The first, perhaps unexpected thing to remark about an online library is the physical experience of it.

A likely scenario would include sitting upright before the computer under the gaze of a desk lamp, either alone or in public (which, by virtue of the screen, still insinuates a certain *non-presence* within the immediate environment), tuned in, fingers poised over keyboard and mouse. This is a modest description, but the physical isolation of this wired contemporaneity (the most recent addition to the looped safety announcements in metro stations is the chipper phrase, "*Do not only look at your mobile phone!*") is so pervasive and acceptable, simply because most of us know and experience the *www* as something inherently social, if only a *ww*(*we*) in the form of a longing. Being tuned in to the internet is an absurd form of communality, where social media-infused neurons reward us for our activity like sedentary, addicted lab rats.

The role of the library and culture, however, never needed to be about the 'we' of being together *per se*; it can be understood rather as a being 'in common' that happens over and across time. The Internet, as a technological advance of such drastic sociocultural implications, is the same, perhaps, though the sickness of virality drastically reduces the half-life of such transmissions; the 'in common' of culture online is its immediacy and the speed at which information flows and changes the nature of sharing. Yesteryear's visiting of public libraries may have been solitary acts as well (like sitting in front of the computer), but the online archive is a far picture from the romanticism of the smell of old books and their crisp, aged pages. The crucial difference in experience and content, of course, is the Internet's immateriality, and its monumentality is its abstraction. The visually structured organisation formerly associated with libraries and archives (think of meandering back and forth through rows of books, film canisters, theatre costumes or any other thing which warrants such archiving) has given way to the new spatial analogies of networks, rhizomes and decentralised nodes.

To think about sound and libraries, the first thought that comes to mind still comes from the archives of memory. As a pre-teen, I took my first position as a volunteer in the local public library. Its floor was carpeted, a beige-ish, mauve colour. Many years later, research work led me to the National Art Library of the Victoria & Albert Museum, the most impressive library I have ever visited. Its floors are marble, and the ornate desks and cubicles are of a classically weighty dark wood. I recall the sounds of these places as the hushed breeze that coincides with the change in air pressure from walking into these interiors: movement slows at the same time that it becomes

amplified, because no one is talking. There is a large and resonant quality of sound to these spaces and movements that I love; a turning page, someone's muffled cough or the shuffling footsteps of an unseen visitor resound magnificently. They are the resounding sounds of 'being quiet'.

Yes, quietness bears a sound. What is not manifested in decibels becomes an awareness of rhythm, spacing and movement, and perhaps it is this attention to the spatiotemporal attributes of experience that I would like to connect to The Library by soundpocket. Where its digitized nature distances the visitor from these material qualities of sound, it is possible to read another relation tied to this collection, one that resounds with the sound of quietness. What soundpocket refers to "listening as a way of being and being with others" is not only as Yeung Yang and many social researchers point out an ethical position, it is a spatiotemporal one. Such an ethics is defined by the rhythm, spacing and movement between a speaker and a listener (and where these roles interchange), and that between the listener and the array of sounds around him/her. If we are to listen, then, to the spaces created in the experience of the soundpocket Library, what becomes crucial is not simply the individual sounds created by each uploaded recording, but the sound of this acoustic project as a whole in itself. What radically different position this bears from a typical understanding of sound in the urban environment, and from the most troubling accelerations of our networked behaviours, are what gives this library its quietness.

What then, is the spatiotemporality offered by this immaterial, online Library of sounds? Instead of through a door, we enter through a field of colour. A minor deconstruction identifies this field to be the particular shade known as HEX #F2EEAF—perhaps not as telling as 'chartreuse yellow' or 'ochre yellow', but actually much more precise as description. And for some unidentifiable reason, HEX #F2EEAF seems to create the same hushed change in pressure as passing through the entrance of the libraries of my memory. It is non-excitable yet expansive, leading us through a web architecture which cues the senses in much the same way as a traditional archive. The user is encouraged to take time, to be curious and to drift with care through the subtle taxonomy of the library's contents. Like a traditional library, it is from within this taxonomy that words begin to stimulate, but stepping here into the world wide web, the first sounds only come from the *click - click - click* of my mouse.

Click. This is the first, perhaps unexpected sound rhythm of an alter-transport into the city. We stop at stations known as "Protest" and "Courtship", and each of these districts transforms geographic proximity into a topical, subjective intimacy.

Interestingly, when my body and the interweb connected to it are outside of Hong Kong, the sounds feel differently than when I am here. As these words are being written, I am somewhere else in the world; the *click - click - click* transport system bores through mental tunnels and the sounds play as if heard through glass jars, faraway record players or cupped hands holding whispers into my ear. Through distance comes the closeness of familiarity. I hear someone else's journey as if it were my own memory, and this embodiment is simultaneously estranged as well as intimate. Somehow, this is how I will always feel about this city.

As these words continue to be written, I meander through "Day and Night" and "Hubbub" and find myself in Hong Kong again. It feels somehow ridiculous to listen to these sounds through the computer when I could simply go outside. But it is precisely that these recordings are not, as one may think, about going elsewhere. While they certainly may be of a previous time, or a place we've never been, such presencing made aware to us by the hands and ears of another is exactly the form of embodiment that precipitates the certitude of *nowness*, *hereness* and the *being-with*. These sounds carry with them another form of immediacy, where immediacy becomes flow, and sound occurs not only over the passage of time but *is* the passage of time. Even after the recording stops, sound never ends, just as even quietness has a sound and silence exists only as a conceptual outside (in outer space, or in death).

Sound is the passage of time. And to 'collect time' is to try to understand time itself. Thus, when Yeung writes, "This is not an archive, but a series of encounters, affirmations and doubts about listening as a way of being", we could just as easily counter that "This *is* an archive". Where encounters, affirmations and doubts occur as a manner of being, they are the expression of collected time. This is not a collection in the traditional sense of heritage preservation, but just as we must reconsider the spatiotemporality of the library within this online architecture, we may also reconsider the archive as an active genealogy in the making, where sound is not past time, but *of* time.

A final note:
If we are to respect the collection of time in its fullest, my only doubt comes from the temporal editing of the soundpocket Library collection into one-minute excerpts. As the website says, this may be primarily due to a server limitation (because immateriality bears its costs as well), but seeing that the Library is as of yet still minor in its presentation, it seems a disappointing curation to make edited narratives of the

sounds that have been collected.　Time, as time, could be represented in its reality, as per those of the stop-start moments of each of the sound collectors. To cut short their narratives seems rather unforgiving of time, or maybe only a Hong Kong-valuated version of it. But acceleration is still time, and listening is still listening. Let us keep trying.

Elaine W. Ho
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Artist Bio
Elaine W. HO (HK/USA) works between the realms of time-based art, urban practice and design, using multiple vocabularies to explore the micropolitics, subjectivities and the alter-possibilities of an intimate, networked production. The act of describing takes on a number of forms—a kind of grammar, a documentation, a gesture, a biography—or a project in Beijing known as HomeShop. She is the initiator of the artist-run space, active from 2008-2013, and currently a fellow at the Institut für Raumexperimente in Berlin.

藝術家簡介
何穎雅的工作多借由不同面向的藝術語言，探索人、空間、組織與日常生活之間纏結的微觀政治關係。她為北京藝術空間「家作坊」的創辦人，平日好飲鴛鴦。