The Visual Archive

Week 2, September 14

Parsons School of Design

Divya Mehra

The Visual Archive

Week 2, September 14

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Divya Mehra

archive

arkhe
archivum



archive

the authority to keep



record

record

re: back, again
cord: heart, mind

How did we begin recording?



Kora, before 1878. Senegal. Calabash, hide, wood, copper, vegetable fiber



Senegalese griot, 1890

jellis or griot

“A repository of oral tradition and a counterpart of the medieval European minstrel, the griot is a living archive of the people’s traditions and a maestro who commands universal admiration.”

Francis Bebey, *African Music, A People's Art*



Odysseus at the Court of Alcinous by Francesco Hayez, 1814-1816

Homeric epics

- recomposition-in-performance
- formulaic storytelling
- dependence on plot



Aboriginal songlines

Try to imagine a culture where no one has ever ‘looked up’ anything. In a primary oral culture, the expression “to look something up” is an empty phrase: it would have no conceivable meaning. Without writing, words have no visual presence.”

Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*

A written or visual record



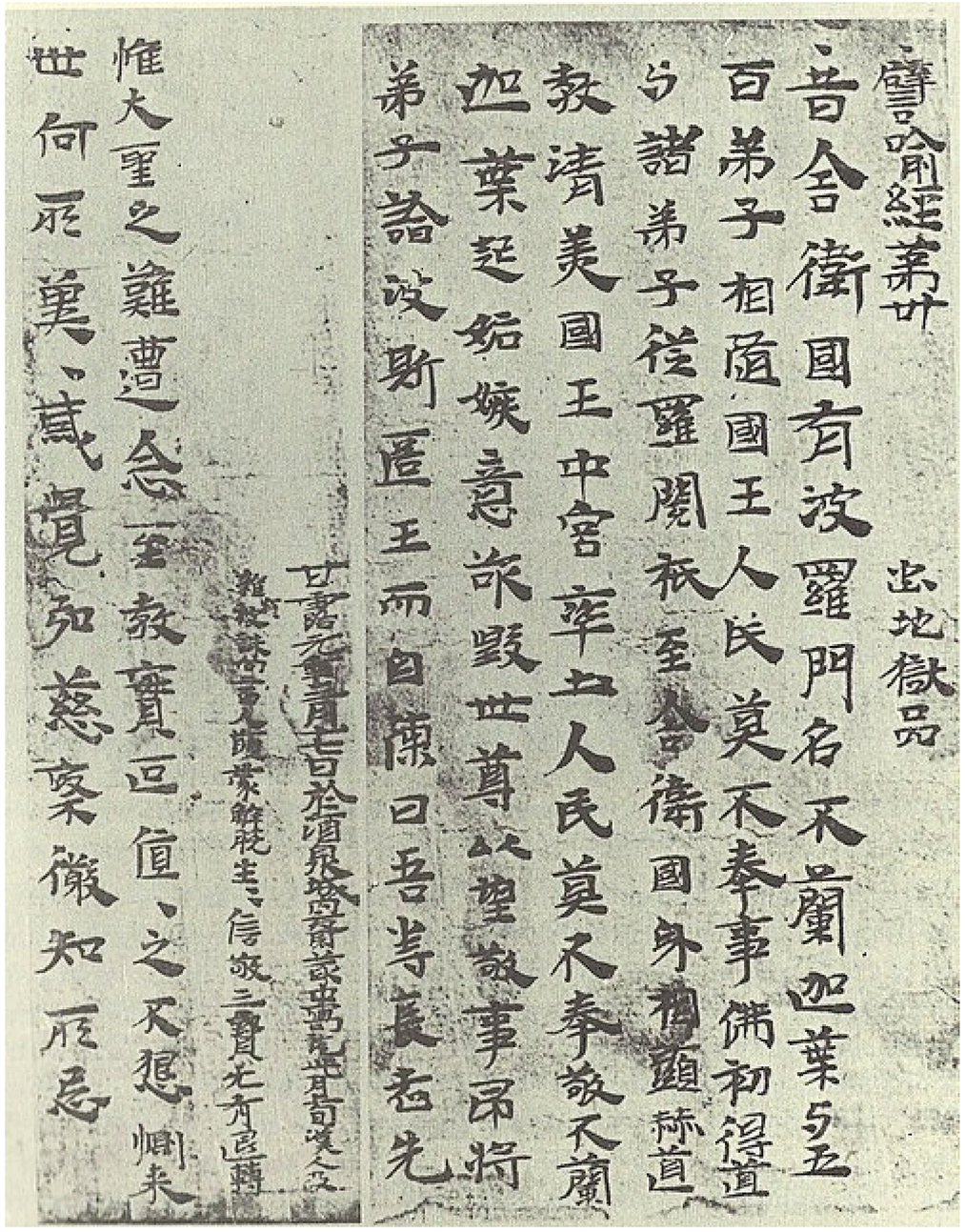
Cuneiform tablet: hymn to Marduk, 1st millennium BC



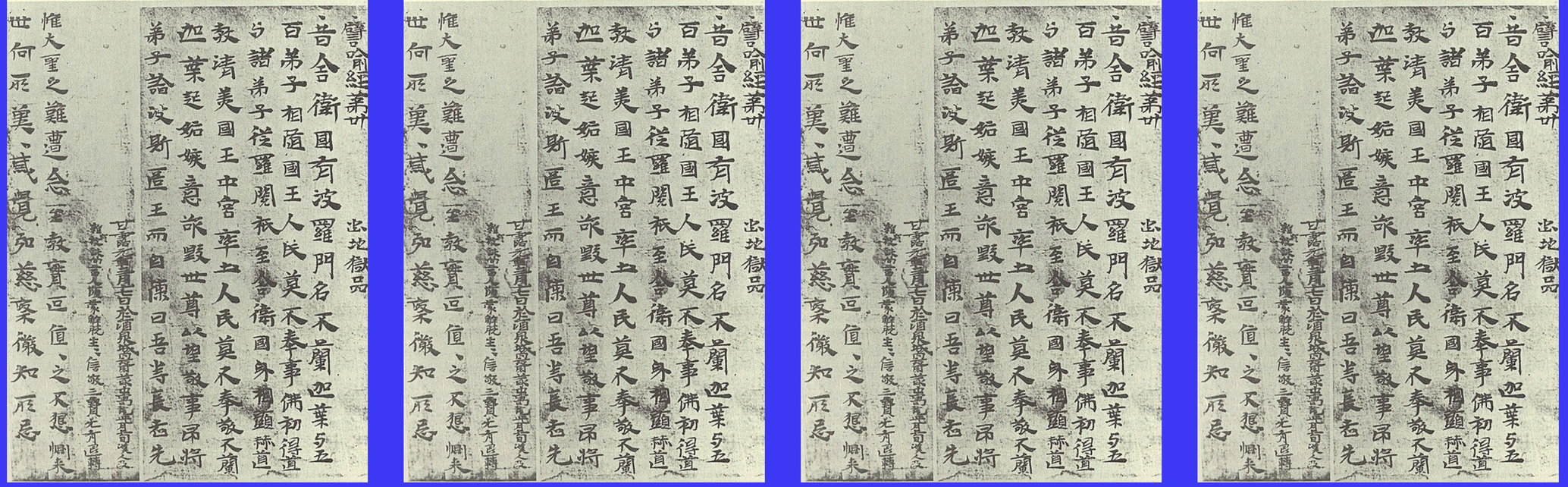
The oldest preserved fragment of the Odyssey (Fragment Odyssee 2245), 3rd century BC



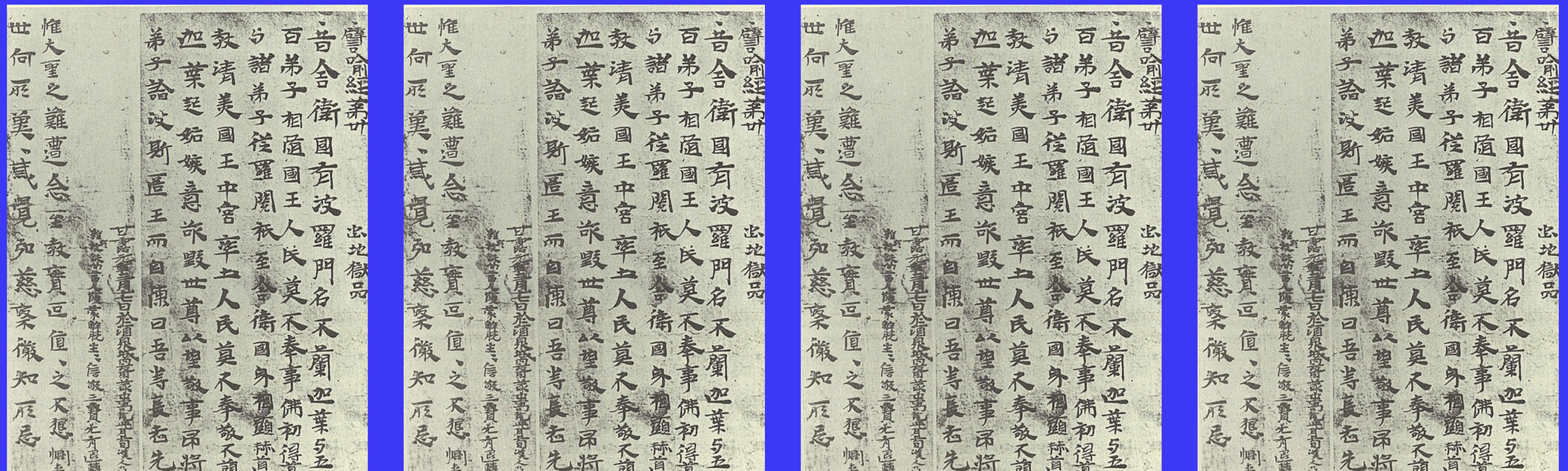
Codex Borgia, c. 1400–1500 AD



Oldest surviving complete book written on paper (Buddhist scripture, 359 CE

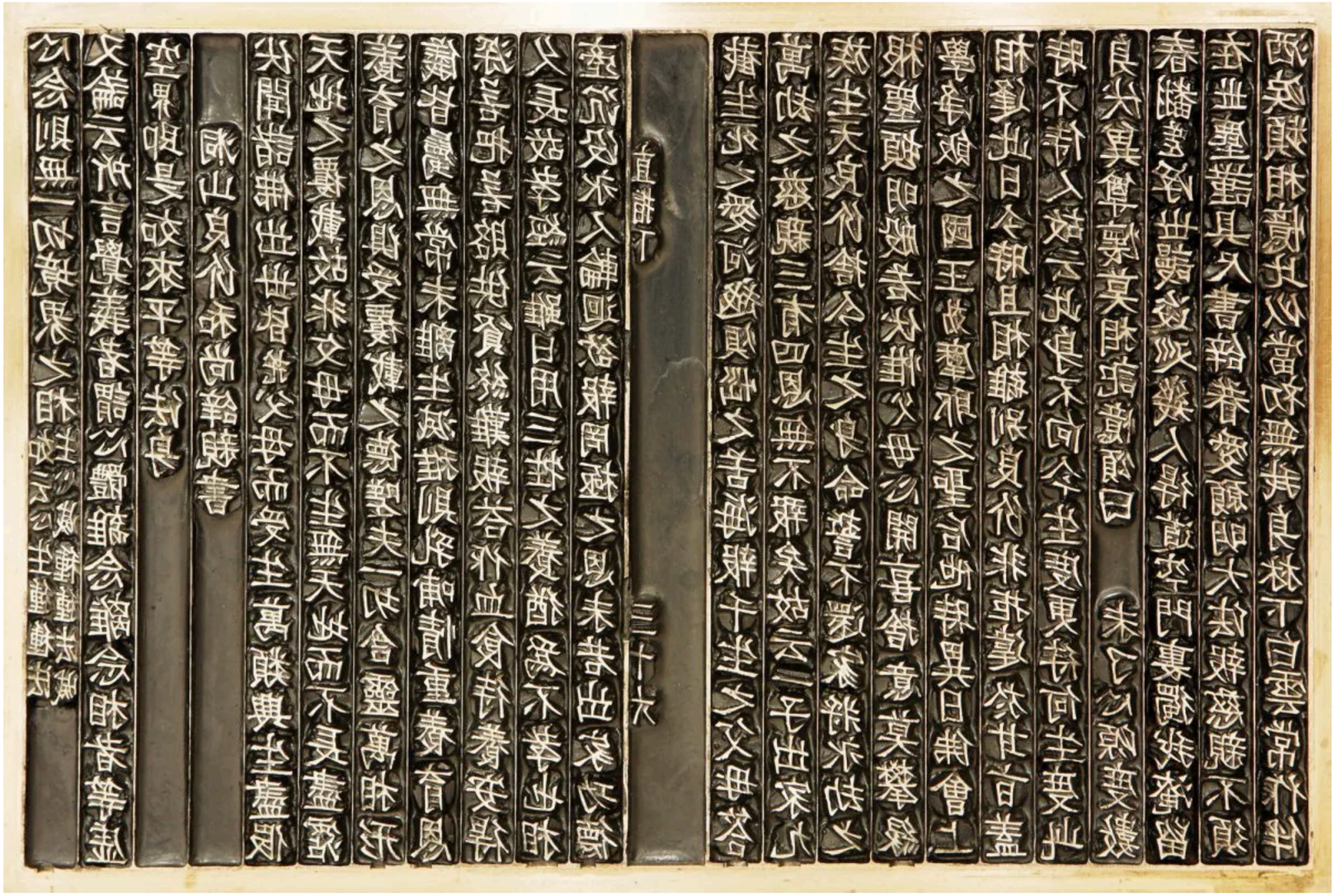


A written or visual record, reproduced





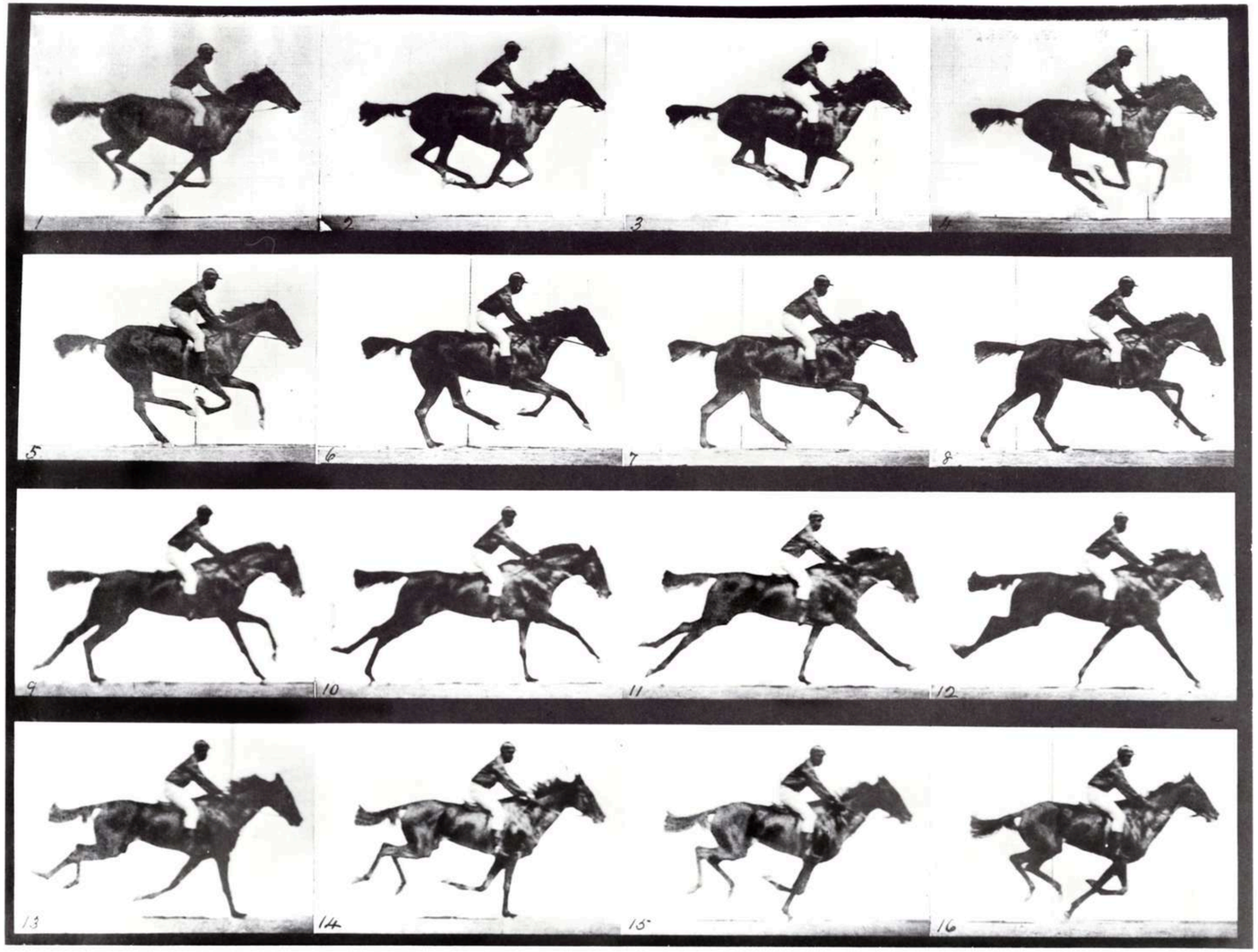
The Diamond Sutra, woodblock print



Restored movable metal type printing plate (inpan) of the Jikji (Jikji Simche Yojeol), a Korean Buddhist document compiled in 1377. Considered the oldest existing book printed with movable metal type.



Recreated Gutenberg press

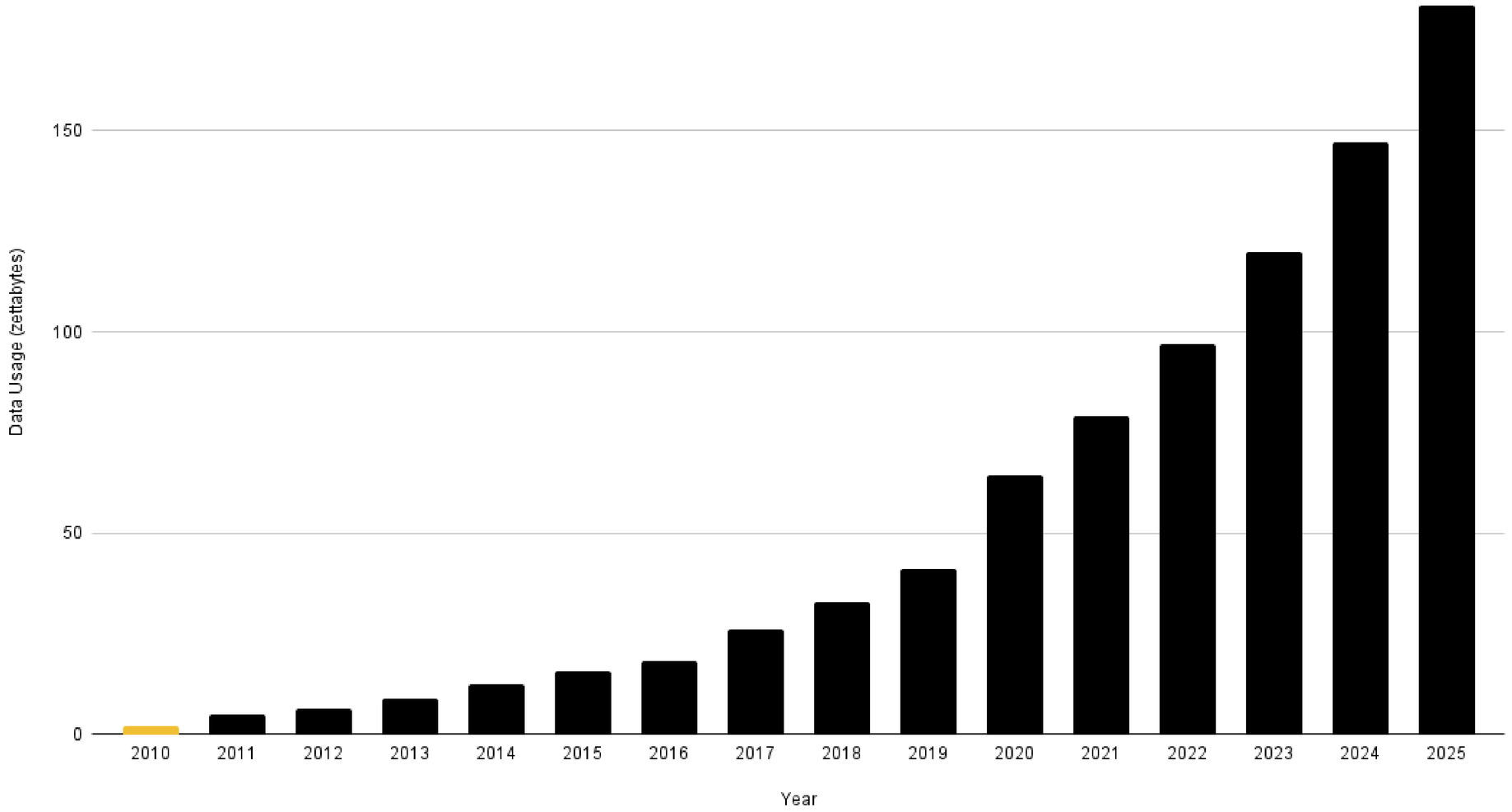


The Horse in Motion (Sallie Gardner at a Gallop), Eadweard Muybridge

record → digital data

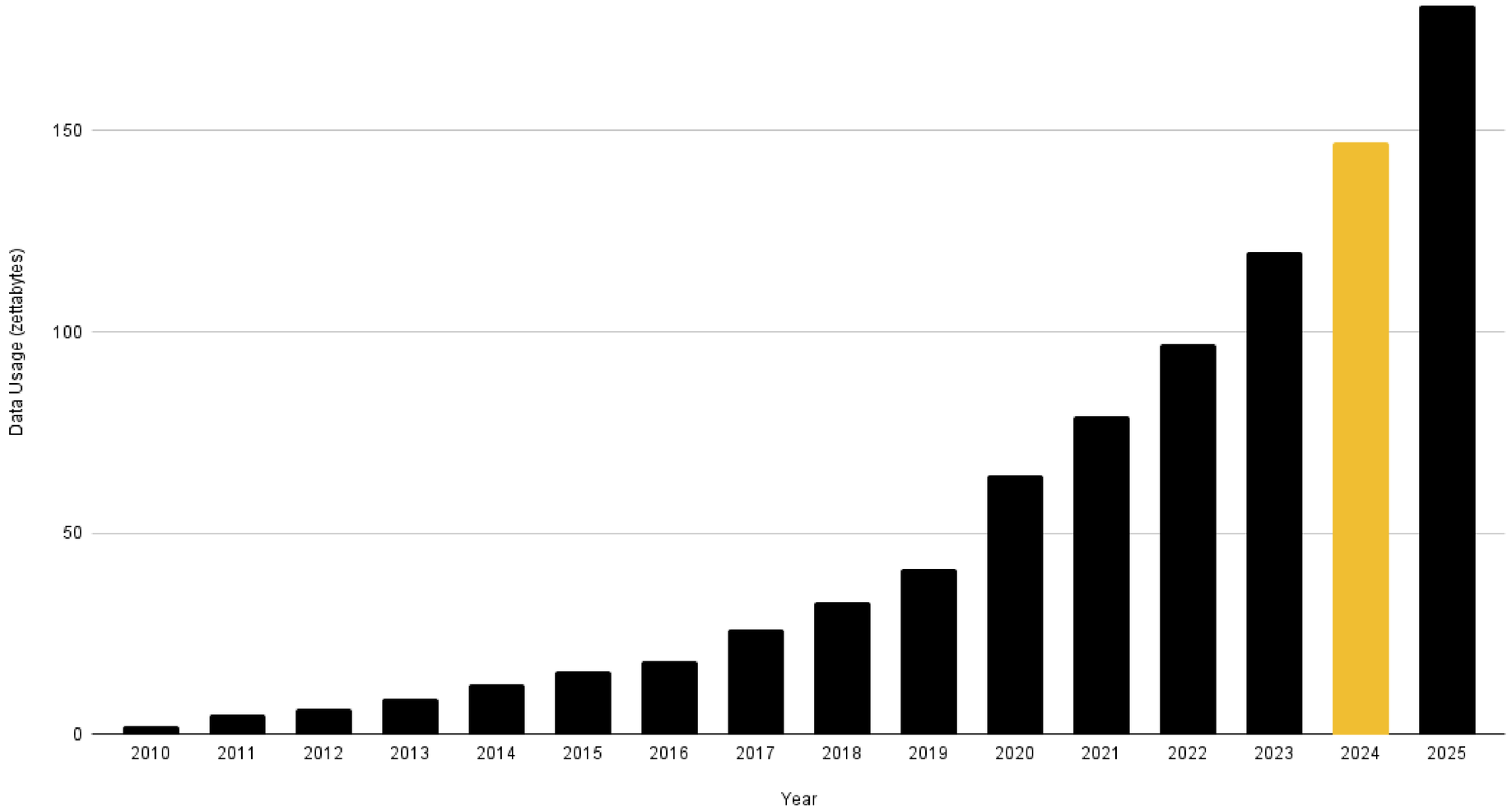
2 zettabytes

data created, captured, copied, consumed in 2010



149 zettabytes

data created, captured, copied, and consumed in 2024





INTERNET ARCHIVE

WayBackMachine

The form of the record determines what version of that thing survives.