For You, Me, Them?

Choosing Designated Communities
for Personal Digital Archiving

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Abstract

The paper addresses motivations for choosing designated communities when applying measures for archiving personal digital data and digital objects. Results of two case studies focusing on designated communities and the types of archived digital objects are reported and discussed.

Keywords: personal digital archiving; designated communities; motivation

Motivations and designated communities
for personal digital archiving

In professional settings concepts for digital storage and preservation of data are pushed by funding organizations and other stakeholders. Management and preservation e.g. of research data have become a standard expectation not only in research environments but in the business area, too. More and more tools and concepts for dealing with data and files are available but there is still reluctance to apply them.

Digital objects and digital communication have gained relevance in private contexts, too. The number and volume of digital files created and stored by individuals has grown from year to year. Pictures, small movies and

sound files are the fastest growing types of digital data. They are stored e.g. on smartphones, notebooks and by using cloud-based services. The availability of large and cheap storage media accelerates this trend. Most files are saved and stored automatically by software based on the names assigned to the files. Personal Digital Archiving (PDA) is a concept of digital curation and preservation helping individuals and groups to come to grips with their digital collections and to preserve content that is important to their lives in trustworthy, long-term ways.

In these private settings (adapted) professional concepts for selection as well as grouping or naming files or adding metadata are rarely used. Most of the tools and concepts developed for professional environments are not suitable because resources and knowledge are missing in private settings. As a consequence, special recommendations e.g. provided by Library of Congress (Library of Congress, 2016) and nestor Personal Digital Archiving working group (nestor AG PDA, 2016; Oßwald et al., 2016) are more applicable in this context. Nevertheless, their application is laborious. Special motivation is needed, which is partially drawn from the expected benefit, acknowledgement and perhaps gratitude of the people who will reuse a structured and well-named collection of text files, photos or other data. Among these designated communities there could be the owner of the files him- or herself. Motivation for curation activities might be very personal (Kim, 2013) or family-related (in a great number of cases; see e.g. recent presentations at PDA, 2016), in other cases based on other private links to different designated communities at present or in the future. Nevertheless, there is little knowledge about age-related differences in motivation of individuals putting effort in the organization, curation and preservation of personal digital data.

The poster presents results of two case studies with Library Science students (of TH Köln) and Cologne citizens who have taken part in a public workshop at Cologne Public Library (Digitale Werkstatt, 2016). Motivations of both groups are explored when applying basic activities of personal digital archiving in relation to the designated communities they have in mind.

Two hypotheses are explored: (1) The younger people are, the more are they themselves the designated community of their personal digital archiving activities. (2) Digital objects are curated and archived differently depending on age and family ties.

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