

II International Scientific Conference GCPMED 2019
"Global Challenges and Prospects of the Modern Economic Development"

**SOCIAL ASPECTS OF DIGITALIZATION: ARCHIVE AND
MEMORY IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

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Abstract

The study considers a new phenomenon of modern humanitarian knowledge - digitalization of social memory and archive as its carrier and creator at the same time. The purpose of the study is to analyze the impact of digitalization on traditional forms of archiving and to identify the social consequences of this process. The material for the study self-documented texts of the Boutorov family (the Russian noble family) who immigrated from Russia after 1917. These texts are preserved in the family archive in Paris and in the city archive of Syzran. The research is based on a phenomenological approach, which gave the authors the opportunity to suggest the existence of systemic unity in self-documented texts (memoirs, diaries and letters) of the Boutorov family, due to general worldviews, family traditions, family norms, and also allowed using comparative tools for these texts to search for identification grounds for their phenomenological unity. The study made it possible to establish new theoretical approaches to archives - the problems of digital memory and "creative archiving". Having systematized the changed definitions of archival science, the authors revealed new trends in digital archiving: conceptual inconsistency and preservation of traditional archival practices in the digital environment (identification of documents, examination of value, funding). The methodology proposed by the authors for reconstructing a virtual family archive based on materials from self-documented texts by the Boutorov family allows putting into practice two basic trends of modern digital archiving: expand the document base and interpret the context and subtext of family texts.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Digitalization of memory, archive, memory, family archives, creative archives, Boutorovs.



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1. Introduction

The meaning of the “archive” underwent significant changes at the end of the twentieth century. The technological basis of these changes was digitalization of modern society, and the theoretical one was the challenge posed by postmodern mainstream philosophy. Each of these factors played an independent role in the development of archive thought and practical activities of archives, and it is especially important how the technological breakthrough “in numbers” and postmodern concepts in archive science are interconnected. Modern socio-humanitarian research also raises the question that the horizon of memory is changing with changing storage conditions of the memory, the spread of the digital environment, the emergence of new ways of documenting and preserving memories (photo / video services, cloud storage, social networks). If in the past it was limited by physical capabilities of the individual’s consciousness and the social framework of memory, in the digital era it turns out to be dependent on the availability and integrity of the media profile. Storage mechanisms underlying the human culture are at risk under conditions when a person can save too much on the external medium. In this regard, the study of the mechanisms of memory and identification of possibilities reconstructing personal and social determinants of memory is becoming increasingly relevant.

2. Problem Statement

In the digital environment, which is changing almost all modern everyday social and anthropological practices, there is a change in archives created by man. The new conditions raise questions about digital heritage and inheritance, storage and possibility of representing personal archives, “the tyranny of written in marble memory” (Reading, 2016; Hoskins, 2017). Recent research on archives formulates a number of new scientific problems, among which the study of social identity is the main one. Here, it is important to analyze the role of the archive in this process, as well as the influence of this process on archival practice and theory (Bastian, 2013; Brown, 2013). For archivists, a paradigm shift requires moving away from identifying themselves as passive custodians of inherited heritage in order to note their role in the active formation of collective (or social) memory. Accepting the archive not only as a keeper, but also as an actor in social memory and various group identities required a review of archival practices (Cook, 2013).

Along with this, such a direction of socio-humanitarian knowledge as Digital Memory Studies has become increasingly noticeable. They study the influence of the information environment on the formation of empirical data warehouses - personal and social memorial archives. The modern media environment, combining various points of the physical space such as a public (state archives), a private (personal archives) and a single virtual network, provides the researcher with the opportunity to reconstruct the “family archive” as an integrated documentary complex even when physically the documents of this complex are in different archives, from individual private owners, in remote countries and even on different continents. This new condition for the existence of “family archives” allows us to review the boundaries of this concept today and requires the formation of a new methodology for working with distributed family archives, which can be formed as a “virtual archive”.

3. Research Questions

In view of the challenges of digital technology, archival science faced a lot of new questions, each of which, one way or another, was associated with determining the location of the archive in information society, its significance and functions in the modern world. The technical conditions for storing and reproducing a large amount of data in the digital environment raised the question of the existence of the archive outside of the digital space. Analyzing this research field, the authors of this study consider the following key questions:

1. How has the digital environment affected the functioning of traditional archives?
2. What impact did the challenge of postmodern philosophy have on the mission of the archive?
3. How is a new essence of the archive in the digital age formulated?
4. In what forms is it possible to use the methods of reconstruction of the digital archive when working with historical sources?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the impact of digitalization on traditional forms of archiving and to identify the social consequences of this process. The authors consider new theoretical approaches to archives in the context of digitalization, systematize the changed conceptual definitions of archival science, and identify new trends in digital archiving. As a result, the authors propose a methodology for reconstructing a virtual family archive based on materials from self-documented texts by representatives of the Boutorov family.

5. Research Methods

The basis of this study is the phenomenological approach. It proceeds from systemic integrity of the world, interconnectedness that is established by the researcher. This approach allows the authors to suggest the presence of systemic unity in the texts of representatives of one family (the Russian noble family of the Boutorovs who emigrated from Russia after the 1917 revolution), due to general worldviews, family traditions, family norms, and also use comparative tools for these texts to search for identification grounds for their phenomenological unity. The approach to reconstruct family archives used by the authors, which implies phenomenological unity of a family archive physically located in different archives, but capable of becoming a single archival complex inside the digital or virtual space, allows us to trace clan traditions combining such documents and the general motives of family memory.

6. Findings

6.1. Digitalization and archive

Like many other social phenomena (education, document flow, video environment, etc.), archiving ran into the problem of replacing the analog medium with the digital one and managed to justify the impossible mechanical transformation of one into another. In recent studies, Ivan Szekely emphasizes that although Internet services can play all the basic functions (recording, coding, structuring, processing,

storing, making available, copying) of archival institutions, modern society will not be able to refuse archives, since only they possess necessary qualities that can ensure the preservation of archival documents, including electronic ones (Szekely, 2017). At the same time, researchers acknowledge that the form and content of archival institutions are changing under the influence of the new “digital environment”: new ways to create, store and publish archival documents arise (Bountouri, 2017). Some experts even suggested combining the study of new experience in the framework of a new scientific discipline - “computer archival science” (Marciano et al., 2018).

The changes described above affected objective factors related to the functioning of the archive, and they also affected a whole range of subjective relations between the researcher (historian, archivist, etc.) and historical source (document, image, etc.). An important factor in archival research at all times was the special atmosphere of the archive as historical memory of mankind and the dialogue arising in the archive with documents (images) of the past, emotionally experienced by the researcher. It seems that digitalization destroys this archival charm, deprives the researcher of direct, tactile contact with the past, mechanizes the research process itself. However, this is not quite true. Today we can talk about the emergence of a new digital culture of archival research, the study of which, in particular, is aimed at the project “Le goût de l’archive à l’ère numérique”, initiated by the national archives of France. The main theme of this project is to change the attitude towards sources, to understand how a digitized historical source can be “assigned” by a historian, whether the same “intimate” connection arises between them as when working with documents in an archive, and, finally, the desire to understand what kind of “rituals” communication can acquire in the digital era (in the previous era this communication was with sources in the reading rooms of the archive, such rituals were your favorite place, your chosen pace and order of work, etc.).

No less important is the fact that the development of the digital environment has led to the emergence of new types of archives. In the context of digitalization, a person will sooner or later become involved in the process of creating digital memory, which has already acquired its own institutions, to ensure its permanent storage (for example, an Internet archive). In this case, the World Wide Web acts as a space for the formation of such a memory, and at the same time as a way to preserve it.

6.2. Archive and power over memory

The postmodern challenge to archival studies also posed problems about the nature and mission of the archive, and, ultimately, led to the emergence of new archives. So, the archives were tasked with disavowing their own power over memory and trying to expand their limitations in preserving document information. American archivist researchers have dedicated one of their works to the consistent “deconstruction of archives” (Cook, & Schwartz, 2002). According to the authors, the archive should no longer hide behind neutrality and objectivity, but should rethink its role and significance for society and history: in this sense, archives are not just passive custodians of documentary evidence, but active creators of historical memory, constantly forming and organizing it. Selecting certain evidence to be remembered (stored), archives classify a single past into a privileged and marginal history.

Identifying the active position of the archivist, who must fully recognize himself as a subject, and forming and preserving the documentary memory of society becomes especially important in the context of the digital environment that can accommodate a huge amount of data, but cannot automatically make

this or that phenomenon or era understandable. Analytical operations that can form such an understanding can only be performed by a researcher (historian, archivist). In particular, this will lead to the fact that narrowly professional analytical operations traditionally performed by the archivist (description, systematization, etc.) will be carried out using an interdisciplinary approach, involving methods of interpretation, historical reconstruction, design, modeling, etc. This trend was reflected in concepts of “creative archiving” (Velios, 2011). Agreeing with the point of view of Ketelaar (2011) that the archivist always balances on the border between art and science, the followers of “creative archiving” pay attention to the fact that archivist funds and describes the archive in accordance with his own professional settings, but not according to the views of the author of the archive, who could criticize such treatment to his heritage. The “creative” approach to archiving proposed by these authors implies that the archivist studies the ideas and worldview of fund-creators, the result of which should be an archive that is collected and ordered in a certain way. The archive in this context seems to be the result of the work of the archivist.

6.3. New concepts: electronic archive, digital archive, virtual archive

The digital environment enables the historian to be an archivist: using interdisciplinary connections to present his experience in creating or reconstructing the archive, even in the virtual space. At the same time, it is important to pay attention to terminological uncertainty when it comes to archives created using digital technology. The most commonly used concepts are “virtual archive”, “digital archive”, “electronic archive”, “Internet archive”. At the same time, only the term “electronic archive” was defined and approved by the Russian state standard as a set of documents stored in archives, electronic documents, as well as electronic registration cards for them. However, in the archival sphere there is another definition in which the electronic archive is understood as Enterprise Content Management. Thus, the electronic archive is a combination of electronic documents and the system in which they are stored. The term “digital archive” did not have a specific meaning: it is used as a synonym for electronic, virtual or Internet archive. The online archive or web archive is a system for archiving and storing websites and other digital resources. There are a lot of examples of such archives: the National Digital Archive of Russia (ruarxive.org), the Internet Archive (archive.org), the Electronic Security Coalition (dpconline.org), and others. The unified definition of the “virtual archive” has not been formed yet. The virtual archive is often called the Internet resource, which contains images of electronic documents, systematized according to certain principles. It is important to note that the creation of the virtual archive offers great opportunities for the reconstruction of archival funds and implies “reuniting fragmented or creating new archival funds by placing digital copies of documents on one Internet resource” (Lapteva, 2018, p. 155). In the first case, the fragmented archive is reunited on one Internet resource; in the second, archival funds of “failed fund-creators” that have never existed before are created in the virtual space. However, in both cases, the work of creating the virtual archive involves traditional activities of the archivist: identification of documents, examination of value, funding. Based on the above approaches to understanding virtual archives and their tasks, we emphasize the role that they can play in the reconstruction of family archives. Reunion of the family archive distributed in different archives as an integral phenomenon on one Internet resource will allow us to consider the memories of representatives of one family through their common experience.

6.4. Methodology for constructing a virtual family archive

There are diaries, letters and photographs of Yulia Vladimirovna Boutorova (1885-1946) in the center of the reconstructed virtual archive, which are currently stored in the city archive of Syzran. During the First World War Yulia Boutorova (member of the noble family) was a sister of mercy on the Southwestern Front and left unique records about her military experience. After the events of 1917, the Boutorovs, convinced monarchists, immigrated to Europe with the whole family. Yulia Boutorova's diaries, apparently, remained in the estate of her mother Vyazovoe near the city of Syzran, and then ended up in the city archive. Later in immigration, the Boutorovs' family archive was replenished with the memories of Julia's mother - Sofia Nikolaevna Boutorova (1862-1940), nee Davydova, memoirs of her brother Nikolai Vladimirovich Boutorov (1884-1970) and husband Alexei Alekseevich Tatischev (1885-1947). Some of the family texts are digitized and stored on the Internet of the Library of the Russian Abroad website. Women's texts of the family are presented only in fragments in the network. The reconstruction of family and friendly ties based on ego-documents of the Boutorovs and Tatischevs allows us better understand the family environment and the context of their self-documented texts, and to supplement the family archive with new documents and details.

The study was conducted in two directions: identifying biographical information about members of the Boutorov family and searching for information about the persons mentioned in their memoirs and diaries. In the first case, the work was complicated by objective reasons. The hasty departure of the Boutorovs from Russia and the political conflicts of the 1920s did not contribute to the preservation of the family archive. S.N. Boutorova (the mother of the family) recalls that she left the estate "with a small chest in which she put ham, butter, cauliflower, jam and apples" for her daughter and granddaughters (Boutorova, 1999). Soon Vyazovoe was defeated by local peasants. Probably, it was the lack of the family archive that prompted the Boutorovs, who appreciated the history of the clan and family, to record their memories. Another direction of the reconstruction of the Boutorovs' virtual archive involved working with texts of persons mentioned by family members, as well as searching for common stories in their family texts and in texts of other memoirists from their environment. For example, it was found out that T.A. Aksakova gives details of the life style of the Davydovs and their family relationships (Aksakova-Sivers, 1988) in her memories. An appeal to other texts of the sisters of mercy allowed us to restore some plots that were not reflected in the diaries and letters of Yulia Boutorova. So, the memories of T.A. Varnek help clarify the circumstances of sending the sisters to the front (Varnek, 2014). As a result, a circle of friends and relatives was mentioned in the Boutorov self-documented texts, which allowed expanding the database of the virtual family archive.

7. Conclusion

The study of the impact of digitalization on traditional forms of stock formation and archiving allowed the authors to establish new theoretical approaches to archives - the problems of digital memory and "creative archiving". Having systematized the changed conceptual definitions of archival science, the authors revealed new trends in digital archiving: conceptual inconsistency and preservation of traditional archival practices in the digital environment (identification of documents, examination of value, funding).

The methodology proposed by the authors for reconstructing the virtual family archive based on the materials of self-documented texts by the Boutorov family makes it possible to put into practice two basic trends in digital archiving: expand the document base and interpret the context and subtext of family texts.

Acknowledgments

The reported study was funded by RFBR, project number 18-49-630006 “Family archives: problems of the reconstruction and an archaeography (using the example of Yulia Boutorova’s archive)”.

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