**Title:** The Archive as Hive: Collecting and Transforming Honeyed Knowledge and Wax Comb Structures of Thought

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**Status of NCA Membership:** Current Member

“I am a Bee, (no Drone) tho‟ without sting

Here you may see, what Honey-Combs I bring . . .

What others did Contrive, I carry to my Hive.”

–Francis Daniel Pastorius quoted in Erben

“Honey Combs” and “Paper Hives‟” (163-164)

**What?**

This digital humanities proposal attempts to activate the principles of Francis Daniel Pastorius’ notion of the archive as a hive through an interactive digital project involving the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps to help explore the (hi)stories surrounding a house in downtown Baton Rouge, LA. Though the original text matter has a specific locus, based on the author’s previous research of a specific dwelling, the possibilities for extending beyond that frame are multiple given the various layers of digital resources that inform the project. Cultural historian Patrick Erben says of Pastorius’ work that it is indicative of a broader method, in which “the process of collecting and composing simultaneously engages the experiential and concrete world outside the text, the intellectual world of his reading and writing and, finally, the physical compilation and representation of his knowledge on the pages of his manuscript books” (Erben 163). We hope to enact this same process in our (re)construction of a digital (arc)hive, as well as in the opportunities afforded the reader to engage in similar assemblages with(in) the digital text.

**How?**

In the original written text, the author explores the principles of the archive as a hive, as a simultaneous process of collecting and composing, by first gathering material from the analogue and digital versions of the Sanborn Fire Maps that included the house and surrounding areas. In assembling and transforming the information and images collected about the house from the maps, as well as other sources, the story of the house is retold textually and graphically upon the page, as well as reconstructed in a model of the house created from the maps themselves. For this further iteration of the project, the authors hope to enlist our media artist to help envision a virtual space in which the reader to can partake in the creative labor of gathering and transforming the nectar of what is learned from interacting with the text and its digital expressions into the honeyed substance of new knowledge, as well as participating in creating the shape and pattern of its digital display (the wax comb).

A number of variables offer exciting possibilities for how to incorporate digital media and reader interaction. First, many of the Sanborn Maps themselves now have digital versions, so even though the original project is localized in focus, there is the possibility of expanding the scope of this digitally mediated version to include other locales and mappings. Additionally, Francis Daniel Pastorius’ Beehive manuscript has recently been made available online, as part of the University of Pennsylvania’s NEH initiative to create digital facsimiles of its rare book and manuscripts collection, so his writings could become more integral to the design of the project. Finally, we are investigating ways to use the principles of mapping, collecting and assembly, as well as the beehive metaphor, as both subjects and methods for producing the digital version of this project. We see the HTML5 experiment “The Wilderness Downtown” for Arcade Fire’s “We Used to Wait” video as a model for this kind of experimentation.

**Why?**

The method and principle behind this project, the archive as a hive, calls for more interactive and dynamic displays than traditional text and image on the page can provide. The ability to experiment with digital technologies that activate the materials for both authors/artists and readers open up the possibility for a more experiential engagement with the structure and content of text itself, as well as the archives from which it is produced.

**Presentation of Idea**

Flanagan and Laurion Bowman will continue developing the content, context, and theoretical extension if the project to accommodate the transformation of the text to include new digital media. Everson will work with Flanagan to take this material and develop a digital structure that is both layered and interactive. We may need internet access, audio, and video projection.