The Open Human Record Initiative

Preserve the Artifact. Protect People. Open the Knowledge.

Human history does not belong exclusively to the institutions that happen to possess its surviving records.

Across the world, governments, religious institutions, museums, universities, corporations, archives, and private collections hold enormous bodies of historical material. Some of these collections contain documents and artifacts that are unique, irreplaceable, or inaccessible anywhere else.

Physical custody carries a responsibility to preserve those materials. It should not automatically confer permanent control over the knowledge contained within them.

The Open Human Record Initiative proposes a simple principle: historically significant knowledge should be presumptively accessible to humanity.

1. Inventory Before Secrecy

Major custodians of historically significant collections should maintain a publicly searchable inventory describing what they possess.

At minimum, the public should be able to determine: what collections exist; their approximate dates and origins; their general contents; whether they have been catalogued and digitized; whether public access is permitted; whether material has been restricted; and the stated reason for that restriction.

People cannot request, research, challenge, or investigate records whose existence they have no reasonable means of discovering.

2. Digitize the Human Record

Where materials can safely be digitized, they should be. Modern imaging allows fragile manuscripts, photographs, maps, correspondence, and other materials to be examined without exposing originals to continual handling.

Preservation of an artifact and access to its information are separate questions. Digitization should include provenance, catalog information, dates, authorship, and sufficient metadata for independent evaluation.

3. Direct Harm, Not Discomfort

Restriction should require a specific and demonstrable risk of direct harm — not embarrassment, contradiction of accepted narratives, political or religious discomfort, or the possibility of public debate.

Disruption of accepted knowledge is not, by itself, harm. If credible evidence changes humanity's understanding of itself, that is precisely why it deserves independent examination.

4. Protect People, Not Institutions

Legitimate exceptions exist: information identifying living individuals, vulnerable minors, or security details capable of facilitating immediate attack may justify limited protection.

But the least restrictive solution should always be preferred — redact three lines rather than suppress two hundred pages. Every restriction should identify what was restricted, why, who authorized it, when, and when it must be reviewed again.

5. The Custodian Cannot Be the Only Judge

An institution should not have unlimited authority to decide whether information that could expose or embarrass that same institution stays secret.

Contested restrictions should be reviewable by an independent body, with the burden on the party seeking continued restriction. The question is not “why should the public see this,” but “what specific harm requires that it remain hidden.”

6. Unknown Knowledge Must Be Discoverable

Opening only records researchers already know to request creates another form of restriction. Discovery systems should let researchers explore collections without already knowing the precise document they're looking for.

7. Preserve Provenance

Every digitized record should preserve its source, custody history, catalog identifier, date, authentication status, alterations, translations, and known scholarly disputes. The public should receive the evidence and the context to evaluate it — institutions should not dictate the conclusion.

8. No Authority Over Truth

This initiative does not assume any particular archive conceals extraordinary revelations. It assumes something narrower: humanity should be able to examine its own historical record and find out what the evidence says.

If accepted history is correct, open records strengthen it. If incomplete, open records let it improve.

9. A Technical Path: Human-Supervised Archival AI

The scale of the world's archives is a practical bottleneck: imaging, transcription, translation, cataloguing, and cross-referencing across millions of documents. AI can substantially reduce that burden, assisting with:

- Transcription and OCR correction
- Handwriting interpretation and multilingual translation
- Metadata generation and identification of people, places, dates, organizations
- Duplicate and related-document detection
- Cross-referencing across collections and chronological reconstruction
- Provenance tracking and identification of conflicting records
- Uncertainty and confidence reporting
- Prioritization of materials requiring specialist human review

AI should not determine what history means, nor should its interpretation replace the underlying evidence. Every machine-generated output must remain distinguishable from, and independently verifiable against, the original source.

Candidate architecture: Physical Artifact → Archival Image → Cryptographic Identity → Transcription → Provenance Record → AI Processing → Uncertainty/Confidence Record → Human Review Where Required → Public Searchable Record. The original archival image remains the authoritative reference against which all subsequent processing can be independently checked.

> **Disclosure:** this initiative's author, Jason McCoy, is the founder of Pre-Failure Research Group LLC and the developer of OmniSniffer, a governance-integrity architecture built around source-integrity controls, provenance preservation, drift detection, and append-only evidence records. OmniSniffer is proposed here as one candidate foundation for the workflow above, not a required or exclusive one. It is named because it is the system the author has built and understands in depth — not because it has been evaluated against, or shown to outperform, other archival or provenance technologies. Readers should evaluate OmniSniffer, and any competing approach, on technical merit.
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> **Provenance:** this document was drafted collaboratively — the argument and positions are Jason McCoy's, developed and refined through discussion with two AI systems, Claude (Anthropic) and GPT (OpenAI), which assisted with structuring, editing, and stress-testing the disclosure language above. As with PFRG's other AI-assisted work, this credit reflects documented contribution to the drafting process, not authorship, ownership, or personhood.

The objective is not adoption of a particular platform. It is trustworthy access to the human record at a scale previously impractical. AI should help remove barriers to knowledge — not become the next barrier.

The Principle

Custody is not ownership of knowledge. Preserve the artifact. Protect people from specific, demonstrable harm. Document every restriction. Make restrictions independently reviewable. Digitize what can be digitized. Make the record searchable. Open the knowledge.

The human record belongs to humanity.