

# Labyrinth Archiving Dossier Narrative

**Project Leaders:** Deborah Everhart and Martin Irvine

**Current Project URL** (at the time of this archive in 2021): <http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu>

**Permanent URL:** <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/1061738>

**Project Creation Date:** December 1993

**Archive Date:** July 25, 2021

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## Abstract

The Labyrinth medieval studies website was the first website in the world in the humanities, created by Deborah Everhart and Martin Irvine at Georgetown University in 1993. It is also the longest continuously available website in the humanities, still available at <http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu> at the time this archive was created in 2021. The history of this website reflects not only the organization of medieval studies primary and secondary resources from around the world, but also the development of scholarly communities on the web, the evolution of research and pedagogical uses of online resources, and fundamental changes in authorship, textuality, and equitable access to resources. The narrative describes how medieval studies scholars and students first navigated hypertext within documents and on the web, first experienced a hybrid online/in-person conference, developed the first websites for professional societies, and rapidly evolved other scholarly practices to benefit from the unprecedented changes enabled by web technologies. This archive includes the Labyrinth Narrative (story and explanation); an Archiving Dossier Narrative (about the archive); History and Documentation (including information about the creators and contributors, a timeline, WorldCat Catalogue references, a bibliography of publications and presentations by the creators, citations and references to the Labyrinth, a list of Internet Archive documentation, and a description of artifacts included in the archive); the Labyrinth files in their original formats (HTML and ColdFusion); and 3rd party documentation of the Labyrinth website (Internet Archive captures).

## About this project

The creators of the Labyrinth medieval studies website, Deborah Everhart and Martin Irvine, have created this archive. Here we provide a narrative explanation and documentation of the history and significance of the Labyrinth, the first humanities website in the world and the longest continuously available. The Labyrinth is still available at the time of this writing in 2021 at <http://labyrinth.georgetown.edu>.

The timeline of activities documented in this archive spans the years 1992-2021. It covers the original conception of the Labyrinth, the early web context when it was first developed and launched, its rapid growth and adoption, its transition through multiple types of web-based technologies, and the process of archiving the Labyrinth files and relevant documentation of the Labyrinth's significance.

Like the web itself, the history of the Labyrinth involves complex sets of connections. There have been many, many contributors, both direct and indirect, to the success and value of the Labyrinth and its expansive resources. The people and organizations explicitly noted in this archive illustrate specific points, but we cannot possibly document all contributors and their impact. We sincerely apologize for the many important people, activities, and resources that are not included. We have done our best to fact check and accurately record this history using innumerable files, emails, web pages, catalogs, and other documentation sources.

We remain proud of the Labyrinth, its role in advancing medieval studies, the humanities, and scholarly collaboration on the web, and the contributions we and our colleagues have made to providing equitable opportunities for discovering and exploring the rich and complex world of our medieval heritage. We hope that this archive will provide a permanent record of one important episode in the history of the web, and lay the foundation for future evolutions in medieval studies. We encourage others to document the history of other digital resources, refer to this archive for related context, and collaboratively build a rich tapestry of scholarly history.

## About the artifacts included in this archive

The logic of what is included in this archive begins with the Labyrinth files themselves, which on their own are massive and complex. Making decisions about which files to archive was challenging. The Labyrinth web files that are written in basic HTML we have kept in their original format, as a set representing the most expansive Labyrinth HTML site. They can be browsed and viewed as a self-contained set with any web browser or text viewer. The ColdFusion files, also in their original format, could be reinstated on a ColdFusion server, but they are not humanly readable in their current format. All of these Labyrinth web pages changed continuously until 2014, so the captured collections represent specific points in time:

1. The latest and most complete set of manually written HTML web files and images, from 2007, when the URL <http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth> was retired
2. The latest and most complete set of ColdFusion files, from 2014 when the ColdFusion server was retired

In addition to our own original copies of the Labyrinth files, we captured third-party documentation of the Labyrinth site from the Internet Archive at numerous sample points from 1997 (the earliest Internet Archive record of the Labyrinth) to 2021. This Internet Archive documentation is included in the archive as PDF files.

Along with the Labyrinth files themselves, we compiled documentation explaining the history of the site and describing its significance. Here again, there was a continuous flow of activities, citations, and influences which we attempted to represent through three documents, which are included in the archive as PDF files:

1. Archiving Dossier Narrative
2. Labyrinth Narrative
3. A Labyrinth History and Documentation (1992-2021) document that includes:

- An abstract
- Curricula vitae for Martin Irvine and Deborah Everhart, creators of the Labyrinth
- List of contributors (necessarily incomplete)
- Timeline
- WorldCat catalogue references
- Publications and presentations related to the Labyrinth by the creators
- Citations and references to the Labyrinth (necessarily incomplete)
- List of the artifacts archived, including the Labyrinth files and 3rd party documentation in the form of Internet Archive captures

Further details about the archive can be found in the Labyrinth History and Documentation document.

## Artifacts included in this archive

### Archiving Dossier Narrative

*This document. Included in the archive as a PDF.*

### Labyrinth Narrative

*Included in the archive as a PDF.*

Pre-print version of:

Everhart, Deborah, and Martin Irvine. "Beginnings: The Labyrinth Medieval Studies Website." In *Medieval Studies, Digital Methods*, edited by Sean Gilsdorf and Laura K. Morreale. York, UK: Arc Humanities Press, 2021.

### The Labyrinth Medieval Studies Website, History and Documentation: 1992-2021

*Included in the archive as a PDF.*

### Labyrinth Files

*Included in the archive as 2 .zip packages:*

1. *Labyrinth original HTML and ColdFusion files: 5255 original files in their original file formats as they were archived by Georgetown University Information Services on March 6, 2014.*
2. *Labyrinth HTML file set: A stand-alone version of 2033 of the Labyrinth HTML files that were archived in 2014, with the links between Labyrinth pages modified to be local references within the file set. This enables the Labyrinth to be explored as a file set on a personal computer, using a web browser to view local files without these Labyrinth files being hosted on an internet-accessible website. To explore the Labyrinth HTML file set, start with labyrinth-home.html*

## HTML Files

- File types included:
  - .gif and .jpg (image)
  - .html and .htm (HTML)
  - .txt (plain text)
  - .map (image map)
  - .xbm (XBitmap image)
  - .xls (spreadsheet)
- Labyrinth HTML and image files that were last updated in 2007
  - Starting point page: labyrinth-home.html
  - "info\_labyrinth/laby-index.html" file includes overview statistics for website traffic May 1994- August 1995
  - The "stats" folder Includes detailed statistics for website traffic January 1997-February 2002
  - These files were used to create the stand-alone file set in 2021.

## ColdFusion Files

- File types included:
  - .cfm (ColdFusion files)
  - .class (used by ColdFusion)
  - .mdb (Microsoft Access database that holds all the Labyrinth ColdFusion data)
- Complete set of Labyrinth ColdFusion files that were last updated in 2013

## 3rd Party Documentation: Internet Archive Captures

*Captured from web.archive.org as PDF files.*

*Included in the archive as a .zip package of PDF files.*