

# Reconstruction of cultural memory through digital storytelling: a case study of Shanghai



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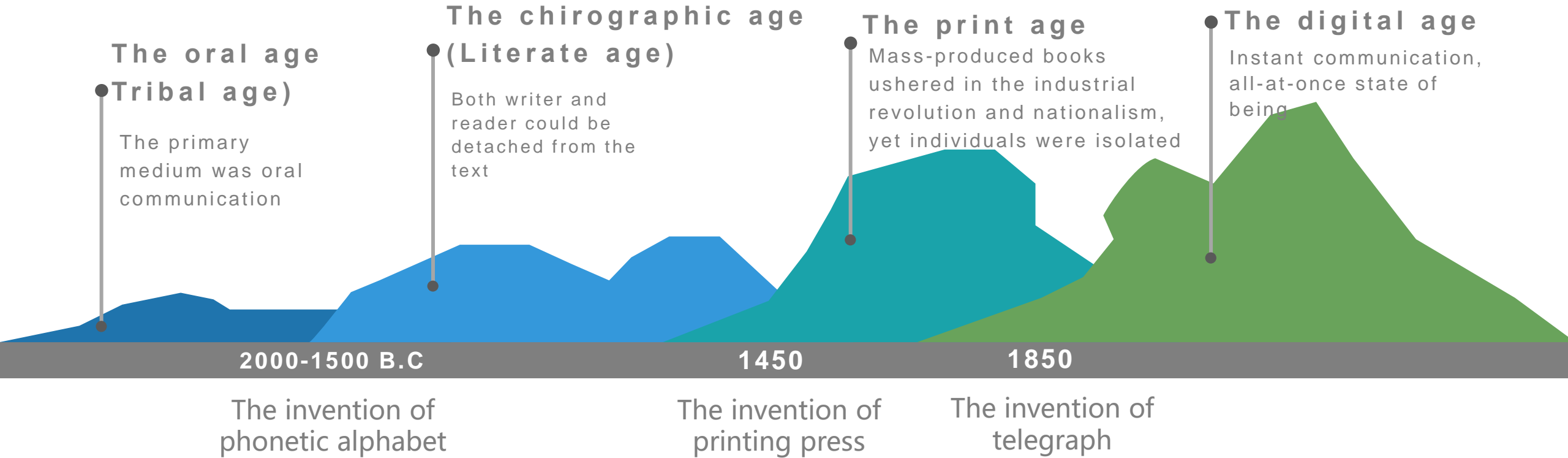
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# Outline

- The theory of digital storytelling (DS)
    - background, definition
    - how it has been applied in the fields of public history, media studies, pedagogy
  - The theory of cultural memory
    - Cultural memory in memory studies
  - Crossover of DS and digital humanities (DH)
  - Shanghai memory project
    - research subject
    - research methods
    - how DS is applied in the project
    - project highlights, future work
- 

# Marshall McLuhan's Map of the History of Media



# From storytelling to digital storytelling

- Storytelling: the interactive art of using **words and actions** to reveal the **elements and images** of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination.<sup>1</sup>
  - Single-modal
  - One-way output
- Digital storytelling: a movement or method for creating, expressing, interpreting, and sharing stories and personal experiences using **digital tools**, has been viewed as a "**democratization of culture.**" (Clarke & Adam, 2011)
  - Multi-modal
  - Initiative, interactive, democratize
- It draws attention from the mainstream to the marginalized, the minority, the overlooked and forgotten.



<sup>1</sup> <https://storynet.org/what-is-storytelling/>

# The theory of digital storytelling

- Backdrop:
  - The "digital turn" (Noiret, 2018)
  - Web 2.0 (UGC)
  - Evolution of media
- Representative studied fields:
  - Media studies: audio-visual story creation using digital media (Lambert, 2018)
  - Public history: as a way of collecting historical materials from ordinary people (Burgess & Klæbe, 2009)
  - Pedagogy: an effective means of enhancing the interaction between students and teachers, and helping students understand important concepts and knowledge (Robin, 2008)

## Examples:

- [The COVID-19 pandemic story by Imperial College, London](#)
- [Bristol Stories](#)
- [University of Houston- Educational use of digital storytelling](#)

# Common ground of DS & DH

1

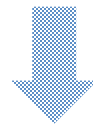
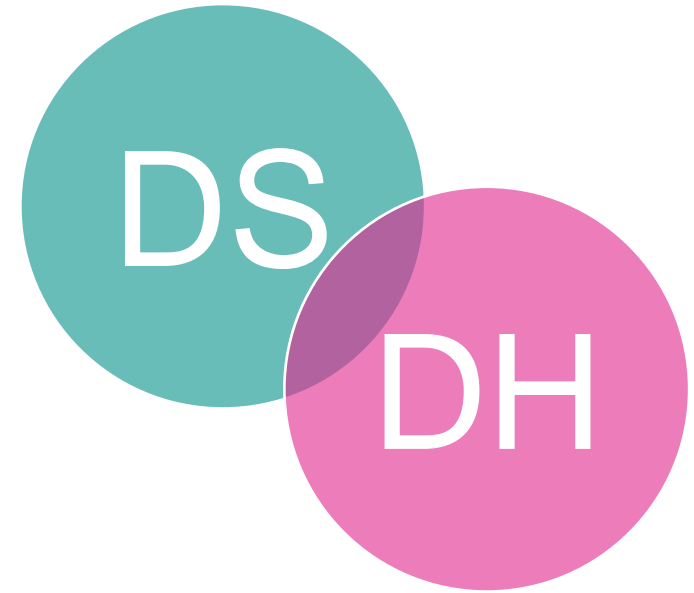
DS provides new opportunities for DH

- encourage dialogue
- make the world comprehensible
- discover new ways of interaction with the support of digital tools (Barber, 2016)

2

DS can serve as a bridge between cultural heritage and DH

- space and time as shared concepts (Münster et al., 2019)



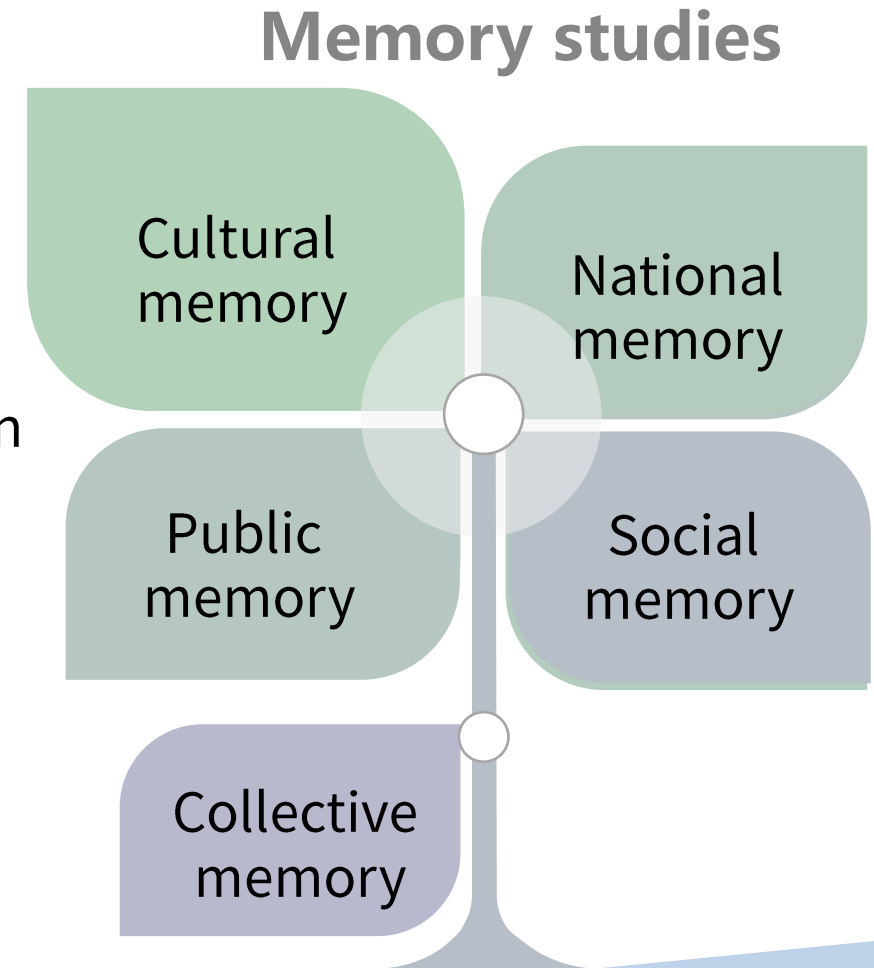
A great potential exists for DH practitioners to employ GLAM collections to reconstruct knowledge and cultural heritage, discover hidden knowledge, and support knowledge creation through the lens of digital storytelling.

# The theory of cultural memory

Collective memory: shared and contested recollections that forge a sense of place, time-consciousness, and social differentiation. (Halbwachs M., 1992)

Social memory: the way people perceive themselves in response to a sense of belonging within a group with a common culture. (Forster, K W., 1976)

Cultural memory: "the individual storage of texts, images and rites that are meant for reuse related to various societies and epochs" (Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. 1995)



# Shanghai Memory: A Journey from Wukang Road



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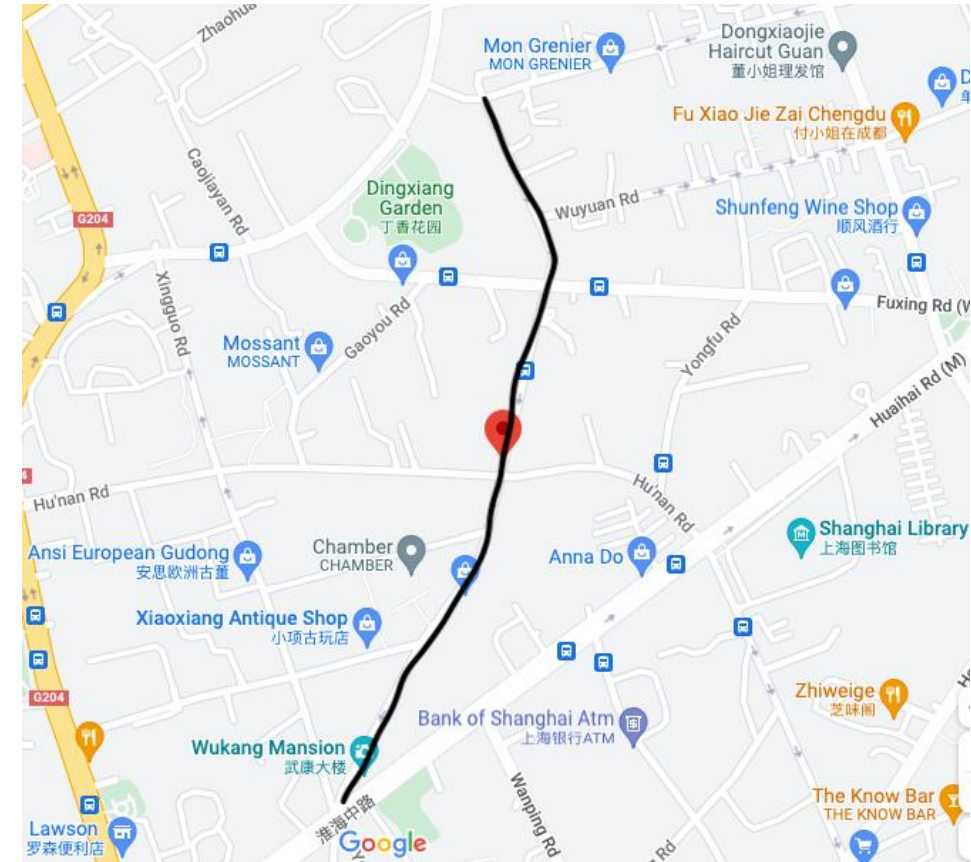
- Length: 1.183 km
- a residential street in the former French Concession
- more than 30 celebrities lived here
- Historical buildings presenting the "old Shanghai"



Wukang Mansions

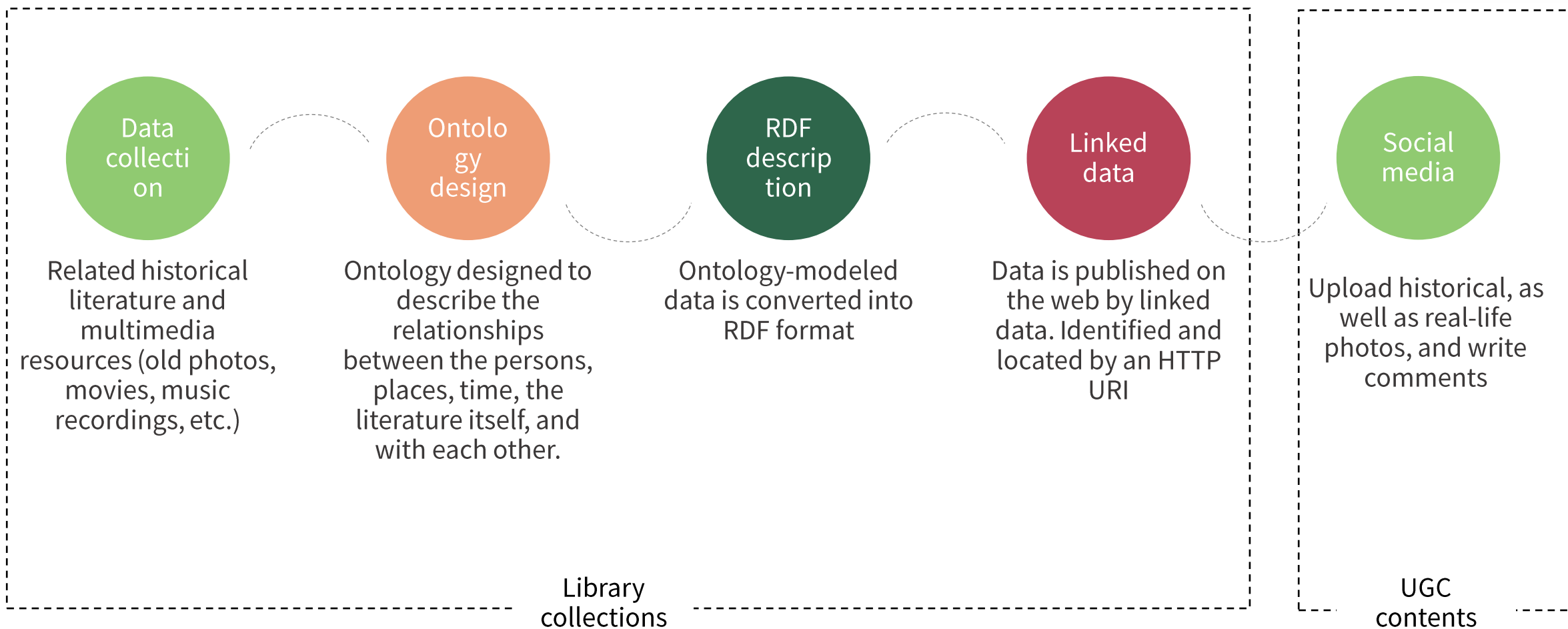


Former Residence of Bajin





# Research process and research methods



# Project website



## Buildings



### Introduction 简介

1916年建造，为砖木结构的假层四西班牙式小楼。1943年初夏，中国最早的歌影两栖明星、流行乐坛的先驱者——“金嗓子”周璇和养母一起搬进武康路391弄1号，居住在三楼的一套房子里。此前，由于时局关系，周璇已歌影一年多。与此同时，周璇加入张善琨主持的中华电影联合股份有限公司，复出拍片。主演了《渔家女》、《鸾凤和鸣》、《红楼梦》、《凤凰于飞》四部影片，并为百代唱片公司录制了这些影片的全部插曲。1946年春，周璇应香港大中华影业公司之邀赴香港拍片，离开了居住三年多的武康路寓所。

### Person 人物

### Event 事件

### Related resources 资料

语音简介

普通话



沪语



Audio introduction in  
mandarin &  
Shanghainese



Map presenting  
spatial  
information

# Website functions



The screenshot displays the website's main interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the following elements: a home icon, '武康路' (Wukang Road), '街道全景' (Street Panorama), '分享空间' (Share Space), '知识库' (Knowledge Base), and a '登录/注册' (Login/Register) button. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a '建筑照片' (Building Photos) section with a gallery of four historical photographs. The first photo is highlighted with a red border and a red arrow pointing to its caption: '武康路391弄1-5号 周璇旧居' (No. 1-5, Lane 391, Wukang Road, Zhou Xuan's former residence). Below the gallery are four tabs: '简介' (Introduction), '人物' (People), '事件' (Events), and '资料' (Materials). The '简介' tab is active, showing a text block about the building's history: '1916年建造, 为砖木结构的假层四西班牙式小楼。1943年初夏, 中国最早的歌影两栖明星、流行乐坛的先驱者——“金嗓子”周璇和养母一起搬进武康路391弄1号, 居住在三楼的一套房子里。此前, 由于时局关系, 周璇已歌影一年多。与此同时, 周璇加入张善琨主持的中华电影联合股份有限公司, 复出拍片。主演了《渔光曲》、《鸾凤和鸣》、《红楼梦》、《凤凰于飞》四部影片, 并为百代唱片公司录制了这些影片的全部插曲。1946年春, 周璇应香港大中华影业公司之邀赴香港拍片, 离开了居住三年多的武康路寓所。' Below the text is a '语音简介' (Audio Introduction) section with two audio players: one for '普通话' (Mandarin) with a duration of 01:11, and one for '沪语' (Shanghai Dialect) with a duration of 01:07. The right column features a '街道全景' (Street Panorama) section with a map of the area. The map is overlaid with a green dashed line and blue location markers. The markers are labeled with names of historical sites: '孔令侃故居', '颜福庆旧居', '张乐平故居', '王元化故居', '正广和老屋', '顾祝同旧居', '湖南路', '巴金故居', '密丹公寓', '郑海国旧居', '董仲公室', '贝祖诒、蒋士云夫妇旧居 (IE)', '周璇旧居', '公司办公楼', '北平研究院旧址', '武康大楼', and '宋庆龄故居'. The map also shows '湖南路' (Hunan Road) and '永福路' (Yongfu Road). At the bottom of the map, there is a copyright notice: '© 2022 Baidu - GS(2021)6026号 - 甲测资字11111342 - 京ICP证030173号 - Data © 长地万方'.

A video clip to demonstrate the function of the website  
<http://wkl.library.sh.cn>

# Towards vernacular cultural reconstruction

- Associates the three dimensions of memory (the past), culture, and community as proposed by Assmann and Czaplicka (1995)
- Borrows thinking from postcolonial studies around critical "re-reading" and "re-writing" of the colonial past along with the continuing effect of memory (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 221)
- Engages citizens by having them upload photos and personal accounts of their memories and experiences of the road, foregrounding the underrepresented art forms housed in library collections (Burgess & Klaebe, 2009, p. 155)

# How DS is understood

Studied field	Digital tools used	Characteristics	Goal	Focus
Media studies, public history, pedagogy	Multimedia technology (video, animation, image, sound, etc.), new media platform	Focus on marginalized people, personal and community records collection, culture democratization	Sources of material in humanities and social science research, as a complement to other research materials	Creation
DH	Knowledge organization methods, knowledge graphs, artificial intelligence, etc.	Integrity of knowledge, culture reconstruction, knowledge organization and discovery	Presentation and dissemination of humanistic research process and outcome	Research

Fu, Y., Zhang, Y., Liu, W., & Zhu, Q. 'Digital Storytelling as a Digital Humanities Method: the Status Quo and the Potential.' Library and Information Service (in press).

# To close

## ✧ **Project highlights:**

- Brings together many aspects of memory construction as part of a comprehensive programme of heritage management
- With digital storytelling, sharing methodologies with oral and public history, we capture the voice of the common people so that the history and culture of Shanghai is democratized in the modern postcolonial era, through the reorganisation and critical "re-reading" and "re-writing" of the past.

## ✧ **Future work:**

- DS theory exploration in DH field and practice
- The evaluation of DS in DH as part of the research

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# Thank you!

- Shanghai memory website: <http://memory.library.sh.cn>
- A journey from Wukang Road website: <http://wkl.library.sh.cn>
- Digital Humanities Platform of Shanghai Library (Demo):  
<https://dhc.library.sh.cn>

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