

THE MUSEUM OF UNFINISHED WORLDS

A practical field guide to states, labels, provenance and the ethics of revival | Sahilverse | Version 2.0 | 26 October 2026

A project can be real without being finished, visible without being verified, and meaningful without being revived. This field guide invites careful appraisal rather than a retrospective verdict.

1 / Read a record without inventing a biography

Start with the most modest claim the evidence can carry. A catalog listing establishes that a title and location were recorded. It does not establish uptime, authorship, original functionality, intent, success, failure or abandonment. A dossier anchor establishes a route into an archive, not necessarily the content inside it.

2 / The five questions for any object

IDENTITY: Which stable identifier distinguishes this record from a similar title?

EVIDENCE: Which surviving sources make each claim inspectable?

ABSENCE: What is missing, inaccessible or unknown?

ACCESS: Should this source be public, private, restricted, or merely referenced?

TRANSFORMATION: If revived, what might be lost by changing form, context or audience?

3 / Four curatorial treatments

PRESERVE — Keep current evidence, metadata and context readable; do not assume the old work can run.

REINTERPRET — Make something new while conspicuously distinguishing new work from reconstruction.

RECONNECT — Offer links based on editorial themes while saying they do not prove influence.

LET REST — Leave a discoverable record and avoid pressure to reanimate a work whose purpose is unresolved.

4 / A provenance lab in plain language

The W3C PROV approach asks: what is the thing, which activity shaped it, and which people or systems are associated with that activity? For this museum: the CSV row is a recorded entity; today's selection is an editorial activity; the visitor's decision is a local reinterpretation. These are different layers.

Never upgrade the label from catalog-listed to live because a domain looks plausible. Never upgrade private to public merely because sharing sounds desirable. Separate observed, inferred, claimed and unknown.

5 / Micro-exercises

- A title is on a site map but opening the site was not tested. Write a label of at most twelve words that tells the truth.

- You encounter the same title in two archives. Record both IDs before merging anything.
- Choose one thing a revival would recover and one thing it could erase.
- Draft two links: one evidentiary citation and one editorial association. Explain the difference.
- Write a rest decision that still leaves a useful trail for a future visitor.

THE TWELVE INDEX OBJECTS

Museum / complete-x77

Recorded state: archive-only; evidence: An archival coordinate titled Museum; its scope and active status require examination.

Unanswered: What was meant to be kept, and what was meant to be exhibited?

Revival risk: Revival could turn provisional collecting into a retrospectively coherent institution.

The Long Game / complete-x79

Recorded state: archive-only; evidence: An archival coordinate titled The Long Game; no history or current deployment is attested by this snapshot.

Unanswered: How long does a work need to stay quiet before its meaning changes?

Revival risk: Revival could substitute a current ambition for an undocumented earlier intention.

Living Index / complete-x87

Recorded state: archive-only; evidence: An archival coordinate titled Living Index; this label is not evidence of current operation.

Unanswered: Can a catalogue record change without concealing earlier states?

Revival risk: A new index may overwrite the earlier organizing logic.

Possibility Engine / complete-production-item-94

Recorded state: archive-only; evidence: An archival coordinate named Possibility Engine, with no verified project content bundled.

Unanswered: When does possibility become a promise that the record cannot support?

Revival risk: A new engine might be mistaken for an authenticated reconstruction.

Lineage / complete-s58

Recorded state: archive-only; evidence: An archival coordinate for Lineage; another same-titled URL appears in the catalog but is not uptime-verified.

Unanswered: Where does influence end and editorial association begin?

Revival risk: Retelling lineage can overstate causality or erase unrecorded contributors.

Archive of Attempts / catalog-055

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: What qualifies an attempt for preservation when outcomes are undocumented?

Revival risk: Reactivation could erase drafts and make the record look more resolved than it was.

Museum of Things We Misplace / catalog-089

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: What does a museum of absence preserve without access to its original contents?

Revival risk: Rebuilding the aesthetic could become a substitute for preserving the original object.

Not Final / catalog-093

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: Does the title express a project premise or a state of work?

Revival risk: Treating the title as a status would confuse a work's theme with its provenance.

School of Unlearning / catalog-107

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: How might a learning experiment preserve errors as well as finished answers?

Revival risk: A refreshed curriculum could retroactively invent a pedagogical record.

Olfactory Cathedral / catalog-094

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: What survives of a sensory work when the source is only a URL listing?

Revival risk: Recreation may imply faithful scent reproduction without surviving evidence.

SYNTH / SYNAPSE / catalog-112

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: Which connections are documented, and which are editorial conjectures?

Revival risk: Reconnecting a network might suggest an influence history that is not proven.

Ordinary Tuesday / catalog-097

Recorded state: catalog-listed; evidence: COMPLETE archive CSV includes title, URL, category and source. Its status is "Listed · not uptime-verified"; this is not proof of current service availability.

Unanswered: How can ordinary activity be kept visible without making it performative?

Revival risk: Turning a quiet idea into a polished showcase could change its scale and purpose.

THE READING ROOM

UNESCO — Memory of the World (updated 2026)

Why documentary heritage deserves both preservation and considered access.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/about>

W3C — PROV overview (2013)

Vocabulary for distinguishing entities, activities and agents.

<https://www.w3.org/TR/prov-overview/>

W3C — PROV primer (2013)

Beginner-accessible illustrated provenance examples.

<https://www.w3.org/TR/prov-primer/>

Library of Congress — Personal digital archiving (undated)

Advice for protecting and describing everyday digital works.

<https://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/>

Library of Congress — Personal digital records (undated)

Why drafts, versions, organized copies and periodic checks matter.

<https://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/records.html>

Library of Congress — Recommended Formats Statement (current page)

Why portable, documented formats improve survival.

<https://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs/format-pref-summary.html>

PREMIS — Preservation metadata (standard reference)

How archivists describe events, rights, agents and objects.

<https://www.loc.gov/standards/premis/>

Related doors / editorial associations

COMPLETE — <https://complete.sahilverse.online/>

Sahil Tayal / canonical home — <https://sahiltayal.com/>

Sahilverse experimental universe — <https://sahilverse.online/>

Hearsay Department / counterpoint — <https://hearsay.sahiltayal.com/>

Lineage dossier — <https://complete.sahilverse.online/#project=s58>

Living Index dossier — <https://complete.sahilverse.online/#project=x87>

Custody & limits

This is an interpretive tool, not an institutional assessment. The bundled data is a documented selection, not a complete history. Link availability, rights and completeness change; check original records before publishing assertions. Neither UNESCO, W3C nor the Library of Congress endorses this project.