#DHNord2017: (De)Constructing Digital History
Lille, 27 - 29 November 2017

Individual (Hi)stories in Russian Internet: Participation and Autonomy?

Milena Rubleva
National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Introductory Remarks

1. Web 2.0. Production and consumption of pasts knowledge

"... the web becomes a place for new forms of collaboration, new modes of debate, and new modes of collecting evidence about the past. At least potentially, digital media transform the traditional, one-way reader/writer, producer/consumer relationship."

Cohen, Daniel J. and Rosenzweig R., Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

2. Participatory culture: be (pro)active

Image: DrAfter123 /Getty

3. Turn to personal and subjective

"Attention paid to an individual experience and personal commemorations enables the demolition of the coherent historic construction in order to demonstrate inevitable polyphony and ambivalent nature of the experience described"

Assman A. The Long Shadow of the Past: Memory, Culture and Memory Politics. Moscow: Novoie Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2014.

4. Crowdsourcing projects: "Archive Fever"

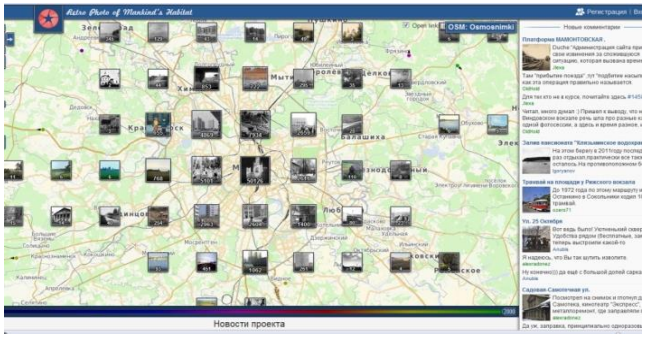
История России в фотографиях

УСТНАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

Прожито

СИБИРЯКИ

БЕССМЕРТНЫЙ БАРАК



ОТКРЫТЫЙ СПИСОК

Звуковые АРХИВЫ

Европейская память О ГУЛАГЕ

The question is…

Whether crowdsourcing projects about individual pasts provide an autonomy from state-promoted meta-narrative?

I guess the answer is NO

Arguments

1. Participation vs. Demonstration

Forms of participation:

- to upload personal story or photo from the personal archive
- to compose a collection from the objects by different users
- to start an inquiry about unclear details
- to volunteer in deciphering the diaries

2. Risk of over-academization

Roles of professional historian:

- creator and/or runner of the project
- mediator (taking biographical interviews, moderating etc.)
- person making use of new research sources

3. Inexact self-positioning: between digital archive and media

Options:

- research
- enlightning of the audience
- giving voice to people
- uniting people
- commemoration of the victimes

4. Dependence on funding and institutional affiliation

Sources:

- Culture-supporing charity foundations organised by the oligarchs
- State-funded instituions (indirectly)
- Private investments

+

- Crowdfunding (only one)

Closing Remarks

1. Agency Issue in Past Narrative Production

- Academic institutions
- Museums
- Charity foundations
- Enthusiasts: media manager, blogger, independent historian

- Individual

2. Limitations of user activity + Lack of the audience

Approximate audience - 1000 users/day

Mostly scholars from within Humanities

4. Does uprising of projects mean social request for autonomy?

Projects not answer, but try to evoke it

Issue of public space in Russia

Witnesses/Historians/State:

- simultaneously
- in digital

3. Alternative archives, alternative sources

Archival crises in Russia (mid 2000 - till now)

- access hardships

- classifying previously open sources

- preferring myths to documents on state level

+

Thank you!

mefito23@gmail.com