
The Internet will not remember you: the effect of internet censorship on personal practices of archiving.

Anya Shchetvina*^{†1}

¹Independent researcher – Netherlands

Abstract

Archiving of online materials can be very personal, as, for many people, social media became tools and platforms to produce, share and remember their past, and they also might require special efforts to preserve these memories. What happens then, when social media as usual infrastructures for remembering fail? "Instagram for me is an album of memories", was written in a comment published in the Russian newspaper Meduza on March 13, 2022. That month Instagram was blocked in the Russian Federation, as an attempt by the government to control the representation of the Ukrainian-Russian war. The war escalated less than a month before this publication, on February 24th, with Russian army forces entering the territory of another country. The events of war were accompanied by a variety of repression actions, starting from arrests of people who publicly criticised the government, and ending with censorship of online content. At the same time, companies from other countries started leaving the territory of the Russian Federation, and a variety of sanctions were implemented in order to affect Russia's economy. All these events highlight the role that the internet plays in the lives of people who were affected. These changes enacted are active and extensive curation of personal online autobiographically meaningful materials among Russian internet users. This case study is based on a qualitative inquiry into cases when people archived or transferred their online materials into alternative mediums, expecting the lack of access or safety to their usual social media platforms. It documents the ways in which internet censorship and social media shutdowns in Russia affected the construction and preservation of autobiographical data, but also, more generally, reflects on the problems that people face when they need to transfer online materials into offline formats, without losing meanings that these objects had in online environments.

Keywords: autobiographical memory, web archiving, social media archiving, archive curation, autotopography, self, writing, remembering, autobiographical memory studies

*Speaker

[†]Corresponding author: anya.shchetvina@posteo.net