

Ego archive: digital society vs. personal memory?

To preserve the memory, to retrieve the historical memory, to create places of memory, the Memory of the World Register, the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity... It seems that our society in the latter half of the 20th century and early 21st century needs to remember more than ever, to cling to the ephemeral as an antidote to the amnesia caused by the speed of change, the excess of information, the increasingly shorter life-cycle of this information and, especially in the digital environment, the technological obsolescence speeding up the oblivion. In this context memory is the basis, deliberately or not, of the identity of individuals, of organizations and societies on the whole. Memory stands as the basic reference of the ability of individuals and societies to transform the present.

However, we might wonder why the memory currently arouses so much interest and, more precisely, if this interest is specific to our age or, on the contrary, it is only our distorted view of the present as an overcoming of the past, as a process of substitution of the earlier records by the recent memory. This is a probable prejudice of the current society in relation to our past which, as Miguel Anxo Murado (2013) points out in *La Invención del Pasado* (Past Invention) we shape in the interest of our present, as in the 12th century the Bishop of Oviedo, Pelayo, did with the *Corpus pelagianum*, so did the respective authors of the Chronicles in King Alphonse III's time, or the four great Catalan medieval chronicles.

Apart from the alleged stories or personal memories of power, personal testimonies throughout history are very scarce. In fact, the personal fonds as

archives do not constitute an objective for the institutional archives until well into the 20th century especially from the mid-century on and, above all, around the turn of the century to the present day. So, would the sudden interest in memory relate to the increase of personal archives, personal memories, that is, with the democratization of the ability to retain memories? Would the ability to retain memory make us more dependent on it because it frees us from remembering? What is the value of personal memories if we know their subjectivity? Surely, the interest in preserving personal memories lies in the multiple perspectives, as many as individuals, whose combination tends towards a more multifaceted view of the society. This multifaceted view makes possible to compare, contrast, doubt, and interpret so it becomes essential for the society self-knowledge. It should be emphasized that, for the first time in history, the aforementioned multiple perspectives are not determined by the interpretation or the account of any third party but they come directly from their creators.

In this sense, one of the more intellectually challenging examples of the 20th century is the contraposition of memories about the Warsaw ghetto, during the Second World War. Adam Czerniakov, a Polish chemical engineer, councilman and senator, who would be appointed as the first leader of the Local Jewish Council of the ghetto, began writing a personal diary on September 6th, 1939, a few days before the Nazi occupation of Warsaw, giving evidence of the situation of the Jewish community in the ghetto. His notes end the very day before his suicide, on July 23rd, 1942, since he was forced to draw up lists of people for deportation.

At the same time and in the same period, Emanuel Ringelblum, a Polish historian, politician and social worker, promoted the project *Oyneg Shabbos*, a clandestine operation for the creation of records of life in the ghetto. Different people of different professions, social background and age helped to create and collect memories, essays, diaries, drawings, posters, invitations to concerts, chocolate bars wrappers, etc. It was the deliberate design of a *fond*, a collection, an archive in short since they truly believe they had no future. The result is materialized in thirteen containers, ten metal boxes and three churns, buried for their future preservation. The boxes were found in 1946 and two of three churns in 1950, a total of about 6000 records. Among the records, the Grojanowski report, about the concentration camp at Chelmno, prepared by Szlama Ber Winer, under the pseudonym of Yacov Grojanowski, who had managed to escape from the camp. The whole (archive-*fond*-collection) was included in 1999 in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

In May 1942, and during a few months, a Nazi film crew was devoted to shoot images of the ghetto, mainly prepared scenes in which the inhabitants of the ghetto were forced to participate. The goal was to make a propaganda film, with the particularity of being shown in the future. Since the start of the operation known as the Final Solution was near, documenting the supposedly lack of

moral and humanity of the Jewish race was the aim in order to justify their extermination. Some of the films, not edited, were discovered at the end of the war with a simple sentence written outside: Ghetto. Even with some doubts, powerful images showed the alleged reality of daily life in the ghetto until 1998 when the discovery of new tapes with false and discarded shots proved everything was a set up.

The contextualization of the Czerniaków diary, the so-called Ringelblum archive and the set of Nazi tapes, among other documents and proofs, was undertaken by Director Yael Hersonsky, in 2010, in her documentary *A Film Unfinished*, in Spain with the title of *Gueto (Ghetto)*. The documentary highlights the different approaches on the same situations not only from the preserved documents, but also from the memories of survivors, who were children at that time.¹

Testimonies and works like Yael Hersonki's highlight the importance of the personal memories for the whole collective memory and represent a motivating element facing the challenges of digital personal records preservation. In addition, the three mentioned cases have the added value of being the result of the explicit will of testimonial "archive" and their completeness and value for the collective memory is given by their interrelationship.

Although the context or contexts management is the key to the contemporary Archival Science facing the challenges of digital memories, we should not obviate the need to invoke the explicit willingness of individuals in order to ensure their preservation, since otherwise it will be seriously compromised. This is undoubtedly one of the functions that the institutional archives must carry out in the digital environment, despite the many questions still unanswered: what are the challenges involved in managing the digital identity of individuals?, how to reconcile the right to be forgotten and the right to remember?, how to face the multiple contexts in the information created and shared on social networks? Are there technological solutions for preservation apart from the large Internet service providers? How does the digital context of personal memories affect the methodological basis of the profession and the services provided by the archives?

The aim of this new edition of *Tabula* attempts to bring reflections and some answers, hoping its content incites the reader to the personal and professional interpellation, and of course, to the always necessary discussion taking as starting point the papers briefly presented below.

Digital identity is discussed by Corinne Rogers on the basis that the identity is in the core of society. The author reflects on the different possible approaches in order to address digital identity and the challenges they pose for the Archival Science. Identity management is located in the core of the current information society discussion, because of the need of more secure systems that guarantee privacy and also because of the inevitable greater governmental and also commercial control to which all individuals can be subjected.

Estefania Aguilar Moreno, Angela Guimarães Pereira and Alessia Ghezzi of the Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen, of the European Commission follow the same line as well. The democratization of the memory cannot be subordinated to the preservers' interests if they are the major providers of cloud services. In this sense, they alert us to the ethical and social risks that may arise from them while new opportunities, especially from the current and growing collaborative paradigm, may come up.

Closely related to the management of personal identity, M. Teresa Heredero's article focuses on a hot topic: the recognition of the "right to be forgotten". The massive use of technological devices confronts with the preservation of people's privacy; hence the need to regulate what data can be deleted from the Internet, how and by whom. In short, this is a necessary regulation in order to make possible the data control about each of us.

Alejandro Delgado, in his article *the Personal Archives or the Domesticated Archivist*, questions and redefines the concept "personal archive" from the traditional archival perspective. The author highlights the secondary role of personal archives in the public archives, since they haven't conformed to the usual archiving processes because these are not suitable for personal archives.

For his part, Göran Samuelsson offers a complementary approach to Alexander Delgado's article. Samuelsson demonstrates the lack of specific studies on the personal archive and also questions its archival treatment. He also presents an interesting example of personal memory rework and creation. This is an example of how the biased approach should be considered when interpreting it as a trace for posterity, since, as he says, this is like describing a summer meadow from a herbarium of dried flowers.

In relation to traceability and contexts, Jessica Bushey presents a preview of her study on the use of archives and digital diplomacy in the digital content of social networks, and more specifically about photography in order to evaluate its presumption of authenticity. Today the functions of photography in social networks have reinforced their ephemeral nature and they are closely linked to communication systems. Therefore, we should stress the need to properly appraise the context where not only the image but also the context is created. Context, in which it is shared, included commented and reused.

Territory file and *Home Movie Day Salamanca* two unique projects promoted by non-profit institutions and entities, the foundation of Cerezales Antonino y Cinia and Germán Sánchez Ruipérez, and the Elektronova Association, in collaboration with the Film Library of Castilla y León (Spain), respectively. The two experiences are described by Francisco Javier Frutos and Carmen López by highlighting their common objective: safeguarding the domestic audiovisual production of citizens as a cultural heritage of the Castilla y León civil society.

Josep Lluís de la Rosa and José Antonio Olvera set out their experience in the research into digital preservation from a technological perspective. The creation of a community cloud, based on the collaborative principles of social networks, is the starting point for projects as innovative as Pyramid. The project situates technology preservation as a social need, so the best thing to do in order to resolve it would be sharing solutions among friends through the application of intelligent agents and the social sharing of a storage space.

Finally, Lluís-Esteve Casellas focuses his article on the professional challenges of the personal digital files, from the premise that in the near future their insertion in the public files will be exceptional. So he explains the citizenship awareness and preservation services as an ethical commitment of the public institutions, archives and archival profession to the citizens, either through knowledge transmission, digital preservation dissemination, promotion of research by citizens or their active participation in collaborative environments. He also insists on the need to coordinate public policies of fonds entries in order to face successfully the digital preservation of personal memories.

The Varia section includes two articles. The first article written by Diogo Vivas, presents the career of Mário Alberto Nunes Costa, a famous Portuguese librarian and archivist, who introduced the Schellenberg's techniques in Portugal. The second, by Antonia Heredia, discusses the analysis and comparison of the regulation of the provincial Council of Valencia and the regulatory standard of electronic documents management in the city of Cartagena (both in Spain), under the theoretical threshold defined by the Spanish Ministry of Finance and Public Administration.

As we said earlier, we believe that this monograph will be useful and stimulating for the reader and, in line with the mentioned examples of the Warsaw ghetto, we should end with the testimony of someone who was involved in the memory creation and preservation, helping to bury the first set of the Ringelblum records, on August 3rd, 1942:

“What we were unable to cry and shriek out to the world we buried in the ground....I would love to see the moment in which the great treasure will be dug up and scream the truth at the world. So the world may knowWe would be the fathers, the teachers and educators of the future....May the treasure fall into good hands, may it last into better times, may it alarm and alert the world to what happened...in the twentieth century....May history attest for us.”²

Dawid Graber, 19 years, from his last will and testament.
Warsaw ghetto, August 2nd, 1942

Girona, November 2014
Lluís-Esteve Casellas i Serra and Luis Hernández Olivera

Introduction

Notes

¹ The main information references about the Ringelblum archive are taken from Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Jewish Historical Institute), of Warsaw, where it is stored. <<http://www.jhi.pl/en>> [Accessed: November 17th, 2014]

Also on the website of the exhibition *Les archives clandestines du Ghetto de Varsovie*, produced by the Shoah Memorial and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. <<http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/upload/minisites/ringelblum/shoah/index.htm>>

Information about the film *Gueto* (A Film Unfinished) <<http://www.afilmunfinished.com>> [Accessed: November 17th, 2014]

² Quote from *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive Catalog and Guide* <<http://www.ushmm.org/research/publications/academic-publications/full-list-of-academic-publications/the-warsaw-ghetto-oyneg-shabesringelblum-archive-catalog-and-guide>> [Accessed: November 17th, 2014]