

Community Participation and Post-Custodial Possibilities: Building the South Asian American Digital Archive

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Community Participation and Post-Custodial Possibilities: Building the South Asian American Digital Archive Michelle Caswell, UCLA Abstract: This paper will detail the opportunities and challenges of building independent, online archives using the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) (<http://www.saadigitalarchive.org/>) as its primary research site. SAADA is a community-based online repository that preserves and provides access to the diverse histories of the South Asian diaspora in the U.S.

Employing a post-custodial model in which archival materials remain in their local communities of origin, SAADA creates digital copies of records, describes them to archival standards, and makes them broadly accessible online. This distributed archival model reflects the distributed nature of the South Asian American diaspora and allows families and local communities to maintain control of archival records while at the same time soliciting broad-even global-input on collecting priorities, appraisal decisions, and description. This paper will address the possibilities for marginalized communities to shape collective memory of the past and forge their own identities through grassroots archival collecting projects that employ new media to expand participation and access. Keywords: community archives, digital archives, postcustodial, digital diaspora