Personal digital legacy: findings from an exploratory study among citizens of Croatia

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Introduction

• Increased everyday usage and digital content creation

• digital assets can become part of digital legacy

• organized and stored as a personal collection for the future use or as part of future digital heritage

• exploratory study conducted in Croatia in 2022 as a part of the master thesis titled *Organization and preservation of personal digital legacy*, defended at the University of Zadar (Grgeč, 2022)
Theoretical background and terminology

• an individual possesses two identities: a real-world identity confirmed by official paper documentation and a digital identity created by using the Internet (Park, 2017)

• paper is focused on user's experience and habits in organization and preservation of personal digital legacy

• concept of personal information management (PIM) from archival sciences

• PIM supports everyday actions to acquire, organize, maintain and retrieve information for everyday use (Jones et al., 2006)

• digital footprint represents an individual's online presence, provides evidence of their digital and physical identity and records the data left by their interaction in a digital environment (Fish, 2009)
Terminology

Digital property inventory: categories

- Email
- Social networks
- Communication Apps
- Cloud storage
- Online shopping accounts
- Payment and money management
- Ticketing
- Health and fitness Apps
- Business and networking
- Academic interfaces and educational platforms
- Travel accounts
- Transportation
- Software licences
- Entertainment and streaming accounts
- Productivity services
- Loyalty programs and membership
- Websites and blogs
- Servers
- Product delivery accounts
- Photos
- Smart house dashboard

- **personal digital collection** functions like an informal personal archive of records containing informal and diverse collections constantly expanding.

- **personal digital archives** represent “informal, diverse, and expanding memory collections created or acquired and accumulated and maintained by individuals in the course of their personal lives, and belonging to them, rather than to their institutions or other places of work (Williams, John and Rowland, 2009).

- **digital property = digital assets = personal digital belongings > DIGITAL LEGACY**

- digital archives can be created by anyone, digital assets can be owned by anyone – to ensure accessibility there is a necessity to create **DIGITAL LEGACY PLAN**
Exploratory study

The aim of the research

• to determine the opinions and attitudes of the participants included in the study about their own personal digital legacy

• to examine in what way and to what extent participants organize their personal digital content for the future
Exploratory study

Research questions

a) Are respondents aware of their own personal digital legacy and what are their attitudes/opinions about the subject?

b) In what way and to what extent the respondents organize and preserve their personal digital legacy?
Methodology

- the online survey with 229 respondents
- analyzed by using means of descriptive statistics
- responses collected in the period from February 25th to March 7th, 2022
- 34 questions: 32 closed-type questions and 2 open-type questions
- questions divided into three parts:
  A. general information about respondents,
  B. usage and creation of digital content and
  C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice
Results
A. general information about respondents

- Out of 229 respondents:
  - 56 (24.5%) - aged between 18 and 25
  - 100 (43.7%) between 26 and 35 // most represented age group
  - 41 (17.9%) between 36 and 45,
  - 29 (12.7%) between 46 and 55.
  - only 5 (2.2%) were over 55 years old and
  - only 1 over 60 years of age

- significantly more female respondents (77.7%) took part in the research, and
- only 2.2% of respondents were over 55 years of age

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77.7 % (178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22.3 % (51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

B. usage and creation of digital content

Fig. 1. Online platforms and services actively used in the last 5 years among the respondents
Active usage of social networks and communication accounts

used few times a day

• Facebook and Instagram
• e-mail and communication accounts (WhatsApp and Viber)
  - the largest amount of content and data is generated on these platforms

  - honourable mention: streaming services are often used

  - note: some of the other platforms or services do not require daily use, but are used as needed, such as Internet and mobile banking, e-commerce accounts, travel accounts, transport accounts or product delivery applications.
Deactivation of an account on a platform or service (when stopped using)

- 152 respondents (66.4%) never deactivated their user account on the platform or service they stopped using;
- 74 respondents (32.3%) did deactivate accounts:
  - mostly on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Pinterest, LinkedIn, MySpace, MyAnimeList),
  - other platforms or services such as Amazon, Skype, Pedometer and Uber
- 3 respondents (1.3%) did not respond
Results

C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

Top 4 digital content worth saving

1. digital photographs
2. personal audio/video files
3. e-mail
4. Internet banking

Fig. 2. Value of digital files or digital content created: self-assessment
Results
C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

Preservation for personal use
• Internet/mobile banking, communication applications such as WhatsApp and Viber, and e-mail is either important or extremely important to them.
• BUT, most often used apps, e.g. Facebook and Instagram - NOT the content that is extremely important for them to preserve

Preservation for the future and heirs
### Results

C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIGITAL CONTENT</th>
<th>delete / make unavailable</th>
<th>preserve / give access</th>
<th>I am not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>digital photographs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal digital files</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal audio and/or video files</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-books and/or audiobooks</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social media accounts</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication apps</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business communication accounts</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cloud storage</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/mobile banking</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>online shopping accounts</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>fitness apps</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>business and networking accounts</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic platforms</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>entertainment and streaming accounts</td>
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<td>food and product delivery accounts</td>
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<tr>
<td>dating apps</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productivity tools</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Respondents' opinions on providing the access to personal digital content and platforms to the heirs
Results
C. attitudes/opinions about digital legacy; actions and habits in practice

Table 2. Providing access to different types of personal digital files to potential heirs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIGITAL CONTENT</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I do not care</th>
<th>I never thought about it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>digital photographs</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>digital files</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>music files</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>video files</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-books</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audiobooks</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social media accounts</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Digital legacy plan

Plans for preserving any of digital files and digital content in the event of their death,

- 95.2% answered NO
- 11 respondents (4.8%) answered YES
Conclusions

- digital content and digital artifacts have become equally important for inheritance as the material possessions are.
- Respondents in our study give value to the content they create, but not all is worth saving for future heirs.
- Most of them don’t have a digital legacy plan, but this study gave them enough information to start thinking and act towards building it.
- Although with certain limitations, this study gives valuable insights to the attitudes and opinions towards preservation of digital legacy among citizens in Croatia.
Thank you for your attention!

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