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From the Experience of Studying Practices of Creating and Preserving Digital Records of Personal Provenance in the Context of Archival Work on the Personal Collections

Abstract

Active creation and accumulation of document complexes by citizens, which exist only in digital environment, has led to a change in types, forms, and content of personal documentary materials, to their multiplication, thus inevitably entailing a change in documents composition of

future personal provenance fonds. It is in the personal archives of citizens that the greatest diversity of documents is observed and changes in the methods, types, and formats of data documenting are reflected most quickly. However, the composition of electronic documents received in recent years for storage in archival institutions is presented, in the overwhelming majority, by audiovisual forms. These are mainly photo and video documents. One of the reasons for limited range of electronic documents transferred for archival storage is lack of clear understanding of what personal electronic archives are today, which materials are of greatest value for the society. The article presents the results of a study conducted in the collaboration of researchers from the Tomsk State University and archivists of the State Archives of Tomsk Region. The method of semi-structured interviews has been used to describe practices of creating, preserving, and using personal electronic archives by representatives of the Tomsk academic community. The description of such an archive makes it possible to highlight main features of such complexes of documents, to identify changes in their composition, structure, features, and to trace personal strategies for their preservation and transfer to the State Archives of the Tomsk Region wherein they form personal provenance fonds. In the work of archivists, the results of this study can be used for developing criteria for evaluation and technological capabilities for reception of electronic documents of personal provenance. The results of this research can be used by the state archives as guidelines for building their relations with citizens on the issues of streamlining and preserving personal electronic documents by their creators. Changes in practices of usage, value perception, and attitude of owners towards their electronic materials demonstrate a need for developing recommendations for documents preservation, selection, and preparation for transfer to the state archives. To support the best practices presented in such recommendations, archival professionals will have to organize additional opportunities for dialogue with citizens via workshops, questions and answers sessions, etc.

Keywords

Digital documents of personal provenance, state archives, composition of personal provenance fonds, evaluation of personal provenance documents, preservation of personal digital documents, guidelines.

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