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On Source Study of Internet Materials: Approaches, Problems, and Prospects

Abstract

The article considers some questions of studying of the Internet materials as a group of historical sources. For their collective designation the term “network text” is used. Many authors (N. G. Georgieva, V. P. Bogdanov, E. V. Zlobin) believe that the very formulation of the question is premature: the Internet, from their point of view, is an environment that accommodates different types of sources, but does not generate such as yet; network texts in this case do not form a separate typological group, but amount to semblance (modification) of “traditional” (that is, primarily, written) sources. At the same time, today there is heard an idea that progressive digitalization of social life leads to emergence of “digital heritage” as a phenomenon, which,

although open to the methods of “classical studies”, does not quite fit into the paradigm. Thus, it is more appropriate to use the concept of “potential source,” which has long been tested in our science, in relation to online texts. Qualification of network texts by the means of modern source studies theory requires a clear definition of their significant properties. It is necessary to distinguish texts that simply exist in the network from those that appear and function exclusively in the Internet space. The latter are network texts in every sense of the word. They are characterized by fundamental lack of material carrier, technological dependence, dynamic structure, polycode, dialogicity. The ultra-short life cycle of network text and its variability problematize application of basic classification categories, and yet this does not cancel, firstly, its derivability from the already existing source classifications, and secondly, the possibility of convergent development of “traditional” sources not only through adaptation to the conditions of the Internet space, but through yet deeper mediatization. As shown by the examples of the “Yandex” project “1917. Free history” and the electronic corpus of diaries “Life experience” (Prozhito), the result is not only transformation of source into content, but also appearance of qualitatively new features that provide, according to L. N. Pushkarev, adequate embodiment and expression of reality, and thus deserve separate theoretical and source analysis.

Keywords

Historical source, Internet, network text, classification, dynamics, media, convergence.

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