DIY practices intentionally or involuntarily oppose and transform institutionalized structures and well accustomed habits. One is starting to do something by oneself that is usually done by others or within regulated structures. DIY opens up the well-established and allows the development of alternate ways of doing things. Vice versa individual DIY practices tend to be professionalized, appropriated by commercial suppliers or controlled by the public authorities. So it seems as if DIY practices are constantly in a revolving dynamic of institutionalization and dissolution.

In my talk I want to explore these revolving dynamics by sharing some of my experiences and findings from my research in the Harvard University Archives, where I have researched the history of 19th and 20th Century student scrapbooks and college yearbooks.

During the 18th and 19th Century scrapbooks become very popular among North-American students to accompany their school days and early adulthood. Collecting all kinds of keepsakes in these very heterogeneous albums becomes a common way to cope with the spread of mass media such as newspapers, magazines and the proliferation of all kinds of ephemeral print products. For Harvard College students, scrapbooks are the medium of choice to frame and preserve their personal ‘Harvard Experience’ between two book covers. By the end of the 19th Century the Harvard administration appropriates this framing practice and makes it an official publication: The Harvard Class Album. Of course the official publication follows strict standards and lacks all of the chaotic unruliness typical for scrapbooks.

The comparison of scrapbooks and yearbooks with facebook, pinterest, tumblr and other Social Media platforms is very quick a hand. Although their similarities are obvious, they are clearly not the same. On the other hand New Media is not brand new: We might learn something from the deterritorializing and reterritorializing dynamics (Deleuze/Guattari) between scrapbooks and official yearbooks for our understanding of today's Social Media habits.