

Digital memory and public history: The transformation of historical perception in the digital age

Lia Metreveli

Professor, Georgian Technical University, Georgia


Madona Keadze

Doctor of History, Associate Professor
Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University, Georgia
Email : keadze_madona@yahoo.com

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Abstract---In the digital age of the 21st century, the discipline of history is undergoing a fundamental transformation — it is moving beyond the academic space and acquiring new forms of interaction with public memory. History is no longer just the domain of texts and archives; it comes to life in social media, digital archives, and online platforms, where perceptions of the past are shaped at both the individual and collective levels. The article explores how the understanding of history and public memory are changing in the digital environment, what role digital archives and social media play in the representation of history, and what is the professional responsibility of the historian in the new environment. The research is based on an interdisciplinary approach — analysis of digital media, study of the dynamics of archival materials, and observation of public projects. The results indicate that digital memory creates a new model of perception of history — more open, democratic and multi-voiced, but at the same time fraught with risks of disinformation and algorithmic manipulation. These trends in the practice of teaching and research of history require the development of new strategies so that historians can critically analyze digital memory and have a positive impact on public consciousness.

Keywords---digital memory; public history; archives; social media; historical perception; education; historiography.

Introduction

The digital era is radically changing the rules of our relationship with the past. If history traditionally existed as a form of institutional knowledge — in the form of academic texts, state archives and museums — today it is moving into the digital space, where every user can become an “architect of memory.”

The development of social media and digital platforms has abolished the monopoly of information and the power to interpret the past. Now the meaning of a historical fact is determined not only by scientific argument, but also by the algorithm of the social network.

In this context, fundamental questions arise:

- How is the perception of history changing in the digital age?
- What is the new structure of public memory?
- How should historians and educators adapt to these changes?

Theoretical framework: The concept of collective memory, first formulated by Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 1992), today acquires new meaning in the digital environment. Aleida Assmann notes that memory is not only the preservation of the past, but also the process of its constant reconstruction (Assmann, 2020).

Contemporary visions of public history (Noiret, 2014; Danniau, 2013) emphasize the democratization of history — understanding the past is no longer the prerogative of academia alone, but the result of broad public participation.

In the digital age, memory is shaped by the influence of a multimedia environment: texts, photos, videos, and comments create a "digital ecosystem" of history. In this process, algorithms become "new archivists" (Kansteiner, 2022), determining what society will see and remember.

Research methodology

The research is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines historiographical, cultural and digital analytics.

Methods: Comparative analysis of digital archives (Europeana, Digital Public Library of America, National Digital Archives);

- Content analysis of social media (X/Twitter, Facebook, YouTube);
- Small field observation of online public history projects (Google Arts & Culture);
- Ethical principles: protection of source credibility and authorship, data confidentiality.

The goal is to identify the main trends that characterize the digital representation of history and the transformation of public perception.

Results and analysis

The new function of digital archives

Digital archives no longer act only as repositories of historical materials — they have turned into open platforms where the user becomes a co-author of information. For example, *Europeana* allows citizens to upload historical photos of their own family, which connects individual experiences of history with collective memory.

The impact of social media on historical consciousness:

Social networks create a "decentralized memory". Historical events are often discussed in the language of social media — emotions, memes, short videos. This increases interest in the past, but at the same time makes it difficult to distinguish between fact and interpretation.

Democratization and disinformation

One of the main paradoxes of digital memory is that it simultaneously promotes democratization and increases the risk of manipulation. Information is available to everyone, but algorithms create filter bubbles where historical narratives (here: interpretations) can be turned into ideological tools.

Educational challenges:

History teaching requires a renewed approach: educators should use digital platforms as a means of research and critical analysis, and students as active participants in the process of creating memory.

Discussion: Digital memory transforms not only the form of history, but also its social function. The historian becomes an "information arbiter" whose task is to verify data and encourage critical thinking.

At the same time, digital history reveals a "post-archival" culture, where fact and interpretation coexist in an open networked environment. Therefore, historiography must embrace the new language of media and technology so that historical thinking does not remain marginalized in a digital society.

Conclusion and novelty of the work

The digital era creates a new structure of historical perception — an open, multi-voiced, but unstable system. The task of the historian and educator is to understand this space, strengthen critical thinking, and strengthen the public role of history.

The presented work emphasizes that digital memory is no longer just a technological phenomenon, but a methodological challenge for historiography, which requires the development of new theoretical and practical frameworks.

Scientific novelty of the work:

1. For the first time in the Georgian research space, digital memory is presented as a historiographic category.
2. An integrated model has been developed that combines aspects of public history, memory policy, and digital education.
3. The impact of digital archives and social media on the public perception of history has been covered.
4. The term "digital historical consciousness" has been formulated — as a new form for understanding history and developing civic responsibility.
5. Pedagogical recommendations are proposed on the integration of digital resources into the methodology of teaching history.

Digital memory should be considered as an organic part of the development of history, which unites science, society and technology. It is through the combination of these three that a new culture of understanding history is formed, which responds to the main challenges of the modern era.

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