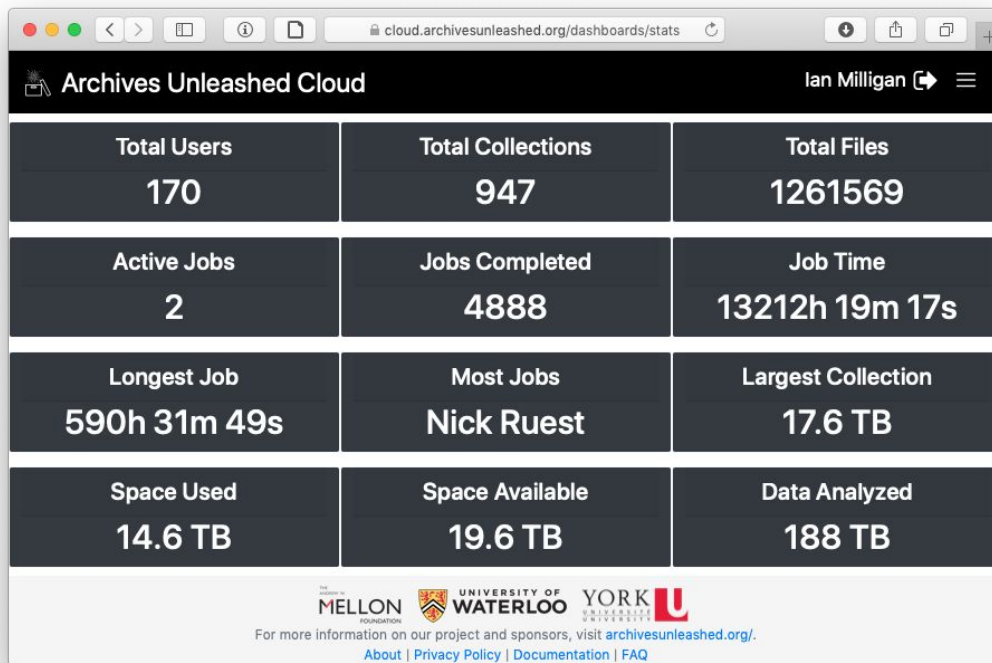
# How it works



# Archives Unleashed Cloud



# Give me some stats!



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `cloud.archivesunleashed.org/dashboards/stats`. The page title is "Archives Unleashed Cloud" and the user is logged in as "Ian Milligan". The dashboard displays a grid of 12 statistics in a 4x3 layout. At the bottom, there are logos for The Mellon Foundation, University of Waterloo, and York University, along with a link to `archivesunleashed.org/` and a footer with links for "About", "Privacy Policy", "Documentation", and "FAQ".

Total Users	Total Collections	Total Files
170	947	1261569
Active Jobs	Jobs Completed	Job Time
2	4888	13212h 19m 17s
Longest Job	Most Jobs	Largest Collection
590h 31m 49s	Nick Ruest	17.6 TB
Space Used	Space Available	Data Analyzed
14.6 TB	19.6 TB	188 TB

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For more information on our project and sponsors, visit [archivesunleashed.org/](https://archivesunleashed.org/).  
[About](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Documentation](#) | [FAQ](#)

Stats as of Thursday, June 13th 2019



But where does our platform end... And the researcher begin?



# Right now, we're kind of here...



Historian with  
research  
question

**Archives  
Unleashed Cloud**  
(requires  
intermediate DH  
skills to use files)

**Archives  
Unleashed Toolkit**  
(requires dev skills)



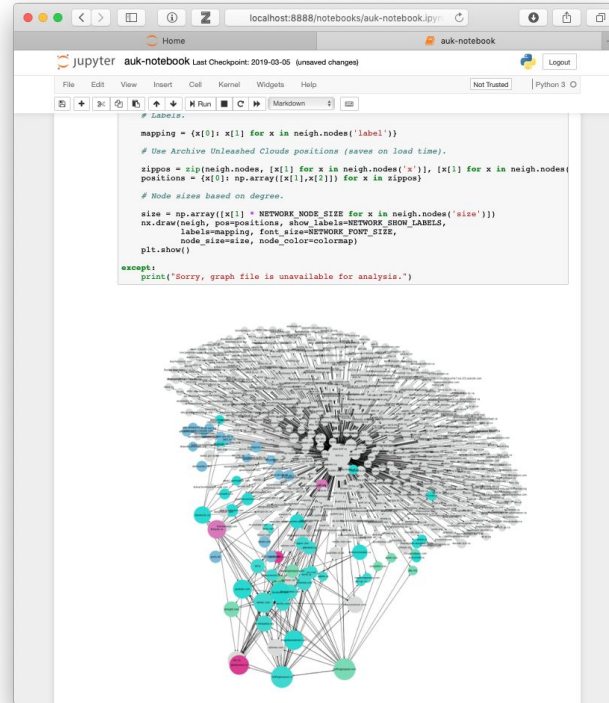
Advanced research  
analytics

**You need digital skills to use the derivatives, but they're the kind you can go to your library or main resources to use...**



# Archives Unleashed Cloud Notebooks

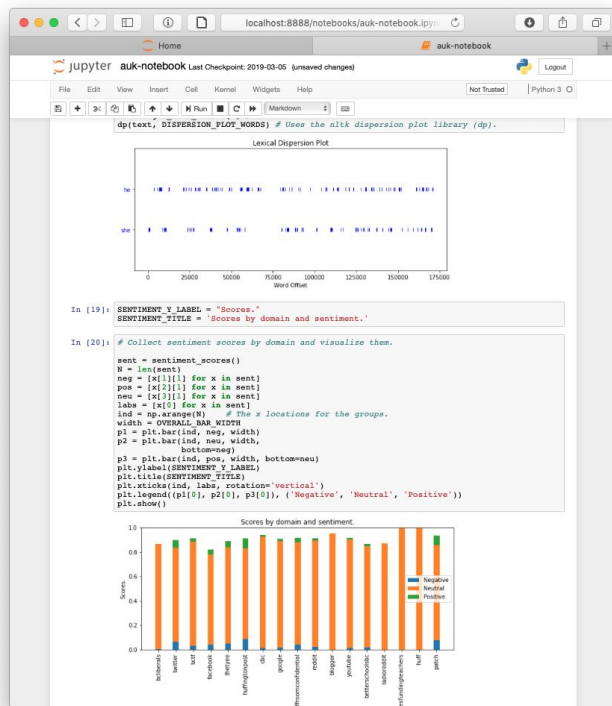
- Jupyter Notebooks
- One for each kind of derivative (domain, networks, text)
- A “**mad-libs**” approach - fill in the blanks with the variables (domains, dates, collections, etc.) that you are interested in, and it does basic computations for you
- Currently an under-development prototype service
- Bundled with data – download, run, explore data in your browser



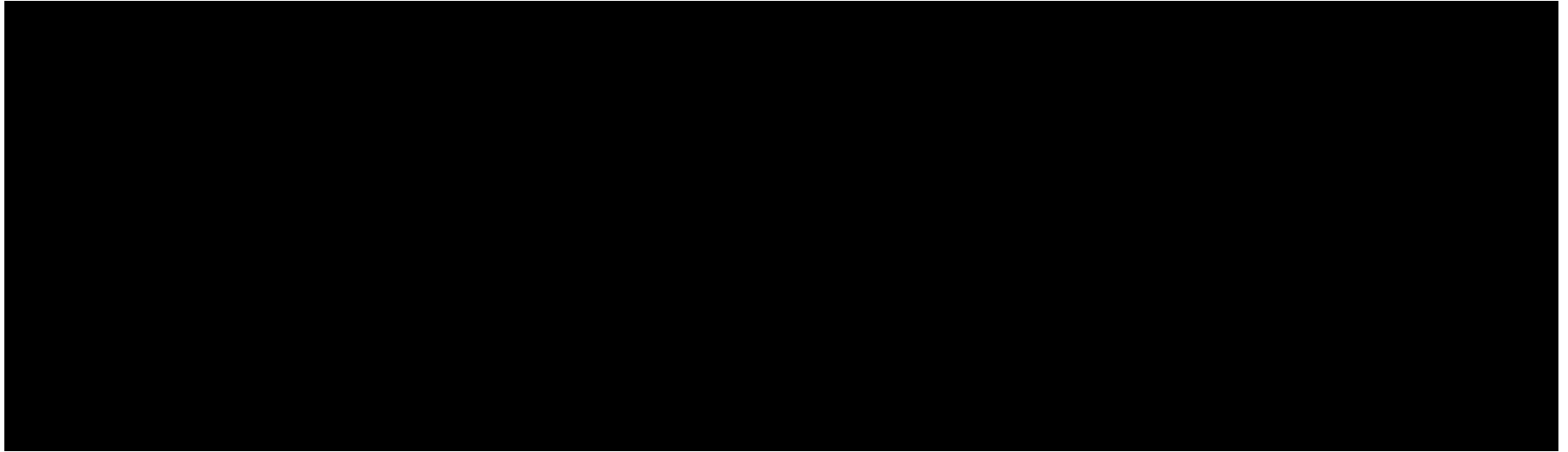


# Archives Unleashed Cloud Notebooks

By giving researchers these notebooks, with data, can we begin to jumpstart the process of research question creation and imagining what they can do with the data.



# Notebook Demo



# Maybe we're helping out with the bigger spectrum?



**Jupyter  
Notebooks**  
(requires basic DH  
skills)

**Archives  
Unleashed Cloud**  
(requires  
intermediate DH  
skills)

**Archives  
Unleashed Toolkit**  
(requires dev skills)



Advanced research  
analytics

Researchers **STILL** need to come out a bit, *but*  
we're getting there...

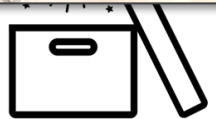


**Finally, we aim to build community around web archives.**



# Archives Unleashed Datathons

- To date we've run (in this sequence) a series of datathons in **Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington DC**
  - a previous iteration had four events as well
- Gaining more experience with working with cultural heritage at scale



# Archives Unleashed Datathons

Helping to lower barriers;

Bringing people interested in web archiving  
(both collection + analysis) together;

Establishing a community through online  
communication and in-person work and social  
events;

Establishing a true community of practice around  
web archiving practice.

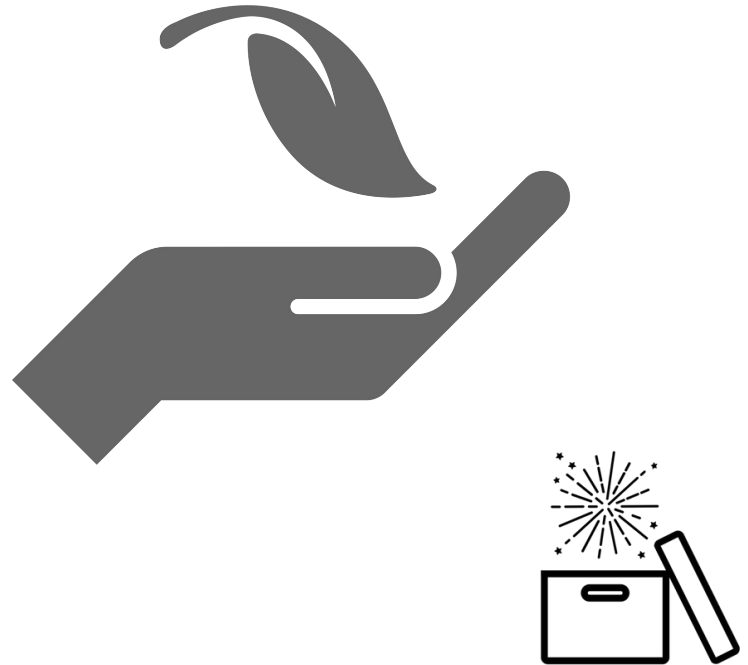


# What's Next?



# What's Next?

- **Sustainability** has been baked into our grant from the very start (thanks Mellon!).
  - Ryan Deschamps, Samantha Fritz, Jimmy Lin, Ian Milligan, and Nick Ruest. "[The Cost of a WARC: Analyzing Web Archives in the Cloud.](#)" *Proceedings of the ACM/IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries*, Vol. 19 (2019).
  - Costs USD\$7/TB to process using the Archives Unleashed Toolkit.





# What's Next?

- Actual processing costs are relatively affordable – approx. US\$7/TB to process WARC<sub>s</sub> and generate derivatives.
  - Large collection like University of Toronto's “Canadian Political Parties and Interest Groups” would cost under US\$30 to process and generate all of our derivative types seen in the Cloud.
- But of course, computing costs aren't the crux...

The Cost of a WARC

Size	Count
≥ 1 GB, < 10 GB	10
≥ 10 GB, < 100 GB	18
≥ 100 GB, < 1 TB	15
≥ 1 TB	5
Total	48

Table 1: Sizes of the collections in our study.

Derivative	all	L	M	S
domain distribution	32	25	27	36
full text	34	28	35	34
webgraph	36	34	36	36
total	102	87	98	106

Table 2: Processing times per GB in seconds.

#### 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the Archives Unleashed Project thus far, we have processed over 150 TB of web archives from our content partners. For this study we focused on 57 collections analyzed in early 2018 from six different Canadian universities, collected using the Archive-It platform. We excluded from analysis nine collections smaller than one gigabyte, as they are too small to benefit from processing by AUI (leaving 48 in total). The largest collection, at 4.3 TB in size, was the Canadian Government Information Collection from the University of Alberta; the smallest collection, at 1.2 GB, was the University of Victoria's academic calendar. The complete distribution of collection sizes is shown in Table 1; all size figures are given in base 10 and all collection sizes refer to the raw, compressed WARC<sub>s</sub>.

We have automated the process model described in the previous section, with scripts that start up virtual machine instances to perform the various stages of processing. For data ingestion, we used the data transfer functionalities of WASAPI (Web Archiving Systems API)<sup>3</sup> provided by Archive-It. Our analysis is derived from the execution logs of these scripts.

In Table 2, we show the processing time (in seconds) per GB of source web archive for each derivative as well as the total. The column marked “all” shows analyses for all collections; we further break down results into large collections (larger than 1 TB, denoted “L”), medium collections (between 100 GB and 1 TB, denoted “M”), and small collections (less than 100 GB, denoted “S”). From these results, we make a few observations: Despite the different nature of these derivatives, running times are quite similar because the analytical queries are all dominated by the time to scan the entire collection. Extracting the webgraph is more computationally intensive, but not substantially more so. We see that total processing time for all three derivatives drops as the collection size increases, likely because the startup costs associated with AUI are amortized over longer running times. As expected, there exists a linear correlation between the raw collection size and the total amount of time required to generate all three derivatives; this is shown in Figure 2, where we observe an  $R^2$  value of 0.970.

WOODSTOCK'97, July 1997, El Paso, Texas USA

Figure 2: Scatter plot between collection size and total processing time, illustrating a linear relationship.

Derivative	all	L	M	S
domain distribution (KB)	0.95	0.51	0.98	1.01
full text (MB)	78.5	97.6	102.1	62.4
webgraph (KB)	76.9	85.8	122.6	50.9

Table 3: Derivative sizes per GB.

How large are these derivatives? The answer is shown in Table 3, which reports the sizes of the derivatives per GB raw archive; we report overall statistics as well as statistics broken into large, medium, and small collections (note the different units). These averages hide the fact that actual values vary by collection, depending on the nature of the crawl (e.g., wide multi-site crawls vs. narrow deep crawls, text-heavy vs. media-heavy sites, etc.) However, in rough terms, for a typical medium site, domain distribution data is usually less than 1 MB, the raw text is perhaps 100 GB, and the webgraph is 100 MB. These values support our observation that AUI provides a bridge between web archives and scholars' existing tools, since datasets of these sizes are well within the capabilities of modern laptops. Furthermore, the long-term preservation of these derivatives presents no serious challenges: they can be treated as first-class citizens in the scholarly community (e.g., given DOI).

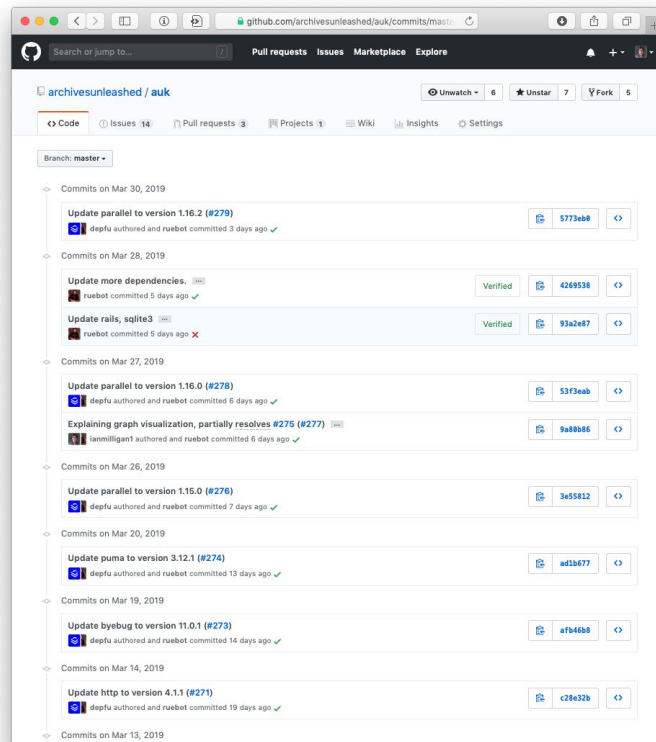
Next, our cost analysis is shown in Table 4, organized in the same manner as Table 2, showing the cost in USD per TB of raw web archive on Amazon's EC2 service. Based on available statistics, the instance type used in our experiments on Compute Canada aligns roughly with a c5.4xlarge instance, with 16 virtual cores and 68 GB memory, currently costing US\$0.68 per hour in the US East (Ohio) region. We assume per-minute billing (i.e., processing times are rounded up to the nearest minute) but do not account for instance startup costs. For consistency, we show cost per TB even for the small collections. These values report an macro-average, i.e., an average across individual collections. Note that our approach for computing these figures leads to inflated costs for small collections because they finish quickly (typically, only a few minutes).

All considered, a “bottom line” figure of US\$7 per TB for a typical analytics product is a fair summary of our findings. We argue that

<sup>3</sup><https://github.com/WASAPI/Community/data-transfer-api>

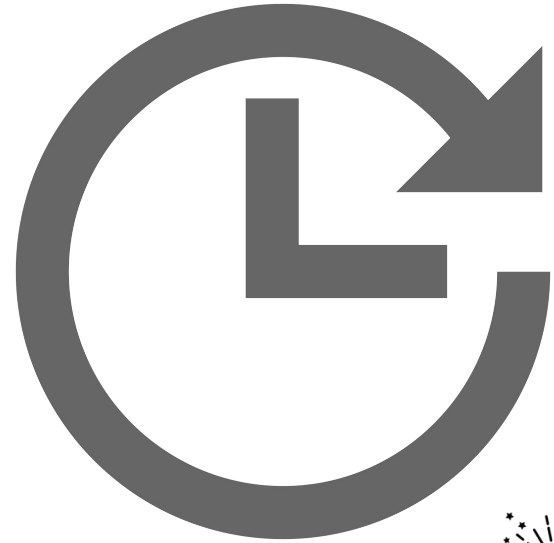
# What's Next?

- Supported by Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Compute Canada; Start Smart Labs; and some institutional support from Waterloo and York.
- Limitations (beyond computing costs):
  - Developer Time
  - Community Involvement
  - Sustainable Infrastructure



# What's Next?

- We know how much it costs;
- We've forged good partnerships with institutions, including the Internet Archive, datathon hosts (Simon Fraser, Toronto, George Washington), International Internet Preservation Consortium, and others;
- Held consultations with research libraries + consortias; and
- Are exploring tangible partnerships to bring web archive analysis to a broader audience.



# The TL;DR (aka Conclusions)

- **Historians in the future will need to understand the Web**
- **We need to make sure they're ready**
  - Part of this is new, usable tools;
  - Part of this is new cultures in the humanities;
- **But overall, we all need to begin to work together in a model of interdisciplinary collaboration, development, and partnership to make sure historians are equipped to do this sort of work.**



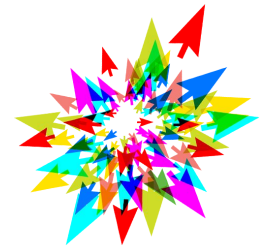
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We look forward to  
your **questions and**  
**thoughts.**



# Links

- [archivesunleashed.org](https://archivesunleashed.org)
- [cloud.archivesunleashed.org](https://cloud.archivesunleashed.org)
- [github.com/archivesunleashed](https://github.com/archivesunleashed)
- [slack.archivesunleashed.org](https://slack.archivesunleashed.org)
- [news.archivesunleashed.org](https://news.archivesunleashed.org)
- [twitter.com/unleasharchives](https://twitter.com/unleasharchives)

