

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH: Sara Puotinen

I'm an ex-academic, storyteller and troublemaker who lives in South Minneapolis. I'm experimenting with ways to craft a life beside (next to, but not in) and besides (in addition to) the academy. These experiments involve a lot of learning new things, like how to code, design my virtual spaces, and craft stories online, and a lot of exploring how to use things I've already learned, like two decades of training in feminist/critical/ethical/queer theories and pedagogies, in new ways. You can find me at undisciplined.room34.com.

TITLE: From Scraps of Memory to Fragments of Unofficial Student Life: Personal Digital Archives as Storytelling

ABSTRACT for 10-20 presentation:

Faced with the loss of two grounding forces, my family's farm and my passion for being an academic, I felt compelled to recover, collect, organize, explore and experiment with materials from my past. Photos, video footage, papers, exams, syllabi, memoirs, letters, scrapbooks, teachers' comments, course blogs, tweets, newspaper clippings, digitized oral history recordings and more. The result of this memory work are two ongoing online story projects: a story experiment about my family's farm, [The Farm \(thefarm.room34.com\)](http://thefarm.room34.com), and a virtual collection of accounts of my Undisciplined life as a student, scholar and teacher (transcripts.room34.com).

Central to both of these projects is the creation and maintenance of public/online digital archives that not only offer a way to organize and access the personal materials that I use in my story projects, but serve as crucial parts of the storytelling. For my farm project, which is inspired by a Finnish rag rug loom, the materials in my archive are digital "scraps of memory" that can be accessed and re-purposed by anyone wanting to use them to "weave" their own Farm stories. For my Undisciplined life project, the materials in my archive become an unofficial student transcript that provides a record of my undisciplined life as a student and allows me to trace an alternative trajectory for my scholarly self to a space beside/s the academy.

In this talk, I will describe how these digital archives function within my two storytelling projects, why they are so important in my own processes of remembering and re-imagining my past, and why I'm choosing to house them online on a public blog. I will also discuss my efforts and struggles with collecting and organizing materials and determining how to make them accessible to a wide range of people.