

---

**On the Event, the Real-Time Image, the Archive, and Other *PhillyTalks* Matters**  
**Louis Cabri and Aaron Levy**  
**March 31, 2002**

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**  
**Calgary, Canada**

Louis Cabri is author of *The Mood Embosser* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2001 [<http://www.chbooks.com>]), a selection of poems written during the 'nineties. He has written on the poets Bruce Andrews, Earle Birney, Alan Davies, Michael Gottlieb, Jackson Mac Low, Steve McCaffery, bp Nichol, among others. He curates the poets' dialogue series, "PhillyTalks" (<http://phillytalks.org>), and is completing a dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania. He is on the board of Slought Networks and a Series Curator.

Aaron Levy is a conceptual artist and founding curator of Slought Networks (<http://slought.net>). Curatorial projects include ongoing lecture series, conferences, exhibitions and publications. He recently edited "Searching for Romberg," critical essays on work by artist Osvaldo Romberg (Philadelphia: Slought Books, 2001).

Between the "discursive" and the "event" ...there has to be something worth photographing.  
— Jeff Derksen, from *Social Facts Are Verticle*

**Aaron Levy:** Notable about live events today is the frequency with which recording technologies are employed.

In March, you moderated a panel discussion on archival theory in Calgary, which I contributed to as well. The event was not recorded due to human error. How did you receive the news that this event — I was assuming it would be recorded like any other live event today — had in fact not been recorded?

**Louis Cabri:** You contributed as panelist. I think you were disappointed. I wasn't that disappointed. How anyone might receive the news — not only that the event was not recorded, but that in the first place the event was going to be recorded — seems to partly depend on how participants conceive of a role for the microphone, before and during the event. Microphone questions interest me — especially for poetry. Does the microphone metonymically embody a potential and future audience? How?

Is this potential and future audience imagined as potential and in a future tense because it embodies an ideal for the event that the event's present can't achieve? Who says? What ideal? Is an ideal audience analogous to an ideal reader? Or, is an ideal audience in this context an ideal of participation, productively engaging with, by participating in, the event — living up to the event, if you like (which, so I recently read somewhere, is a basic definition of ethics)? What does participation in an event entail?

An event that is recorded seems to be shaped in part by how its participants decide to negotiate between the idea/ideal of a potential and future audience, and the actual, live audience. With a full-fledged live webcast, or with simply an audio recording, we've occasionally spoken along these lines after a PhillyTalks event — "Not a lot of people came out.... Well, at least it was recorded." We express hope that the event will ultimately find its audience at some point in the future if we think that it did not find it this one time, live. But for our hope to be realized, panel participants, too, must imagine — actively during the event — that the event might ultimately find its audience at some point in the future. When I would speak to poets about their upcoming PhillyTalk I would stress the recording for this reason. I would speak of the imaginable audience. Of course, I would also speak of expectations the actual audience might bring to the event, expectations shaped in part by their reading the newsletter distributed before the event.

An event that finds its audience, finds or discovers, as much as founds or creates, audience. Still, there is an implication in the phrase "to find one's audience," of fit — size eight and a half? — which I think is, obviously, misleading. But in terms of that panel which we were on regarding the archive, my sense was that nobody was really geared towards beginning to think of the recording as an implicit potential audience (except for Robert Kroetsch's remark, and this made in front of his own archivist and fellow panelist, Apollonia Steele, that he had once destroyed some of his records, before sending the remaining documents on to be archived!). My sense of the discussion was that it was good, and that it seemed to satisfy the audience there; mission accomplished. There was no becoming in that event needing to be preserved because it found, founded, something. That was never its mission, as an event.

There are many reasons to record, and ways of imagining its import. Yet, this is one of them: microphone as device to catch at the future.

**AL:** The earliest PhillyTalks events, though, were often not recorded, else they were recorded but ascribed with so little importance that they disappeared or were misplaced.

As I understand it, PhillyTalks is comprised of a dialogue between poets that is released prior to the event, so as to facilitate an informed audience. Then there is the live event, the recordings of the live event. And then there are, more recently, the pre-

and post-event respondents. Can you speak to the changing nature of the PhillyTalks “live event”? More generally, can you speak to what a live event is or can be?

**LC:** Matt Hart’s online essay at [phillytalks.org](http://phillytalks.org) suggestively describes various layers of the PhillyTalks event, including its live and live-recording components, which are undoubtedly part of it (but in an unexpected way, I think). Written and spoken text is superimposed on more text that accumulates over a temporal trajectory that has a sort of quasi-classical fourth-act climax in the so-called live event (although I often feel that, on the contrary, the live event is anti-climactic). “Beneath,” if you like, the textual palimpsest there is, I suppose — at least, this was Michael O’Driscoll’s comment during the archival panel in Calgary — an ideal of fully-embodied, collective presence. Such an ideal of presence constitutes the event — “The PhillyTalk.” All its layers of text are an attempt to embody the originary event, whatever that event might be for us in our historical location. I’m still thinking about O’Driscoll’s offhand, provocatively interesting, comment.

The relation the event fixes with time creates some important distinctions when it comes to characterizing and conceiving of the originary in relation to the PhillyTalks format. Is the present exclusively turned toward the past during a PhillyTalk? Or, instead, does PhillyTalks attempt to set up conditions of possibility for creating an originary event that is historically specific to now? The latter is a quite different scenario. There’s no nostalgia or worship going on in a PhillyTalk; its direction is future-orientated. What PhillyTalks wants to create is a vortex, perhaps — Pound’s and Gaudier-Brzeska’s metaphorical sense of the present as funnel-shaped, into, through and from which come intensive (and hence, somehow necessary-feeling — today we stumble over the words for this, but in 1916 Pound would have said “primitive”: certainly we wouldn’t today) idea-clusters. One has to set up conditions for a vortex to occur; that’s the PhillyTalk. Whether people want to step into and through it is their decision. The event passes, comes to a close; nevertheless, each PhillyTalk is mostly recorded, its vortex available to be entered by other readers, another time.

It’s interesting to think about the concept of the event in relation to PhillyTalks in particular, as this broaches a larger question of the event in relation to poetry. No one to my knowledge has published much about this larger question of poetry and the event. It is one direction that recent work on historiography, poetry, and the reading, suggests, however; and in fact there might be a MLA panel on the event, organized by Sianne Ngai and Barrett Watten, which sounds great. Think, for instance, of the event uniquely theorized in Whitehead’s philosophy, then of the importance that Whitehead has for Olson’s notions both of process and of historical fact. It would be interesting to consider the event status of a PhillyTalk in relation to how the event is articulated in philosophy — and then, to parallel that with how the idea of a group is articulated in poetry by poets and critics: from the idea of an avant-garde, through to the less presumptive, yet perhaps too conceptually neutral? idea of a nexus (recently put forward by Peter Quartermain and Rachel Blau DuPlessis).

In pragmatic terms, it seems to me that a PhillyTalks event would have to be defined in relation to time. It is a defined moment in time, that everyone agrees is about to happen, that everyone proleptically reads for, and writes toward. The live event component of the PhillyTalk exists, in its most alive form, *before* it happens, in the anticipation, in which the poets and pre-respondents write. The actual live event, in contrast, is dead. The event of this anticipated event “happens,” and in various ways — it is written, spoken, visually and physically embodied (fully, for some, insofar as that’s possible; virtually, for others). Then, the event swallows the event of itself, by means of the past tense — “it happened,” and is written of in that way.

PhillyTalks is a time-based project. Some poets cringe at the word “project” associated with contemporary poetry, as it suggests epical grandeur and ambition in a major, as distinct from minor, key, and the modernist failure of that, which then is speciously romanticized as part of writing. I don’t think the word is inappropriate for the specific, delimited, delimiting scale of the event that encompasses poetry in a PhillyTalk — or in any reading series, for that matter. The alternative — neutralizing or ignoring the idea, and curatorial aspect, of the poetry reading series — is to completely give over control of a reading series to institutional and conceptual inertia and reification. Any reading series is a time-based project, some more conscious of that status than others. Anyway, I’ve thought of the PhillyTalk, specifically, as a live proceduralism — “proceduralism” in the Mac Lowian sense, enabling writers and texts to mingle in a certain pre-determined way, that arrives, despite pre-determinations, at unknown, unexpected outcomes. It is a procedure that occurs in time, and on time — not as in “This event’s on time!” but “This is an event that creates with time,” structures time.

To self-consciously stage the idea of the event in relation to poetry, well, I don’t think this has been done for awhile, and is what makes PhillyTalks innovative as a procedural form. On the *other* hand, every poetry reading stages, even without knowing it, the idea of the event in relation to poetry. Perhaps the difference is that the status of the event in poetry continues to be realized for the most part in predictable ways — protest poem, open mike, performance poem, the slam, “poetic” intonation. Yet all of these now-predictable forms once attempted to intervene into and conceive of poetry as social occasion (even certain intonations that spurn sociality, default, by default, to their own social occasion). Maybe a fresh way to think of the poetry reading, of the poetry coterie, salon, school, is in terms of what sort of live proceduralism(s) each is able to unleash. The avant-garde group was disposed around the live proceduralism of a manifesto. The poetry listserv and the more recent poetry blogs out there offer forms of live proceduralism. At any rate, if one wanted to align the PhillyTalks event with other ways that poetry is socially displayed, and socially involves readers as collective agents, then I think the procedural might be a way to take on the relation of the event to PhillyTalks.

In addition to the time element, my definition of the event in relation to the PhillyTalk would rely quite heavily on participant trust. Participants need to acknowledge that the event will exist, is about to exist. They bring it into existence. The event is on credit, in the minds of those who agree to participate in it.

**AL:** You are invoking trust as that which establishes the event before it takes place. It ensures that the event is forthcoming. I also sense, from your earlier comments on event recordings, that an event is constituted retroactively, that its significance is determined after.

**LC:** Because something is recorded, does not mean that as a participant in the recorded event one is necessarily looking back, in order to make sense of the event, or that if one does look back to make sense one turns into stone or into Beckett's Krapp. Perhaps some participants are unable to enjoy the event let alone participate in it when the microphone is turned on because they are only reading backwards, not forwards, for meaning, only conceiving of the microphone as a passive recording device, not as a literary and social device that figures-forth audience and creates reception — their own presence included. American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir translated the Hopi concept of the event as a verb, "eventing." Eventing captures the idea of live proceduralism, for me — the event unfolding as a singular type of time (and space), rather than as set within and by a standard time (and space).

The idea of retroactively determined significance sounds at a second remove from an ordinary process of eventing. Earlier PhillyTalks as not recorded because they were not thought to be, in some sense, important, also seems to be a thought at a second remove from what the event is actually trying to do, timed to do. It strikes me as looking at the production of meaning backwards, rather than forwards, temporally speaking, vis-a-vis oneself as speaker. It strikes me as situating the production of meaning within, and releasing it via, museum-like institutional parameters, rather than within the singular parameters determined by the event in its unfolding dialogic relationship with participants — where the idea of importance itself becomes sublimated as processual, eventing-orientated actions.

**AL:** Phillytalks 19, as was often the case with the events in the series, was webcast. Being in Calgary at the time, you participated in the event via the webcast. I recall that Keith Tuma and others were disappointed with the "live event" as experienced via webcast. Did you share their disappointment?

Some of the participants were disappointed by the banality of the live webcast; others wondered whether they could have benefited all the same by watching the recording. Worth contemplating is whether calling or emailing in questions constitutes meaningful participation.

I'm thinking of O'Driscoll's comments, which you cited earlier. Notwithstanding PhillyTalks, I do believe a romantic nostalgia for presence often underlies many activities on the Internet. Webcast technologies are remarkable for the rapidity with which they reinstate, at least for me, the need for physical, socially meaningful interaction. Perhaps this is why those present at the live event often leave disappointed, and those tuning in through the Internet feel like pathetic participants.

**LC:** Presence is a device, like a microphone.

But there is a weird disappointment in the virtual live event experience. One thing I hear you raising is how the more texts and pre-event respondents are curated into a PhillyTalk, it seems the less the poets (and audience members) perform "participation" live. Poets' correspondence leading up to the live event, pre-event respondents, invited webcast participants — all this produces expectations, in many I'd think, for some wonderfully epiphanic vortex of dialogue and engagement. And what happens instead is a descent into matter, a pervasive forgetting, by the poets, and by, I'd guess, most participants. The poets' presence, particularly when webcast, their visual presence on the laptop, seems to negate in some banalizing way all the textual work by them and by others that went into producing the eventing as a future-tensed social occasion.

Think of the role, coming out of video art especially, of the banal, the everyday as banal, as captured by experimental video. Or of Warhol's eight-hour static film, *Empire*. And then of today's super-banalization of real-time on TV. That continuum is what the live event aspect of PhillyTalks faces, and those poets' faces in Real Player real-time. I have argued against the use of a visual feed for the event in order that sound and its recording become an exclusive focus, hoping to avoid the banalization of real-time simulation carried in the live image.

**AL:** Gerhard Richter, in the catalogue interview with Richard Storr for his current show at MOMA, speaks about the banalization of the everyday, the monotony of everyday communication, as horrific and terrifying. What you are referencing, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. Not terrifying but...

**LC:** ...gravitational. There is a gravity in the *live* image. I become captive witness to the gravitational pull on two poets sitting in chairs. Text, speech, sound, logos are pulled down by artless visual enframing. An expansive eventing shrinks to a trap in Newtonian-like space-time. The manner in which poets are seated in their chairs, whether they are uncomfortable, if they reach for a glass of water, all this is redundant to their poetry and their discourse in a PhillyTalk.

Over-abundance of signification in their poetic work suddenly bottoms-out in the live image – appalling Concrete.

[laughter]

**AL:** Does this experience lead to the sentimentalization of the live event?

**LC:** I don't think a disappointment with the banality of the real-time image is secretly about an awakened yearning for fully-embodied presence — for the experience of being there in person, as a cure for disappointed virtuality. Not at all. Experiencing a live Phillytalk won't necessarily dispel the visual disappointment. Whether the event is experienced live or virtually is not that significant on this issue as compared to whether the event has a PhillyTalk procedural form or not. It's the PhillyTalks procedural form that induces the banality of real-time visual semiosis, and the desire then to break with it for the sake of the event.

One's relationship to the everyday is completely different at a standard poetry reading that one is at in person. You are curious to see what the poet does. You are there to hear the poet read — specifically *how* the poet reads. Your curiosity is on a humanizing scale. When the poet reaches for a glass of water, scratches her ear, curiosity might even increase — with awareness that these gestures form part of how the poet reads. One is deeply interested when the poet coughs. Ticks, hesitations, ums, ahs, humanize ideas of poet and poetry —

**AL:** From the vantage of the webcast participant, these ticks and hesitations make the poet seem less disembodied, consequently more real —

**LC:** ...incidental gestures, these humanizing redundancies flourish at a poetry reading and form a large part of the experience of hearing poetry if you don't know the poet, yet seem, in the PhillyTalks context — well, suddenly wrong, or redundant, definitely a distraction from the poetry and its discourse, which is taking place — eventing — in its own distinct created time separate from everyday time.

The PhillyTalk attempts to over-ride registers of the ordinary and the everyday, to sublimate them in order to expose their repressed sociality, and to bring to the event awareness of the structures of discourse that constitute it. For instance, the seeming natural location of the speech function in the everyday is broken up, and also the seeming natural location for intellectual forms of dialogue. The usual context for dialogue is pedagogical and institutional, the graduate and undergraduate seminar. An interesting thing about the PhillyTalk is how it takes the idea of dialogue away from its institutional moorings in a university and enacts dialogue in a created, floating community.

**AL:** In the past few years, a number of institutions have appropriated work by digital artists that was situated outside and often against the institution. Is this paradigm relevant to this discussion in a way? How specific is the series to the physical venue?

**LC:** The series could have been situated anywhere there was funding. Perhaps there was for some participants a certain cache to having the event associated, at arms-length, with a great university. For some poets in the series, it was their first university recognition. That's fantastic. There was already an inviting window onto contemporary poetry at Penn, represented by its faculty, and students, in the Writers House concept, and so on.

But the idea of dialogue in the PhillyTalk crosses and even cancels oppositions between the institutional and the non-institutional or anti-institutional community or act, of not-so-recent poetry and art history. PhillyTalks is indifferent to these oppositions because it encompasses both, addresses both, crosses both.

**AL:** When we decided to hold PhillyTalks 18 in Calgary, we encountered a fair amount of disappointment, even hostility. A number of individuals had identified with the project in Philadelphia. They understood it, in a way, as belonging to Philadelphia. And this hostility confused me.

I am also interested in people identifying with the project via the internet. An individual often identifies with, or feels included in, an event that he or she has physically attended. Is it possible for an individual to feel included in a live event that he or she has participated in via a webcast or even a recording?

**LC:** The experience of the instantaneous moment, and philosophically, of essence, is changing. Bob Perelman speaks on the instant, he does not want to reach for a cabled hand-held microphone when he is at an event that he wants to speak to; he doesn't want to have to wait to speak until the mike is handed to him. The microphone is an encumbrance, an intrusion hindering instant response and engagement. As an events recorder himself, he's not averse to recording, of course, but the technology has to be somewhat seamless for comfort. I completely sympathize. Recording, as anyone knows who has done it, or been hit with it, is a dampener on spontaneous talk, besides being sometimes a real pain to set up, impose and acknowledge.

**AL:** Is Bob longing for an invisible, transparent technology? That would be fairly problematic —

**LC:** That technology can or should be transparent is questionable. Bob would not disagree, I'm sure.

But you know, not everything is worth preserving. It's more important to speak now, than to be heard to speak later. On the other hand, everything is worth preserving. It's more important to be heard to speak now, than to speak later.

[laughter]

I've just recently got a copy of Charles Bernstein's *With Strings*. There is a wonderful preface that takes the view that everything is worth preserving — saving the sparks, as Mac Low would say. Charles is suggesting this is the attitude — towards the word, towards its archive, and so on — that one must take as a reader of his poetry. The rhetorical figure he uses in his joke is of the New Criticism, but the joke is not at New Criticism's expense only. Once, poets argued that the author had to be jettisoned, that only the work was important. Remember the intentional fallacy? Bernstein wants to take this, as Emeril Live would, up a notch. It is high time that the work is jettisoned, too. Bam! One is left, then, with a continuum of differentiating details. And if what we are left with is a continuum of detailing, then Bernstein's poems become, in effect, their arrangement, in the ongoing recorded flux.

**AL:** Technology is often employed in nostalgic enterprises, enterprises of preservation such as the recovery of that which has been lost or might soon be lost, degrade or disappear.

In the archival panel discussion in Calgary, I mentioned Nam June Paik's 1968 proposal for a universal archive of all electronic music performances. 97% of recordings were not being recorded, he claimed. "A simple measure would solve the whole problem."

In the 1963 Vancouver Poetry conference, errata frequently make their way into the recordings — things that have no immediate use value to us at the present time. Levertov announces into the microphone that she has just arrived at the conference, apologizing to her audience as she puts down her suitcase. We listen, but do not see her writing on the blackboard with chalk. We listen, but do not see the remnants of the musical performance drifting into the recording from an adjacent room. These sorts of elements result in what might be termed a productive voyeurism.

It strikes me as naïve that anyone who wants to be an archivist can become one today, and that the artist might be in the best position to archive him or herself. Perhaps the artist should be recorded. Perhaps the artist should not be recorded. But to record oneself seems to me unreasonable, completely unreliable.

**LC:** In terms of the archive, I agree with you that the event is constructed after the event.

**AL:** And by someone else.

**LC:** Which is actually a very interesting point in this context. Is it really possible to archive oneself?

But I wanted to clarify this one point about the idea of the archive and its relation to the PhillyTalks event and to the past. Yes, the event is constructed at a second remove, after the fact. All the details can become significant, even the banality of the visual image, the webcast of the poets' reading, after the fact. After the fact, with the passage of time, that's greatly interesting. But it seems redundant, and seems distracting, to think of looking back, from the position of *as if* after the fact, when one wants to maintain instead and put forward value for a proleptic stance in the present. When one's relation to the event is future orientated, if one's relationship to the event is future orientated, if one comes to the event in order to, in the sense of a vortex, drive the present into the future, to motivate the present towards the future, then I think that's where expectations on the live event can turn into, rightfully so, disappointments.

If one considers the event as already occurring in the past, even before it has happened, and as occurring in the past even as it happens, then everything that occurs in the past can potentially be of interest. But because I think the proceduralism of PhillyTalks encourages participation, encourages actualization, to use Aristotle's word for some reason, it is a future-orientated event in the present first and foremost, for its participants. For its archivists, that's another matter. The PhillyTalk is for doing and making the present into the future, into the unknown. And I think that is why it is a proceduralism.

One thing on disappointment — which seems to be a motif in our conversation. Perhaps indeed this affect is structured into the denouement of a PhillyTalk, as we seem to be suggesting. (Given how intensively exciting these talks have been for us, it's curious, don't you think?) Disappointment could so easily have been expressed as derision — of the everyday, et cetera — in 1916. For this reason, I am wary of describing and theorizing (even as I do it!) the PhillyTalks as vortex, due to the latter's historical context. But the form of the vortex, and the high and low tensions it creates, is what I think is generative. And to feel disappointment should not be avoided as bad. Look at how much we have to say about it.

**AL:** Let's return to our recent decision to subtract the visual feed from PhillyTalks webcasts.

I am opposed to the visual feed not because it comes across as extraneous, as unnecessary or banal. Rather, I believe the viewer should not be obligated to remain in front of the computer. Following a sort of lite Levinasian development, I am reluctant to turn away from any computer through which I see the face and hear the voice of the poet in question. I feel obliged to return their gaze.

On the other hand, I'll grant you that webcast images of talking heads are remarkably boring... But are images themselves really boring? Well, I wouldn't go that far.

[laughter]

**LC:** The relationship of sound to time is different from that of space to time. Sound and time go together, you can think of present movement in a future tense. In the image in question here, I don't get the sense of movement, of the logos, of thinking towards something, in some collective sense. In contrast, the vortical image was dynamic, cubist, artificial. I have always been excited by the poet's talk, which has been around in various forms before the Language Poets, but they — group identity — really privileged the notion of it. With them you have not just the poet's talk but a transcript of the audience talking after the talk, about the talk. Poet's talk. The Language Poet's talk itself was for the most part monologic and essay-like, while the PhillyTalk is dialogic.

**AL:** In a PhillyTalks, it is often the case that members of the audience — but not necessarily the performers — are tired and decide to break for dinner shortly after having begun. Contrast this with the Vancouver 1963 Conference: poetry readings often last between 90 and 100 minutes. At one point, Ginsberg admits to those who have attended his reading that he is frankly tired of reading, that he has nothing else to read. His confession follows nearly 3 hours of panel discussions earlier that day.

I'm struck by the duration of poetry readings at the 1963 Vancouver conference and the way in which they appear to contract over time. The reading that accompanied your recent book release for *The Mood Embosser* lasted about 20 to 25 minutes. Do you have enough material to read for 90 minutes per day, on multiple days of the week? Is it in your nature as a performer, as well as our nature as an audience today, to sit still and be captivated for that length of time?

[laughter]

**LC:** Whether I have enough work or not is another question. But I do think that, to a degree, reading time is a function of the institutions in our lives. The fact that the PhillyTalk did happen on campus, where there were other needs and duties pulling audience members away, not least the dinner to follow, prepared by Rebekah Grossman, and the trains to catch, or the need to teach the following morning, work...

**AL:** But are you disappointed that the event itself, the poetry reading, is shortening or appears to be shortening?

Dan Farrell and Peter Inman, in PhillyTalks 14, spoke of the need for *slow* reading. Do you sense that they were issuing not just a call for slower reading, but a reading that in fact lasts longer? So that the same amount of material can nevertheless be read in the end?

[laughter]

Consider the Vancouver 1963 poetry conference again, from the perspective of the recordings available online at Slought Networks. Time and again, I am glued to the recording without interruption. I don't know that this is the case with the live event, today. Have recording technologies exacerbated our inability to stay focused on, to be commanded by, the live event?

At every Slought Networks event, I am conscious of the fact that I will be able to listen to the recording of the live event after. In fact, I discuss this with the participants. I frequently announce it to the audience. And of course I monitor the recording during the live event as well. All parties to the event are aware that there will be a fairly comprehensive residue of the live event after the live event has ended. It is a residue we have the option of returning to again and again.

My other concern is about recordings and their *accessibility*. The compressed PhillyTalks recordings are accessible freely via the website to everyone, at any time. Perhaps the audience for the average PhillyTalk is smaller as a result of their accessibility on the web. However, this would entail the reduction of the live event to its recording. But that is, perhaps, beside the point...

**LC:** Yes, I think that's why the idea of the archive is gathering, and has gathered, an amount of attention by artists and people interested in the net above and beyond its professional and practical function and theory. I mean beyond the practice of those archivists attached to or hired by institutions representing, say, the nation-state to preserve a cultural heritage.

This free-wheeling idea of the archive which is present in Slought Networks is exemplary. It problematizes the notion of the idea of recording, and of what to record. It problematizes the relation of the present to the past in a new and often exhilarating way. The very fact that one can do this in some sense "publicly" (but the word's wrong now), for free (always a highly relative, three-quarters false, word), I think is what makes the idea of the archive so vital to the web, to the internet.

**AL:** If Slought Networks is a free-wheeling archive, it is situated in the over-determined archive that is the web.

Can you speak more about the subjectivity of the Slought Networks repository?

**LC:** That anyone can accumulate details to compose a particular archive makes that archive quite specific. This is the opposite of invoking the internet as a universal archive, or warehouse. Slought.net says to me this is a specific archive that is not attached to the universal program of a nation-state to preserve its heritage, or to an institution to preserve its name. This is a singular archive idiosyncratically organized around the desires, the interests, and the speculations of named artists.

**AL:** Notable about PhillyTalks or Slought Networks projects is the way in which we, as organizers, have removed ourselves as much as possible from the live event and its recording.

Conversely, Steve Deitz, the new media curator at the Walker Center, recently issued a call for the artist and curator as active yet unreliable archivist. He was referencing those individuals whose work addresses the alarming (if exciting) situation on the web in which everyone is trying to record everything.

Do we need more unreliable archivists? In the end, we would be left with an exhaustively unverifiable archive.

**LC:** In relation to the verifiability of what?

**AL:** Regarding the intention with which the recordings were created, the knowledge according to which they were collated. In the end we would have an unverifiable object for an unverifiable archive.

**LC:** You mean we would come across unverifiable reasons for recording in the first place...?

**AL:** Yes. I'm thinking of how to interrogate this widespread conviction that everything is worth recording. That I am always in the best position to record myself.

Archiving oneself is a narcissistic, fairly tautological enterprise.

**LC:** So the unreliable archivist would be from the perspective of the viewer of the archive who cannot ascertain the motivations for the archive.

**AL:** Correct.

**LC:** I like that idea a lot. The erasure of ourselves as the conduit, if you like, to the event and to the archive — this is an important first step.

In terms of the motivations one might attach to the archive or the event... well, those motivations are not in any way reducible to our own. We are enabling an eventing that is inherently collective.

*This interview was transcribed in full from the recording of a phone conversation between Louis Cabri (Calgary) and Aaron Levy (Philadelphia) and edited April 13-25.*