

CALL FOR PAPERS 404 NOT FOUND. DOCUMENTARY ENDS



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Final Annual Conference of the DFG Research Training Group “Documentary Practices. Excess and Privation” (GRK 2132, Ruhr University Bochum)

Date: May 8—10, 2025 | **Location:** Kunstmuseum Bochum

The notification “404 not found” is displayed when visiting a website, if the requested content is deleted or no longer available. The HTTP status code denotes a so-called dead end, a point from which, it might be supposed, one can proceed no further. The undesirability of this code is marked by its common designation as an “error notification.” It is deemed essential to avoid and to remedy such a state of radical interruption, which undermines the imagination of the World Wide Web’s all-encompassing amenability.

The appearance of “404 not found,” then, can be considered both in terms of its temporal dimension — which lies in the “before” and “after” of an exceeded deadline — and as a spatial ordering, reordering, and disordering, where the contents have shifted, and the narratives changed. The disruption of a practiced search routine emphasizes, in radical ways, how the flow of information was once regarded as a source that was constantly within reach. In this way, the act of searching becomes a document of the world’s potential unavailability.

With the concept of the rhizome, a biological-vitalistic metaphor that is shaped by the idea of a space-time continuum has become established in the humanities. While it operates beyond the imagination of a beginning and an end, the manifestations of dissolution, which are inherent in all becoming, should not be overlooked. In the face of the ruinous, ends can no longer be understood as that which cannot be followed. Rather, as in the case of the notification “404 not found,” they can be seen to render describable a moment of documentary withdrawal, shaped more or less by reliable connections. In this way, the documentary stands for relational work that can break down entirely.

The third annual conference of the DFG Research Training Group “Documentary Practices. Excess and Privation” represents both the conclusion and the imminent disbanding of a research context that has grown for nine years. We thus suggest that we think about the documentary with regard to its ends and that we direct our focus to liminal medial and aesthetic figures of documentary modes of existence in scholarly disciplines and the arts. If it is the observational frame that determines when a process comes to its end, then we wish to probe the terms, practices, and politics that form the image that we can make with and out of ends.

Possible questions:

FINAL DESTINATIONS

- How do documentary media stand in relation to the existential, the liminal, the apocalyptic, and to their non-representability?
- Is there such a thing as the death of the document? Can the document's "becoming" be conceived in a degenerative sense?
- To what extent must the end be regarded as a figure of crisis? What happens when the end is absent?
- What cannot be gotten rid of? At what point does an end offer resistance?

LOOSE ENDS

- What must be violently terminated? What are the ways of handling that which is interrupted, lost, presumed lost, and resumed?
- Which hopes and risks await in what is not brought to an end? What can the unsettled, the postponed, and the unfinished bring about – that the completed cannot?
- How can paradigms of cyclicity – like recycling or composting – be brought together with the question of an end?
- Must we give up, in the end? Or should we give up on the end?

WHO CARES

- Which practices of care, maintenance, and upkeep are required for an archive to stay alive? What is the relationship between the notions of find-ability and searchability when it comes to these living archives? What are the dead archives of now-time ["Jetztzeit"]?
- Which boundaries delineate the documentary and where can they most easily be lifted, in order for it to be resurrected? Must the documentary be rescued or reanimated in post-truth times?
- Which forms of the documentary have been established apart from the archive? What must be kept alive and carried on? What insists on being remembered?
- What should we part with? What do we want to disregard, prevent, and let fall into disrepair? In view of the climate crisis, what should we bring to an end?

For a joint, interdisciplinary discussion of these approaches, we look forward to international contributions from media, theater, literary, and cultural studies, art history, musicology, and the social and political sciences, as well as practice-based explorations, forms of artistic research, and artistic formats. Alongside scholarly talks, the conference will be open for different forms of presentation. The conference will take place in English. The costs of travel and accommodation can be covered, and there will be no participation fee.



Conference contributions should be 15-20 minutes long. Please send your abstract with the planned title of your presentation (max. 1,000 characters incl. spaces) and a short bio (max. 500 characters incl. spaces) by e-mail to 404notfound-tagung@ruhr-uni-bochum.de. The deadline for submissions is November 15, 2024.

In cooperation with the [Stabsstelle Familiengerechte Hochschule](#) of the Ruhr University Bochum, we endeavor to cover the costs of individual childcare for invited speakers for the duration of the conference, with prior arrangement. Please contact the organizing team for further information.

Contact: 404notfound-tagung@ruhr-uni-bochum.de

Website: <http://das-dokumentarische.blogs.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/404notfound>

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