

Documenting traces of Latin American feminist movements: Digital counterarchives as sites of memory and resistance

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Abstract

Introduction: Traces of protests from Latin American feminist movements (such as signs, feminist graffiti, etc.) tend to disappear quickly, both because these protest expressions are ephemeral and because institutions erase these traces before they can be documented and preserved. This erasure is a policy decision because it removes women's demands from the public space.

Methods: In this paper, we explain two approaches for documenting traces of Latin American feminist movements of the 2020s to prevent this erasure and address their ephemerality: one through a local digital counterarchive for a mid-sized Mexican city (titled *Huellas Incómodas*) and another through a regional web counterarchive (titled Feminist Activisms in Latin America).

Results: Counterarchives are needed because they are sources to record, highlight, and legitimize women's knowledge and demands, and because memory institutions lack policies on how to document and preserve feminist protests. Building digital counterarchives can resist this erasure of women's demands and unrest by documenting and preserving these protest traces, which we call *Huellas Incómodas* (uncomfortable footprints) because they expose the inaction of institutions to address gender-based violence.

Conclusion: By constructing digital counterarchives, the erasure of women's demands and unrest can be resisted through the documentation and preservation of these protest traces. Termed *Huellas Incómodas* to underscore the inaction of institutions in addressing gender-based violence, these counterarchives play a vital role in amplifying women's voices and demanding change.

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Keywords

Latin American feminist movements, feminist graffiti, digital archives, web archiving, archival activism, counterarchives.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available in the *Huellas Incómodas* counterarchive at <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/> & *Activismos Feministas en América Latina* at <https://archive-it.org/collections/20068>. Other data are derived from the following resources available in the public domains listed in the *Digital projects* section of this paper.

Conflict of interest

We hereby state that we have no conflicts of interest related to the research outlined in this manuscript. Furthermore, we confirm that our study does not involve any experiments or investigations conducted on living organisms.

Introduction

This paper highlights the pressing need to document and preserve expressions of protest by Latin American feminist movements before they are erased or lost. Digital humanities methods for creating digital archives can help in this endeavor, which we exemplify through two case studies: the local digital counterarchive *Huellas Incómodas*³ and the regional web counterarchive *Feminist Activisms in Latin America*.⁴ By capturing and archiving these materials, counterarchives safeguard the historical and cultural significance of these movements, amplify marginalized voices, challenge systemic oppression and contribute to a more comprehensive historical record. Neglecting the preservation of feminist activism perpetuates injustice and disregards its importance to the public agenda.

The *Huellas Incómodas* project was born in 2020 to prevent *pintas*⁵ (feminist graffiti) and other ephemeral expressions of protest from disappearing without a trace. In Mexico, feminist activists and artists place *pintas* in buildings, streets, and monuments “in order to be seen, heard, and remembered in resistance to being rendered invisible, silenced, exterminated, murdered, erased, and forgotten” (Álvarez, 2022, p. 192). The project seeks

³ Translated as Uncomfortable Footprints, this counterarchive focuses on the participation from activists and allies of social movements in the archiving process. It has two cases of studies since 2020: Toluca, Mexico & Cuenca, Ecuador.

⁴ Counterarchive focused on the archiving of websites from feminist organizations in Spanish-speaking Latin American countries.

⁵ A *pinta* is a graffiti created during a protest, usually painted on urban landmarks with feminist slogans or symbols. They are usually made with materials that can be easily erased or deteriorated.

to contextualize these traces according to local and national events, since “in themselves, they do not constitute ‘memory’ unless they are evoked and placed in a framework that gives them meaning” (Jelin, 2002, p. 30). Therefore, it is a digital counterarchive that preserves, categorizes and contextualizes this material based on the voices of the participants in these movements and their allies.

Counterarchives are important sites that store the demands and work of social movements because they house records that are not found in conventional archival repositories, which tend to archive stories of the elites in power. Instead, they push the agenda of social justice through the archiving and access to neglected histories (Bhebhe y Ngoepe, 2022). In the case of feminist movements in Mexico, their demands are so neglected that government workers erase *pintas* just hours after they are placed, thus eliminating the possibility of recording or preserving them (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Government workers erasing *pintas* in downtown Toluca, Mexico.
Source: Anónimo, “Limpia del #8M,” *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023,
<https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/items/show/548>.

If government institutions deploy such an urgency to delete traces of feminist protests, then it is equally urgent to register and preserve them because they are records of the demands, values, and priorities of feminist activists, which include justice for femicide victims and

the end of gender-based violence.⁶ Deleting these pressing demands is a memory policy that sends the message that women's demands are unworthy of preservation and denies feminist activists the possibility of forming part of the historical record. Building digital and web counterarchives for social justice initiatives can resist the erasure of feminist demands in the public space and evidence the biases and gaps in Mexican and elsewhere memory policies.

We call memory policies those that “have the function of transferring through time narratives on facts filtered by specific community preferences” (Closa, 2011, p. 5). They are formed by selection processes that are not neutral, but biased because they prioritize certain facts and experiences over others. Exploring how public institutions respond to feminist protest traces allows us to identify what are the policies regarding the documentation and preservation of women’s demands.

Public memory institutions, such as libraries, archives and museums, are responsible for the preservation and transmission of memory (Grosso, 2002), yet they have made few efforts to preserve the traces of recent feminist protests and they have not opposed the erasure of *pintas* right after they are placed. We argue that this disregard for preserving feminist activism is due to the uncomfortable nature of feminist movements because they challenge, resist, and expose systems of oppression such as patriarchy and capitalism. Feminist movements are so uncomfortable for institutions that they erase the traces of these demands before addressing them and, of course, preserving them.

We propose the concept of *Huellas Incómodas* (uncomfortable footprints) to name the traces of feminist protest expressions that institutions quickly erase because they expose their inaction to prevent and sanction gender-based violence. This concept inspired the digital humanities project with the same name, which will be discussed throughout the paper as an example of a counterarchive that documents feminist protest expressions. This project was created with professors, librarians, undergraduate and graduate students from the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, the University of Cuenca (Ecuador) and the University of Kansas.

In the following sections of the paper, we argue how the erasure of women’s protest traces is a policy decision that dismisses feminist activism as unworthy of being documented as part of the historical record. We then describe the rationale and the process of creating *Huellas Incómodas* project and the web counterarchive Feminist Activisms in Latin America to preserve these movements in the region. The first project was created to document the local traces of feminist movements since 2020 in the city of Toluca, Mexico,

⁶ We use the term feminicide to refer to “the role of the state in enabling violence against women through either omission, negligence or complicity” (D’Ignazio, 2022, p. 6). This is the most common term used in Mexico.

and Cuenca, Ecuador; while the second one is a collection of archived websites of independent organizations and initiatives that address gender-based violence in different Spanish-speaking Latin American countries.

The erasure of women's memory as policy

Feminist movements in Mexico have taken to the streets to protest and, as part of the demonstrations, have created *pintas* on landmarks selected for their nationalistic or patriarchal values. These protest footprints contain slogans that have been used to denounce femicide, such as *Ni Una Más* (not one more woman), which is attributed to Susana Chávez, activist and poet from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, as well as *Ni una menos* (not one less woman), whose use started in Argentina in 2015 to condemn gender-based violence and impunity (Revilla Blanco, 2019). Other types of feminist graffiti mention the name of femicide victims or missing women (see Figure 2) or criticize the inaction of institutions like the police and schools to address gender-based violence (see Figure 3).



Figure 2. Missing women posters in Toluca, México.

Source: Jesús Mendoza Martínez, “[Sin título]”, *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/items/show/810>.



Figure 3. *Pintas* in a high school after a protest in Toluca, México.

Source: Anónimo, “Zamora te queremos fuera” (“Zamora, we want you out”), *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/items/show/308>.

After the protests, institutions remove the feminist graffiti and interventions and thus prevent the visibility of the traces that expose gender-based violence and the inaction of the institutions. By erasing them, the recording and preservation of these expressions of nonconformity is prevented, so the subaltern and local history is also eliminated. This action is “a voluntary political act of destroying evidence and traces in order to promote selective forgetting through the elimination of documentary evidence” (Jelin, 2002, pp. 29-30). Building counterarchives that document and claim these traces as records worthy of preservation is a political act of resistance to avoid oblivion.

We propose the term counterarchive inspired by other recent terms used in Latin American feminist activism, such as counterdata and countermonuments. These “counter” efforts are created by activists and civil society organizations when the state and its institutions systematically ignore phenomena such as femicide and fail to collect important information, so external groups must fill these gaps themselves (D'Ignazio, 2022). When institutions dismiss *pintas* and protest interventions as records unworthy of preservation, counterarchives are needed to resist the erasure of feminist demands in the public space and evidence the biases and silences in Mexican memory policies.

The erasure of *pintas* and other feminist traces of protest before they can be documented and preserved is a policy that denies feminist activism the right to memory and deems it unimportant. This policy is particularly grave when they erase the name of women who were killed because of feminicide placed by activists in feminist graffiti or other interventions. The gravity is that memory policies are deliberate actions “taken by governments or other political or social actors with the aim of preserving, transmitting and enhancing the memory of certain aspects of the past considered particularly significant or important” (Groppo, 2002, p. 192). When institutions remove their names right after they are placed in public spaces, they relegate the memory of feminicide victims to the private sphere and contribute to the forgetting of their cases.

Digital counterarchives bypass this erasure by placing records of these protest traces in the public sphere of the Internet. In the case of protest traces that mention feminicide cases in Mexico, the names of these women (if they are on any records or in the media at all) are in criminal or legal records. By adding their names in *pintas* or counterarchives, they are mentioned in a different context that does not victimize them and instead humanizes them by appearing alongside records that demand justice for them.

While in this paper we discuss the creation of digital counterarchives, we recognize that there have also been similar physical initiatives since the last century, for example, the [Lesbian Herstory Archives](#), which for decades have housed records of the lives and experiences of lesbians. In Africa, the [Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work](#) has documented the stories of people with HIV/AIDS in South Africa, while the [South African History Archive](#) has recaptured lost and neglected stories in archives in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Bhebe & Ngoepe, 2022). These projects now also have a digital counterpart that has allowed them to reach a wider audience.

These are other examples that serve as counterarchives, in this article we will discuss how the counterarchive of *Huellas Incómodas* as a digital humanities project addresses the ephemerality and erasure of the traces of feminist protests in the city of Toluca, Mexico.

***Huellas Incómodas*: a local digital counterarchive**

Huellas Incómodas is a counterarchive that currently contains more than 450 records from different cities in Latin America, but mainly from Toluca, Mexico. The focus has been on this city because it is where the team is based, as documenting the activism happening in a city requires a team with individual and group situatedness (Earhart, 2018), as well as local knowledge of the movements and links to grassroots activist organizations leading the protests.

The records are obtained in two ways, and they are all assigned a Creative Commons license:

- For the first method of archiving, one member of the *Huellas* team records the protests or *pintas* (if they have not been erased yet). That same person adds descriptive metadata, as well as an explanation to contextualize them. For example, many *pintas* contain names of victims of femicide, so the team looks for the names and, in the description of the record, adds their full name and where they lived.
- The other method of archiving is through crowdsourcing, where activists can self-archive their images directly on the site and add metadata, such as title, author (can be anonymous or a pseudonym), description of the context, date, place of the image, among others. This allows the initiative to grow and expand to other regions in Latin America.⁷

The methodology proposed by *Huellas Incómodas* of both crowdsourcing materials and having the team record protest traces can be especially fruitful for small and mid-sized cities. This is because most Latin American countries are highly centralized, so memory institutions, including archives, libraries, and the media focus mostly on the social movements happening in the capital cities of the region, while other cities receive less attention or are excluded from national records. Digital counterarchives like *Huellas Incómodas* serve as a reminder that feminist struggles happen in several cities beyond the capitals, which challenges centralized memory policies.

Toluca's student-feminist movement

We started with the counterarchive because of the student feminist movement at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México that began in February 2020 in Toluca. In this movement, collectives of feminists and students protested various cases of femicide, sexual harassment and other gender-based violence. These protests and a following student strike showed the inaction of university authorities, who failed to address the increasingly evident cases of violence and abuse.

The student strike was abruptly interrupted by the closure of activities due to the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, but with the loosening of health measures in 2021, feminist activism restarted in-person. However, during the lockdown, the digital counterarchive kept a record of the February and March protests when many people continued in their homes, and it was more difficult to notice when graffiti and other expressions of protest were removed.

⁷ This characteristic allowed a group of professors and students from the University of Cuenca, Ecuador, to join the collective, developing their own digital counterarchive on the feminist social movements that took place in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, starting in 2020.

In addition to documenting protest traces, we created different visualizations to contextualize the images we had collected. First, we created [juxtapositions](#) where we contrasted how some places in the city looked with the *pintas* and after they had been erased (see Figure 4). Another way to contextualize the movement was through newspaper articles. The team collected a database of about 100 news stories that covered the movement over a six-month period. We then created a timeline with the headline of each news article, the first paragraph of the story and a screenshot (captured in case the story was deleted in the future).



Figure 4. Juxtaposition of a university sign with a feminist graffiti and without it. The text reads: This is a space free of cigarette smoke, which was crossed out so that instead it said: This is a space free of harassment.

Source: Yuxtaposiciones, Una universidad libre de acoso, *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/yuxtaposiciones>

A final strategy was the documentation of the Facebook posts of student organizations. The challenge of archiving this type of records is that in 2018 Facebook restricted most of the automated tools used by researchers for the extraction and archiving of large volumes of data. In response, there have been calls to counter-archive Facebook, where activists and archivists preserve screenshots of posts from the platform as a way of resisting the non-public availability of this type of records, which are ultimately part of local and national history (Ben-David, 2020).

Following this approach, we manually took screenshots of 400 Facebook posts from student organizations, who used the platform to share updates on activist actions and

demand changes in university policies. We then added the screenshots on a [digital timeline](#) to contextualize how the organizations disseminated their activism to other students (see Figure 5).

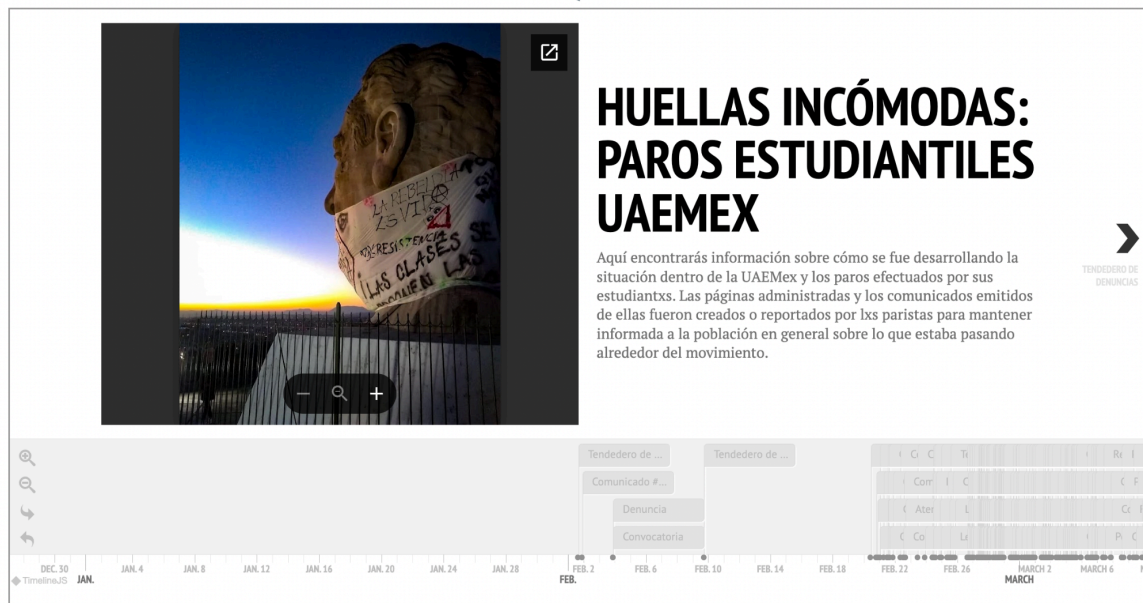


Figure 5. Digital timeline with the social media posts from feminist organizations in Toluca.

Source: Timelines, *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023,

<https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/lineasdeltiempo>

The *Huellas Incómodas* counterarchive is available in English and Spanish, has been developed in Omeka and is hosted on a server at the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities at the University of Kansas in the United States, since a digital humanities librarian from this university has collaborated with the technical development of the archive.

Our university in Mexico would not have agreed to host these uncomfortable records on its servers, especially since the project came two months after the pandemic interrupted the student movement. In addition, the independence of the archive would have been compromised and the activists would not have felt comfortable sharing their records on a server of the same university to which their protests were directed. The creation of this counterarchive leads us to think about the need for this type of records as a basis for making feminist demands visible and demanding the development of policies aimed at addressing them.

Feminist Activisms in Latin America: a regional web counterarchive

While *Huellas Incómodas* aims to record the physical traces of a local feminist activism, the second counterarchive we created aims to preserve the digital traces of feminist organizations through a web archive. This collection, entitled [*Activismos feministas en América Latina*](#) (*Feminist Activisms in Latin America*), contains copies of a selection of feminist websites from all Spanish-speaking countries in the region, in order to preserve them in case they disappear or become unavailable in the future.

In recent decades, memory institutions have created web archives to document and preserve parts of political, cultural, and social history happening on the web. Since web archives are usually created in these institutional spaces (and mostly in the Global North), few of them preserve the digital activism happening in Latin America as part of social movements, including those addressing gender-based violence, which may result in the long-term disappearance of these movements from the digital cultural record.

Web content is often mistakenly assumed to be permanent, but in reality, it is ephemeral and subject to continuous alteration. Without proactive preservation measures, there is a significant risk of degradation, loss, or even complete disappearance of web-based information. To counteract this, web archiving serves as a crucial solution by encompassing the intricate process of collecting and safeguarding web content for the sake of its long-term survival. According to Antracoli et al. (2014), web archiving involves the complex task of harvesting web content and preserving it for the enduring future.

At the beginning of our web archiving efforts, we found feminist websites that were no longer available on the web. For example, the websites of the Femicide Observatory *Cuántas Más* in Bolivia or the Puerto Rican Women's Health Society are no longer available. Another example is that 22 of the 176 organizations that make up the Latin American Consortium Against Unsafe Abortion (Clacai), were no longer available as of January 2023, and another 41 organizations had no website at all. These cases highlight the importance of archiving the websites that are still available, as there is no guarantee that they will remain online in the long term.

In the case of feminist websites, they contain reports, visualizations, and counterdata that can be even more comprehensive than official data, such as femicide observatories in Latin America (D'Ignazio, 2022).⁸ Websites also display the activities of feminist organizations and provide information about their culture and concerns (Byatt, 2009). Therefore, archiving these websites is important not only for legitimizing activist

⁸ Examples of these observatories available online are [Utopix Femicide Observatory](#) in Venezuela and [Ahora que sí nos ven](#) in Argentina, where activists share visualizations and femicide counterdata in their respective countries.

counterdata and knowledge production, but also for analyzing and tracking this information over time that can be useful to women, activists, policymakers, and researchers.

There are several web archives that have collected websites related to feminism and women's rights movements, such as the [#metoo Web Archive collections](#) at the Schlesinger library at Harvard University, the [Women's Reproductive Rights Web Collection](#) at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and the [Sophia Smith Collection](#) at Smith College. In addition, some larger web archives have sections focused on women's rights, such as Columbia University Libraries' [Human Rights Collection](#) (one of the largest thematic web archives created by a university), which contains 59 archived websites focused on women's rights.

These collections have contributed to the preservation of digital feminist activism, but they have one important limitation: they focus primarily on feminist movements in the Global North. Except for the Human Rights collection, the other initiatives only have archived North American or European websites.

Conversely, web archiving initiatives in general, not just those focused on women's rights or activism, are scarce in the Global South (D. Gomes et al., 2011; P. Gomes, 2020). This creates a gap between the North and the South because web archives allow to collect, preserve, and contextualize multiple versions of a website over time, but if websites are not archived, their information is at risk of being lost in the long term. Therefore, digital feminist activism from the Global South is at greater risk of disappearing from the digital cultural record, and if it is preserved, it is collected and hosted by institutions in the Global North.

This situation is a strong wake-up call about the urgency of having web archiving policies in general and for social movements websites that fight for women's rights, diversity, and the eradication of gender-based violence.

If Latin America lacks its own web archiving policies, it becomes dependent on what is preserved by international institutions (based in the Global North), which can be detrimental to digital memory shaping (Rockembach, 2017). Because of this lack of local web archiving policies, Latin American countries lack agency about which of their websites are preserved, and what is considered worthy of preservation will differ between Latin America and the Global North.

The creation of a web archive on Latin American feminist activism is one initiative to address these large geographical absences in the digital cultural record. While creating it, we considered several concerns in gender studies, digital humanities, and web archiving.

As of June 2023, the Feminist Activisms in Latin America collection contained 76 archived websites from all Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. The records in this collection aim to show the diversity of feminist movements online, which is why the title is “Activismos Feministas en América Latina” in plural, to reflect that feminist activism has taken many forms in the region.

We also wanted to include the websites of smaller organizations, which are at greater risk of disappearing or are not usually preserved elsewhere, such as the general [Internet Archive](#). These smaller organizations are also likely to be restricted to a city or local region, which is why they may be overlooked by other web archiving efforts. Given the high barriers of entry to web archiving, it is complicated for small activist organizations to begin a web archive, which is why memory institutions should be the main responsible for ensuring that contents on the web, including digital activism, get archived.

Some examples of the websites included in the Feminist Activisms in Latin America collection are the Chilean organization [Fundación contra el femicidio con Javiera en la Memoria](#), which has a series of illustrations depicting the lives and dreams of femicide victims. Another website is [Estación del Silencio](#), which collects data on different types of gender-based violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, while the website of the [Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia "Bartolina Sisa"](#) addresses the problems faced by indigenous Bolivian peasant women.

The collection is hosted on [Archive-It](#), a web archiving tool from the nonprofit Internet Archive that leverages the tools and infrastructure of its parent company to create, host, and provide access to collections curated by institutions or research groups (Antracoli et al., 2014). Since this is the first web archive of its kind in the region and most web archiving policies have been documented by large libraries or archives (Chen et al., 2008; Hanna, 2014; Maemura et al., 2018), policy decisions for our collection were made almost from scratch, although we followed examples of web archives in other parts of the world.

Appraisal and selection policies

After we became aware of the scarcity of web archives that compiled Latin American websites related to feminist activism, we set out to document and preserve feminist activism available on websites written in Spanish. Therefore, the first step was to decide what to include in the collection. Since the information available on the web is immense and constantly growing, it is impossible to preserve everything. Therefore, it was necessary to create a policy that would delimit which records would be collected.

We established several priorities. First, we decided that the archive would focus exclusively on websites of Latin American feminist activists, excluding pages created by government institutions dealing with or monitoring gender-based violence, as well as international

NGOs, such as the United Nations or Amnesty International. This first criterion was the most important, since our objective was to collect websites that are underrepresented in existing web archives. These large organizations, with stable financial support, have already been archived in other collections or are more often stored in the general Internet archive.

Another priority in creating the web archive was related to geographic coverage. An important goal was to archive at least two websites from each Spanish-speaking country in Latin America rather than collecting several websites from only a handful of countries. This would avoid overrepresentation of the most populous countries in the archive. Papers discussing the decolonization of digital humanities have argued that "geographical underrepresentation has had severe negative implications on the field's impact" (Aiyegbusi, 2018, p. 435). A Latin American web archive with websites from just a handful of countries would contribute to this lack of representation of lesser populated countries in the digital cultural record and ignore the debates around the geographic biases of digital humanities.

In addition to geographic coverage, we considered thematic diversity in the selection process. The collection includes archived websites focused on indigenous women, women miners, domestic workers, and lesbians in various Latin American countries. While we found more websites focused on reproductive rights or feminicide, it was important to archive these sites as well to recognize that feminist activism in Latin America is diverse and focuses on a wide range of issues.

To create the list of seeds (URLs) to archive, we added the feminist websites we already knew about to a spreadsheet. We then began a snowball sampling process, in which we visited the selected seeds and followed the links to other feminist websites. If they met the criteria defined above, we would add them to the spreadsheet. At the same time, we started looking for directories that included Latin American feminist organizations and repeated the same process. We also detected several websites thanks to Catherine D'Ignazio's (2022) book *Counting Feminicide: Data Feminism in Action*, where she interviewed members of activist organizations in Latin America that monitor, research and record feminicide counterdata.

Finally, this collection is collaborative thanks to an [online form](#) in which people propose Latin American feminist websites to be added to the archive. The only mandatory question is the URL, but it is also possible to add country, city and the topics addressed by the website. This participatory practice allows the discovery of sites that the archivist ignores (Schafer & Winters, 2021). Other web archiving initiatives have implemented participatory approaches to nominating websites through online forms, such as the UK Web Archive (n.d.), and the #blacklivesmatter collection created by the Internet Archive (Rollason-Cass

& Reed, 2015). This form is available on the *Huellas Incómodas* website as the web archive is a continuation of our work preserving feminist activism in Latin America.

Description and metadata policies

There are some general recommendations from the OCLC library organization for adding metadata to archived websites using the Dublin Core standard (Dooley & Bowers, 2018), but there are not yet common practices for adding metadata to both web archives and the individual websites contained within them. For example, for the subject metadata element, some web archives (such as the Sophia Smith and Human Rights collections) follow the Library of Congress subject headings, while other collections create their own subject categories for this metadata field.

While following the Library of Congress subject headings may be more useful for interoperability, we chose to create our own subject categories in Spanish to use the most common terms used in Latin America. This was also done in the Puerto Rican [#RickyRenuncia web archive](#) to reflect the main themes in the collection and to allow the user to search and select records from a concise list of categories (Blanco-Rivera, 2022). Creating our own categories also follows the OCLC recommendation to select “a vocabulary that is used by the communities likely to benefit from the described content” (Dooley & Bowers, 2018, p. 31). Since our target audiences are Spanish-speaking Latin American researchers and activists, it was more useful to create a list of 15 subjects based on the issues the websites address (Table 1).

List of issues		
Acceso a la salud (Access to Healthcare)	Derechos políticos (Political Rights)	Mujeres desaparecidas (Missing Women)
Acoso y hostigamiento sexual (Sexual Harassment)	Derechos sexuales y reproductivos (Sexual and Reproductive Rights)	Mujeres indígenas (Indigenous Women)
Activismo estudiantil (Student Activism)	Educación (Education)	Tecnología feminista (Feminist Technology)
Derechos laborales (Labor Rights)	Feminicidio/femicidio (Femicide/feminicide)	Trabajo doméstico (Domestic Work)
Derechos LGBTTTI (LGBT+ Rights)	Migración (Migration)	Violencia intrafamiliar (Domestic Violence)

Table 1. List of issues used in the Subject metadata field.

When creating our own subject list, we considered some of the debates surrounding the use of certain terms in Latin America, such as the distinction between the words feminicide and femicide. The use of these terms varies widely from country to country; even some national

laws use the word femicide and others use feminicide. Therefore, in deciding how to describe the websites dealing with these crimes, we decided to use the dual term *feminicidio/femicidio*, rather than choosing one or the other. If we had used the subject headings of the Library of Congress, these nuances would have been ignored, because the subject headings only use the term *femicide* or the more general *crimes against women*, a term that has been rebutted, for example, by the Mexican researcher and activist Marcela Lagarde when she studied feminicides in Ciudad Juárez (Aragón-Castro, 2022).

Conclusions

In this paper we discussed the risks and damages caused by the erasure of women's demands in the public sphere. Physically, this happens with the removal of feminist graffiti right after it is placed during women protests. This also happens online, when feminist activism is erased from the digital cultural record due to the decay and lack of preservation of information stored in the web. Memory institutions need policies to prevent this from happening or a part of Mexican history that demands justice for women will be lost in physical and digital records.

To counter this erasure, we have proposed two digital humanities approaches for documenting feminist movements: the creation of a local digital counterarchive (*Huellas Incómodas*) and the development of a regional web counterarchive (*Feminist Activisms in Latin America*). Both challenge the gaps in Mexican memory policies and expose the inaction of authorities to address gender-based violence, hence the “counter” prefix.

The next step for the *Huellas Incómodas* project is to create a sustainability plan to ensure the sustainability of its records, which can include exporting the metadata for each record to a repository and using web archiving tools to preserve copies of the website at several points in time. We also intend to provide training for activists regarding the creation of images, metadata management and the importance of digital preservation to prevent social media from being the only place where activist images and content are disseminated.

For the web archiving project, the next steps are raising awareness among activists of the importance and advantages of having a website so that it can later be archived either in a curated Archive-It collection or in an automatic crawl by the Internet Archive. It is also important to increase the awareness of web archiving among memory institutions in Latin America so they can preserve records of national importance that are only available on the web, including the digital activism happening in their countries. For this endeavor, more training resources in Spanish are needed to increase the uptake of web archiving.

The two counterarchives explained in this paper highlight the importance of documenting and preserving the digital and physical traces of Latin American feminist movements in a region where institutions prefer deleting these traces instead of preserving them as a listening gesture toward women's demands. For instance, feminist organizations of restaurateurs in Mexico have requested the federal government to stop the removal of the traces of feminist protests, given that:

[...] due to their high social, historical and symbolic relevance, the graffiti should be thoroughly documented by professionals, in order to emphasize and keep alive the collective memory of this event and its causes (Restauradoras con Glitter, 2019).

This evidence shows a lack of memory policies from institutions on how to proceed with uncomfortable records, such as *pintas* created as part of protests. Currently, most governments or institutions have an area of attention to gender issues; however, no policies have been developed for comprehensive attention to women's demands, including the documentation of protest traces, as well as their proper physical and digital preservation. Instead, the gender offices have served mainly to convey and institutionalize the protest and to simulate that the institutions are addressing gender-based violence.

The records stored in both counterarchives discussed in this paper remind users that the demands of feminist groups have been persistent over the years. However, just because these protest traces and activist websites are in an archive, it does not mean that their struggle is part of the past. On the contrary, archives represent a site to engage with the issues that women face in the present. Given how feminists have acknowledged that digital (and physical) activism requires a lot of time and emotional labor (García-González, 2021), counterarchives recognize all the labor that goes into attending a protest or maintaining a website as an activist organization.

Feminist websites host reports and documents that can be preserved and analyzed through web archives. These documents are an important source of information on feminist movements, and they have even been used to shape policies. However, these documents may become unavailable in the future if the websites go down, so archiving them can legitimize the knowledge of feminist groups and preserve it in the long term for other activists, researchers, and policymakers. Therefore, web archiving needs to be an essential part of digital preservation policies.

Official archives can collaborate with counterarchives by training them in best practices for archiving, linking to digital counterarchives so they can receive more visits, and promoting their records without owning copies of them, which should belong to the activists. Memory institutions can also support the creation of digital and web counterarchives by providing mentorship, software, and funding.

Other activist groups, library and archives associations, and memory institutions could follow similar approaches to those presented in this paper for building archives on local activism, not only for feminist protests, but for social movements in general. These approaches for the documentation of social movements are important to begin shaping memory policies in the Americas with the participation of activists themselves.

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Source of images

Figure 1. Anónimo, “Limpia del #8M,” *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/items/show/548>.

Figure 2. Jesús Mendoza Martínez, “[Sin título]”, *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/items/show/810>.

Figure 3. Anónimo, “Zamora te queremos fuera” (“Zamora, we want you out”), *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/items/show/308>.

Figure 4. Yuxtaposiciones, Una universidad libre de acoso, *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/yuxtaposiciones>.

Figure 5. Timelines, *Huellas Incómodas*, accessed June 28, 2023, <https://idrhku.org/huellasincomodas/lineasdel tiempo>.