

Finding the best of both worlds? Understanding cases of “going analog” by Chinese adults in a personal archiving context

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1. Background

- Existing work on personal archiving: focuses more on developing and introducing best practices and tools for digitization and long-term preservation
- Less research on nuanced thoughts behind individual choices of personal archiving media in everyday lived experiences (esp. outside of “Western” cultures)
- This study: examines **cases of “going analog”** by Chinese adults in a personal archiving context

2. Research questions

- What are the **thoughts and experiences of Chinese individuals** in certain cases of **personal archiving** where they:
- prefer analog** versions of materials over digital versions?
 - intentionally **create necessary analog counterparts** of digital versions?

3. Method

- Data: Drawn from larger project studying the sharing of personal memories and personal archives in Chinese families – **semi-structured interviews** with 32 Chinese adult participants
- Analysis: **qualitative** coding using a **general inductive** approach (Thomas 2006), coded all content related to “choosing analog” for themes via **open coding**

4. Preliminary Findings

Emergent themes in three shades of “going analog”:

Resisting digitization

- Avoiding enhanced visual representations

“I feel like when I take digital photos of [my drawings]...I magnify them, add filters... Then it's like, gosh, they're so ugly, goodbye. So I delete them.”
--(Wei, age 20)

Preferring original creation in analog, not digital

- Sustaining motor memory (for Chinese writing)

“I would continue to write with pen and paper [for my diary]. Because if I don't, I'll forget how to write [Chinese] characters. Opportunities to use a pen are already very rare nowadays.”
-- (Yingri, age 38)

Needing to create analog versions of digital files

- “Forcing” selection
- Adding “truly” personal imprints
- Facilitating more embodied engagement (esp. when sharing)
- Accommodating elders

Summary

Going analog:

- May be shaped by ideas about **representations of self, uniqueness, add-on value**
- May vary by **type of materials** (text, visual) and **envisioned use situations** (self-oriented, other-driven, interaction-based)
- May have connections with **cultural elements**

Practical implications: personal archiving support may consider a process of “**analog to digital to analog**”, help individuals find **the best of both analog and digital worlds**



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5. Further work

This study:

- Refine and contextualize themes, potentially follow up with participants to gather more targeted data

Future studies:

- More focused investigations on cases of resisting digitization
- Comparative studies to further explore potential cultural differences in choices of personal archiving media

6. References

- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246.
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