

ARCHIVAL EDUCATION
AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE 2009, UCLA

PERSONAL DIGITAL ARCHIVES AND THE ARCHIVAL PROFESSION

Sarah Kim
School of Information
The University of Texas at Austin
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Everyday life surrounded by excessive volume of personal digital materials:



1. How are we handling personal digital materials in everyday life?

2. What will happen to personal digital belongings after one's lifetime?

Research Trend

Human-computer interaction, personal computing, ubiquitous computing, cognitive psychology, information retrieval, etc.

- ◎ **Personal Information Management (PIM):**
looking for alternative/new ways to increase efficiency of personal information management
- ◎ **Digital Memories:**
actualizing vision of Memex (V. Bush, 1945); capturing and keeping individuals' complete lifetime information in digital form (i.e. MyLifeBits project; Memories for Live project)

Market Trend

Demand: Increasing interest among ordinary individuals

Supply: emerging commercial services for family archives, digital asset management, etc.

The screenshot shows the MeM website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, ADVANCED SEARCH, COMPANY, CONTACT US, and HELP. A search bar is located on the right side. Below the navigation bar, there are three main sections: 'Featured Life Stories', 'MeM Products', and 'Members'. The 'Featured Life Stories' section features a story for Jackie Joseph Causa, Jr., with a photo and dates (January 23, 1915 - December 31, 2007). The 'MeM Products' section lists 'Lifelong Memories™' (an online baby book), 'Everlasting Memorial™' (a collection of writings and photos), and 'MeM Announcement™' (a personalized tribute). The 'Members' section includes a search form with fields for 'Enter Last Name*' and 'Enter First Name', a 'Go' button, and links for 'Existing Members' (Click here to Login) and 'New Members' (Register as a new member). The main content area features a large image of a family and the text: 'Making Everlasting Memories® (MeM) helps families share and archive the stories of their lives. Whether documenting a child's first steps or honoring the memory of a loved one passed, MeM publishes the memories, treasured photographs and loving thoughts that capture life's most cherished moments. We invite you to explore our site and learn how MeM can help you share your story today while preserving it.'

The Digital Beyond

Cultural Legal Technical Featured News Podcast

Categorized | **Featured, News**

SXSW Digital Death Wrap Up

Posted on 22 March 2009 by John

Thanks to all the attendees at the SXSW festival who came out for our core conversation [Who Will Check My Email After I Die.](#) We had a great time and a great conversation.

We think it is a conversation that will be the center of a lot more attention in the years to come. We hope to host a panel next year where we have an **archivist, archeologist/sociologist, a lawyer,** and a person from the business community. Some representation from the **social networks** and from Google would be great too.

For me the highlight of the conversation was when we discussed products that allow you to release content (email, videos, photos) after you die. We were talking about other possible triggers that could release content. The birth of a child. Graduation. Marriage.

This idea blew my mind. The idea that you could start conversations and communicate with loved ones years after your death is a spectacular idea. @qthrul asked does "Afterlife = cron job?"

What were the things that made you go "hmmmm"?

The screenshot shows the Legacy Locker website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Features, Why Legacy Locker?, Pricing & Sign Up, and Support. Below the navigation bar, there is a large blue banner with a white cloud graphic. The banner contains the text: 'The safe and secure way to pass your online accounts to your friends and loved ones.' Below this text, there is a paragraph: 'Legacy Locker is a safe, secure repository for your vital digital property that lets you grant access to online assets for friends and loved ones in the event of loss, death, or disability.' To the right of the text is a photo of a family (a man, a woman, and a baby) standing in front of a house. Below the banner, there is a footer with five columns of text: 'The value of web accounts', 'Protect your online assets', 'Privacy and security', 'Family and loved ones', and 'Financial and estate planners'. On the far right of the footer is a green button that says 'Sign Up Now in 60 seconds or less'.

Call for the archival profession I



Archivists/archival researchers contribute:

- ⦿ Knowledge and practices accumulated in a long tradition of collecting and preserving personal records
- ⦿ Understanding about cultural value of personal records
- ⦿ Understanding about challenges of digital preservation



Call for the archival profession II

Think beyond traditional archives:

Value of personal digital records for both society and individuals  Increased needs for a long-term preservation of personal digital records of ordinary individuals (*N. Beagrie; 2005; R. Cox, 2008; A. Flinn, 2008*)  Limited capacity of traditional archives to preserve digital collections of ordinary individuals; individual differences

 **A new approach needed**

Grass-root level archival preservation for personal digital materials:

Personal Digital Archives

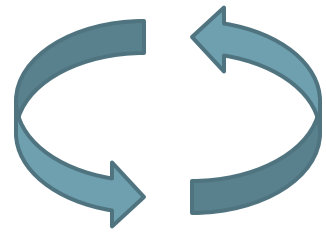
- ⦿ A type of digital archives for everyone
- ⦿ Managed and operated by individuals as a part of their everyday recordkeeping
- ⦿ Maintained through future generations after one's lifetime by other family members or by archival institutions
- ⦿ Neither data backup storage nor personal data warehouse





Archival research:
Understanding of personal archiving behavior & practices;
Meaning of personal digital archives in individuals' lives

Developing Models or Conceptual frameworks



Participation in personal information management system and tool development

New role of archivists:
Find ways to “equip citizen archivists”
(R. Cox, 2009)

Developing practices (Software, tools, best practice guidelines, etc.)

Personal Digital Archives

Personal Digital Archives:

A life-long work of the mind constructing the meaning of records

- ⦿ Archived personal records function as evidences of life, memory aids, and symbol of legacy.
- ⦿ Personal archiving (selecting, organizing, displaying, maintaining, retrieving, and re-appraising records) is an activity of individuals that involves a psychological process through which individuals attempt to make sense of their past experiences, memories, and so lives.
- ⦿ Building one's own personal digital archives is a process of reflexively constructing/preserving one's self and life narrative not just a collection of records.

Thank you.

Sarah Kim

srhkim@gmail.com

Doctoral student, School of Information
The University of Texas at Austin