COLLECTIVE AND COLLECTED MEMORY: PHOTOGRAPHY AS FAMILY HISTORY RECLAMATION IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET RUSSIA[1]

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ABSTRACT

The paper compares social functions and perspectives of family memory in the era of traditional media and that of user generated content through Web 2.0. Family photograph as a component of family history reconstructing projects made in the conditions of completely different communication technologies is in the focus of the paper. Project of Nikolai Schapov (1881-1960), amateur photographer and family historian, is put into comparison with the practices of users of the family social network FamilySpace.ru.

KEYWORDS

family photograph, family history reconstruction, images collecting and sharing, memory, communication technologies, Internet, Russia.

BIO

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Introduction

The article compares social functions and perspectives of family memory in the era of traditional media and that of user generated content through Web 2.0. It focuses on different forms of social interaction and connection facilitated by online photo sharing practices in contrast to the more static practices of printing photographs. The matter concerns interaction of photographs and family memory. The idea is that the photographs posted on the Web are imbedded in communication, especially verbal, differently from the way they were before the era of Web 2.0. They differently shape the space of interpersonal communication and how family members talk about and visually construct the past.

The aim of the research is to present the difference between making family histories visible by means of traditional photography of the end of the 19th – first half of the 20th century, and with the help of contemporary online photo sharing practices. The material to analyse is the heritage of Nikolai Shchapov (1881-1960), a muscovite, hydrotechnology engineer, professor of the Bauman Moscow Higher Technical School, family historian, and passionate amateur photographer who left one of the richest family photo collections in Russia. By contrast, the contemporary mode of images collecting and sharing is analysed through the family social network FamilySpace.ru, launched in 2008. It was the first family social network in the Russian-speaking Internet, and its purpose was to study family trees, to reconstruct and often to rediscover family histories, and to contribute to the development of existing group narratives and identities. These represent amateur attempts to reconstruct histories of the family in the conditions of totally different representation and communication technologies. In either case, to make this reconstruction, a family historian forms a representative version of the family archive.

Nikolai Shchapov lived at a time when family photographs and albums were an essential part of the Russian middle class social life. His 'photo-culture' was developing on the basis of studio family photo portraits that filled the houses of his parents and relatives. As Nikolai grew older, he turned into an amateur photographer that was quite typical for that time. " … There was also amateur photography, which after 1880 evolved from the hobby of the elite, to a global, popular pastime. The power of snapshot photography lay not in the quantity of pictures it produced during the period, but in the means it gave ordinary people to consider, judge, and promote the people in their lives. The photo album of the 1890s was a sort of Victorian Facebook, in the sense that dozens or even hundreds of portraits were preserved, displayed, and circulated among social and family networks. This new ability to "collect" friends was as empowering for the ordinary individual as it was for the artist or official utilizing photography as an investigative tool (I am thinking here of naturalists' scrapbooks or police detectives albums)" (Hudgins 2010: 564-565). Nikolai's another interest was to collect family documents. His archive comprised with time both the documents of several related families, and numerous photographs and negatives. Relying on this archive, Nikolai tried to write several books dedicated to family's history. In the Soviet time, his records as well as pre-revolutionary family photographs and documents were kept at home, and it looks like they were hidden and hardly shown to anybody (his archive was published in part only in the end of 1990s). The Soviet power forced people to abandon their history, their ancestors, and to ignore or even to hide the genealogical and social origin issues. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and soviet ideology, there was a surge of interest in genealogy to the issues that had long been unpopular and often dangerous, both in historical sciences and public life.

The social network FamilySpace.ru is the contrary example of amateur reconstruction of family history and genealogy. It appeared during the post-Soviet period which is characterized by active exploration of 'communicative memory'[2] space (Assmann 2011) – a turn to oral evidence, neglected, and even feared in previous decades. It was the period when " … alternative representations of the past were publicly recalled, recharged, and even relived in ways that would have been impossible a decade earlier. There was a sense that ordinary people were recovering pasts that, because they contradicted official history, had remained hidden and protected" (Watson 1994: 6). The events of the Russian political history of the 20th century destroyed the (feeling of) connection between generations, the chain of handing the information down to the generation that follows. Thus, one of the main sources of self-determination of people, namely, the awareness of family roots and the right to possess this knowledge was destroyed. While amateur family history reconstruction projects in the traditional model aimed mainly at retaining and rescuing family history as important part of family and personal heritage, the similar projects undertaken in the post-Soviet period are primarily aimed at revising, completing, and reformatting of personal and group identity. As a result of the family genealogical amnesia imposed by the Soviet rule, these projects apparently acquired compensatory properties. In addition, in the 1990s, after the abrupt break with the Soviet past, there was a fear of losing 'living memory' of the last witnesses of the 20th century's historical events that had a direct and often tragic impact on the life of families. The allowed access to public archival collections containing a whole set of genealogical sources was one more reason of the surge in interest in the subject.

A burst of memoirs, happened after the collapse of the USSR, is concentrated primarily on the recent past, especially World War II and Soviet socialism. This coincided with the emergence of new communication technologies, in particular, the Web 2.0 which affected commemoration practices in radically new way. Online communication resources, including interactivity, user-generated content, connectedness, and multimedia, stimulated appearance of a great number of memory-related groups in the Russian-speaking Internet, where many alternative histories and multifarious memories began to coexist. As Ellen Rutten argues, social media are pivotal to memory culture in the former Soviet Union now, where the past is as alive as the present (Rutten, Fedor, and Zvereva 2013). Amateur family history reconstruction projects as a special case of web-mediated memory in the post-Soviet space could be supposedly explicated in terms of the 'work of mourning' (*Trauerarbeit*). It implies positive process of creating of a new cultural product, which replaces the trauma of the people who lived either immediately during the totalitarian regime or right after it. "Trauma is response to a condition that had been experienced by the self; mourning is a response to a condition of the other. An individual subject who

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[2] Communicative memory, according to Assmann, is shared and conveyed within a social group defined by common memories of personal interaction through the means of verbal communication over a time span of only 80 to 100 years.

has suffered a trauma […] cannot represent the traumatic situation; this representational inability is precisely what constitutes trauma. In contrast, mourning is all about representation" (Etkind 2013: 14). To reconstruct family history online means to make the family past visual and thereby open, variable, and even unexpected. Social media provide people with the tools to do the 'work of mourning' together and to contribute in different ways to (micro)historical narratives in the process of their continuous development.

Comparative analysis of traditional and online family history amateur reconstruction requires answering to the following questions: who is the author of such a reconstruction? Whom a reconstruction is being created for? What is the main impulse and source of a reconstruction? How words and images interact in both cases? To make this analysis we made use of some provisions of memory studies, first of all, the idea that memory is a communicative phenomenon (Assmann 2011). Then, the idea that memory has a narrative nature, so, people remember what they can talk about (Riceur 1991). Memory exists in the present and for the present, although its contents is the past, but this is 'the past for the present', or 'the past in the present' (Mead 1929). That means that a family photograph, being a manifestation of the past, may be manipulated at present. Photographs live the family members' life and help individuals and groups to create biographical narratives, as any picture is more about people's attitude to the past than just a captured moment of the past. The attempts to reconstruct history of a family are aimed at representing the family photo collection (archive) as a set of the most significant images at present. As Manovich noted, the archive represents the world as a set of events without putting them in order, contrary to the narrative that creates cause-and-effect trajectory of events outwardly unordered (Manovich 2001). To make a family history reconstruction means to transform the archive into the narrative in such a way as to represent a family group as a shared idea of a number of people, united by horizontal and vertical family relations. Thus, a number of photos of quite different origins and age can be arranged into a complete picture in the form of a composite portrait, or mosaic, or album. Susan Sontag gives an example of a traditional family photo album as an image of a 'large' family that does not exist in reality (Sontag 1977). The way the photos are collected and social perspectives of the whole archive much depend on the technologies available to a person who performs this reconstruction. Internet has created new ways the stories are narrated, and family photograph online reconfigures the idea of family group, influencing its structure and boundaries, and finally transforming its identity.

Nikolai Shchapov (1881-1960): amateur photographer and family historian
Short biography

Nikolai Shchapov (picture 1) was born in 1881 in Moscow and lived there until his death in 1960. He came from a family of rather wealthy Moscow merchants. He was a famous engineer in hydrotechnology, Doctor of technical sciences, and an author of several books and more than 170 articles on water engineering published in 1910-1960. In 1910, he started to teach at the Imperial Moscow Technical School (in the Soviet period it was Bauman Moscow Higher Technical School) supervising students' projects on hydroturbines. Later, teaching became professor Shchapov's main activity and he trained many specialists in hydraulic engineering. In the years of the First World War, Nikolai organized a bookshop and a publishing company to sell books on technology in his house. In 1918, the publishing house was nationalized. The 1917 October revolution dramatically changed Nikolai Shchapov's life: he lost a lot. His two-storeyed mansion at Novobasmannaya street, inherited from his father and where he lived with his mother and his sister's family, his father's bank account and jewellery – everything was confiscated by the Bolsheviks. Nikolai did not take part in the political life of the country, but at the same time was not going to emigrate, as he believed in Russia and its future, no matter what political forces ruled there. He hoped that the Soviet power would use water resources of the country to develop the economy and culture, and he was right. In the Soviet time, Shchapov not only designed hydroelectric power plants and taught students, but also conducted a lot of research almost until his death in 1960. He became one of the first engineers to study hydrotechnical machines in the process of their functioning when they served as research laboratories. The results of this research were applied to constructing new machines and facilities. His life is a rare example of a successful career both in the tsarist Russia and later in the USSR.

PICTURE 1: Nikolai Schapov in students' uniform of the Imperial Moscow Technical School. October 11, 1901 (Central Archive of Electronic and Audio-Visual Documents of Moscow)

The brightest manifestation of Nikolai Shchapov's life and career is the awards he received during his lifetime. In 1913, he was presented with medals – "In memory of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, 1613-1913", in acknowledgement of his public and community work; in 1914 – "For excellent carrying out full mobilization of 1914th"; in the Soviet period – the Orders of Lenin and of the Red Banner of Labour, medals "For the Defense of Moscow", "For Valiant Labour in Great Patriotic War 1941-1945", "In memory of the 800th anniversary of Moscow" and a medal of a participant in the VDNH (The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy). He was the laureate of the Stalin Prize in 1948 for development and standardization of small-scale hydroturbines and their manufacturing application.

Family history reconstructing project

The book "I believed in Russia: family history and memories" *("Ya veril v Rossiyu: semeynaya istoriya i vospominaniya")* was prepared by Nikolai during the 1920s-50s and was published with the help of his son Yaroslav in Moscow in 1998. As Yaroslav Shchapov (1928-2011) argued in introduction to this book, Nikolai started reconstructing his family history since his youth. His grandmother Alexandra Ponomareva (1823-1906) was the first to arouse his interest in family history. She often came to Moscow from Rostov to visit her family and told him about their family. Later, Nikolai regretted that he had not made any notes. He only started to write down the memories of his elder relatives in 1930s. Once, two printed books on the 17th-18th century population census of the city of Rostov-the Great fell into Shchapov's hands, and on the cover of one of them there was drawn a family tree of the Shchapov family made in hand by his father's cousin. Thus, the names of his ancestors living in the 18th century became known to his family. Nikolai Shchapov himself tried to draw family trees, and one of them, dated 1898, is still kept safe. Nikolai's second marriage and his children's birth in 1920s inspired him to find out more about genealogy. Nikolai obtained his wife's family's documents from Tulchin (Ukraine) where she was

born. Among them, there were photos, written and printed documents, and portraits. In the 1920s-30s, Nikolai collected his family archival documents from his cousin Piotr Shchapov, whose three sons had died at different time and Piotr, anxious to preserve these documents and knowing about Nikolai's interest in collecting family documents, handed it over to him. Shchapov's archive comprised the documents of several related families.

Meanwhile, the keeping of family archives was a very difficult issue in the Soviet period. At first, the archives could present a certain danger: the non-proletarian and non-peasant origin of Nikolai Shchapov could be revealed through the archival documents, entailing serious consequences for him and his family. Then, beginning from 1918, archives ceased to be considered as an object of private property (due to Lenin's Decree on centralization of archiving in the RSFSR). In other words, any private archive could be requisitioned on government's request at any time. At last, waste paper campaigns (1920s − the beginning 1930s) were one more danger for private archives. Any paper documents could be classified as waste paper and eradicated. The personal archives were under threat, and people could only keep them at home, despite of confined spaces.

PICTURE 2: Nikolai Schapov's family at the summer house in Perlovka (Moscow region). May 25, 1898 (Central Archive of Electronic and Audio-Visual Documents of Moscow)

Living in strained circumstances in two rooms of the shared apartment, Shchapov could not afford to study the family archive in detail and systematically. In his books, he mostly relied on the verbal memory passed on by his elder relatives. But it seems that the main reason of this was not because working with the archive was hard, but mainly because Nikolai believed it was better when the narration of family history was supported by a preceding narration from older relatives (oral, as a rule, and handed down from generation to generation). He believed that the main source for family history reconstruction was oral history. Despite all available sources (including written and printed documents in Shchapov's case), oral history likely serves as the main source in the family history reconstruction projects. And we will see further, this type of source will keep its relevance in many aspects in the era of Web 2.0.

Photo taking exercises

In Nikolai's childhood, he received a present – a 6x9 small camera with six small cassettes. At the age of 15, he developed a real passion for photography during physics lessons when he studied the topic "Light". Nobody taught him to take pictures; he learned to do this himself and did it using his own system. He wrote: "My mother gave me a 13x18 photo camera for Christmas. […] The camera was universal – with tripod and bellows. I take a lot of pictures – portraits and landscapes – in winter and even more in summer in Perlovka village. When I travel, I sometimes take this camera or the 6x9 one bought in Sweden. It is not that heavy to carry but the photos' quality is worse. I have a lot of busy work to deal with developer and fixer solutions. I number every picture and write down the name of an object, lighting, exposition, development and the quality of the picture into the note-pad. I order photo albums from the famous Moscow bookbinder Petsman and glue in chronological sequence the photos – successful and not very – into albums" (Shchapov 1998: 157).

PICTURE 3: Repair of pavement at the Krasnyje Vorota district (Moscow). April 2, 1905 (Central Archive of Electronic and Audio-Visual Documents of Moscow)

Since that time, he always had his camera on him, wherever he went. He took a great deal of 'home' photos (picture 2), as well as a photochronicle of life in Russia and Moscow (picture 3), and wherever he travelled starting from the end of the 19th century (picture 4). In many ways, this collection is typical for an amateur-photographer living at that time; however, it is beyond an ordinary family photo album. Nikolai as amateur local historian depicted much the cityscape (both Moscow and the Moscow Region), with ethnographic emphasis on everyday life of city people. He was intensely patriotic for Moscow, his native city, and concerned himself much with the city's past and present (he was the City Duma Deputy for a few years before 1917). Another part of his photographic heritage comprised the pictures related to his professional activity. They were made both in Russia and abroad during his numerous work travels. He took pictures of bridges, engineer constructions, hydraulic works, and other objects related to history of hydro engineering and technologies.

Nikolai Shchapov's collection also contains photographs not taken by him. Having become a sort of family archivist, Shchapov received some photographs from older relatives, together with documents telling the history of other branches of the family. Other photos used to belong to different members of the family, and with time, they became part of his collection too. A number of photos were taken and

given to him by his classmates, friends and colleagues. All the pictures represent a mixed collection of images inseparably linked with textual documents and forming a large personal archive.

PICTURE 4: On steamboat near the bridge in Coblenz, Germany. May 25, 1905 (Central Archive of Electronic and Audio-Visual Documents of Moscow)

In the Soviet time, the pre-revolutionary amateur photos taken by Shchapov, were kept in his personal archive together with the other documents, and it is doubtful that they were showed to anybody. His shots became the 'family' photos in the full sense of the word (namely, they found the audience in the opinion of which they evidently related to a family) much later. In the post-Soviet time, the members of Shchapov's family, being anxious about the physical conservation of old family photographs, handed over about 100 negative images to the Central Archive of Electronic and Audio-Visual Documents of Moscow, where they had been treated as a rich pictorial source related to the history of the way of life in pre-revolutionary Russia and Moscow. In 2008, in PhotoCenter, Moscow government held an exhibition of photos and documents "Family Album" linked to the Year of Family, with Shchapov's photos taken before 1914. His son Yaroslav, while preparing his father's book "I believed in Russia: family history and memories" *("Ya veril v Rossiyu: semeynaya istoriya i vospominaniya")* to be published, provided the book with many pictures taken by his father. However, Nikolai, as family historian and archivist, tended to regard the photographs, most likely, as a backdrop and second source in comparison with written and (especially) verbal narratives. It follows from his memories that the reconstruction of family history and genealogy is mostly of written character; and, at the same time, the primary impulse for making such a reconstruction is oral histories. Photographs serve rather as an additional tool here, and as if 'running behind' the verbal narrative (it was the idea of Yaroslav Shchapov to add photographs to his father's book, whereas, for Nikolai, the images and the words seemed to be too separate from each other). The relationship between words and images change substantially in the case of the family social network, where, unlike the Shchapov's case, photographs often become the starting point of verbal narrative and communication.

Family social network: FamilySpace.ru
Internet-based family history reconstructing projects

Familyspace.ru is another example of amateur reconstruction of family history and genealogy that was launched in 2008 for Russian-speaking users. It was the first family social network on the Russian-speaking Internet[3]. It includes functions of both regular social network (corresponding, adding friends, participating in interest groups, creating photo albums) and the possibility of genealogical portals (building a family tree using collaborative editing tools, importing GEDCOM[4] files, creating a family calendar, etc.). Users also can store albums of rare photos that the family members saved, constantly replenishing and restoring the family history and where family members can make appointments to share the news. On the website, there is a "Library" section, an archive in the form of scanned and digitized census data, address books, registers of births, commemorative books and other documents. Users enter the results of the research in their own family tree. There is also a possibility to combine online family trees of all relatives registered on FamilySpace.ru into one large and branched ancestral tree. Four million users have already been registered on the website (which is small in comparison to Myheritage.com with 64 million users and 1 billion profiles). Currently, however, this is a significant achievement for Russian-speaking family social networks.

In our research, we invited participants of genealogical forum "All Russia Family Tree"[5] and family social network FamilySpace.ru to complete a questionnaire. They were asked 14 questions (appendix 1, 2). The total number of the respondents was 63, the age range – from 17 to 66 years old. The respondents appreciated the role of the Web in the revival of genealogical interest and admit that before the era of Internet they just did not know how to start searching. Nowadays there are a lot of sites and forums where they share their experience and information about the sources revealed, how to look for the information required and how to start the search. "The Internet has given us new opportunities" [Gennady, age 57], "My Interest has increased with the advent of the Internet" [Olga, age 61], "The Internet allowed independent, state-free search for missing relatives" [Irina, age 48]. Most often, people seek to learn more about relatives, lost during the 20th century, to find living relatives as well as to communicate more closely with distant ones. "The generation which survived during the last war, through repressions, etc., is not eager to tell their children about themselves or their relatives. That is why, with age, the younger generation discovers that they know practically nothing about their parents, not to mention grandparents: just a black hole" [Elena, age 43]. Moreover, people often got rid of family archives, unless a family member made it his or her special aim to conserve the archive, as in case of Shchapov, and took, intentionally, the risk in this connection. The last of the mentioned respondents [Elena, age 43], when asked about the type of photos often used in family social networks, said: "In my opinion, people use what they still have. Given the turbulent history of the 20th century (revolutions, repressions, wars, emigration, and so on), some people have no photos that survived, and not because the photos got lost during the relocation or perished in the bombing. People destroyed many photos themselves in order not to get into trouble".

Most respondents indicated that they visit family websites occasionally, 'from time to time': on average, one or two times a week. Those who have only recently started working on the development of an electronic family archive and designing their family tree visit family websites daily. The rest come to the website either when they find new information or the calendar reminds them about family dates and events. It means that these networks are rarely used for everyday communication with family and friends, although FamilySpace.ru allows you to 'add friends' – anyone you are familiar with. It is most likely that the niche of daily communication is largely occupied by popular networks like facebook.com, while family websites operate in the mode of data storage and sharing. The answers to the questions showed

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[3] FamilySpace.ru launched in 2008 proclaimed by president Putin a "Year of Family". During the following years, Russian mass media did a lot to promote traditional family values. For example, weekly TV program "My Family Tree" that was being broadcasted from 2009 till 2011 by Channel One: "Each release is not a simple description of how a famous searches his or her family tree, but a bright example for any viewer - just look, it isn't so difficult!", was said at the website of Channel. As a respondent noted, "after these releases the number of visitors in archive had been increased next day" (Vyacheslav, age 25).

[4] Genealogical Data Communication (shorten to GEDCOM) is a specification for exchanging genealogical data between different genealogy software. It was developed in the 1990s with the aim to help to conduct genealogical research. See: http://www.eogen.com/GEDCOM

[5] "All Russia Family Tree" is one of the largest Russian Internet projects devoted to genealogy (covering first of all the territory of the former USSR). It was founded in 1999. Now it combines the guide to genealogical search, large genealogical forum, and genealogy database.

that users of family social network seldom use any archival institutions, unlike members of the genealogical forum which deal with the reconstruction in a more professional way. They do not limit themselves to family archives or memories of the immediate and distant relatives. They research census records, registers of births, church records, library directories, local history books and other printed sources and electronic databases. The majority of the participants have never used archives, but less than half of them hope they will soon ("I have not used the archives *yet*" [Anna, age 26]). Mostly, those who were looking for the information in the archives, or at least among the network of archival resources, are disappointed. "There's very little information in the network and the search engine (in the form of digitized pictures) is inconvenient" [Elina, age 20], "efficiency is low" [Ivan, age 28], "I searched through the archives, but in vain; I feel disappointed" [Olga, age 63], etc. Very few noted that "the effectiveness of sources is high" [Olga, age 54]; "if you want more information, you can always find it. The main thing to know is where to look" [Margarita, age 17]; but they had not given specific information on this issue. Typically, users of family sites are satisfied even with a rough picture they get and which relatives can confirm. Thus, the sources are mostly "stories told by older relatives and documents that have been kept in the family" [Artyom, age 22], "family photos and letters" [Alyona, age 23], "family archive and my aunt's letter, written at my request", [Olga, age 54]. The basic unit in the family history narrative is a person defined by the researcher depending on this person's kinship. Typically, family trees are narrower at the top and at the bottom, while the maximum width we can see at the level of grandparents and great-grandparents (picture 5).
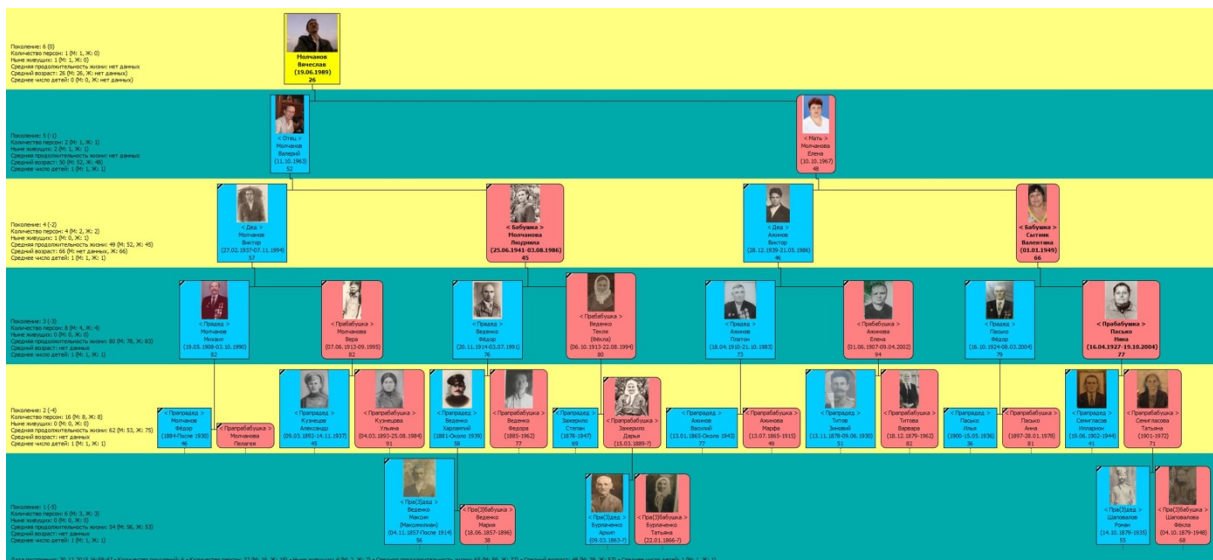

PICTURE 5: Respondent's family tree (family archive) [Vyacheslav, age 25]

This level is easier to fill in, because, as the respondents admit, basic material was provided by the elder relatives personally. In most cases, the memory span is four or five generations. It is exactly the length of time that can be reconstructed on the basis of 'living memory'. The reference to the elderly is the main thing an absolute majority of respondents do. Being no more active members of society, senior citizens begin to play an important role, keeping memories of the past, sharing and telling them to the younger members of the family. Apparently, both in Shchapov's family history reconstruction project and in online family social networks the immediate verbal communication ('oral history') is the initial condition and impulse for the creation of a new narrative about a family's past.

Two types of online family history reconstruction
The analysis of the activity in the family social network Family.Space.ru shows that there are two common types of amateur family history reconstruction:
   a.   Solo reconstruction, which is undertaken by one member of a family. He or she collects and stores information, involves archival sources to maximize the temporal and spatial scope of

ancestry. Other relatives either do not take part in the development of the family tree or their participation is nominal (in questioning such users recognize that they "tried to involve other relatives – for some time, but not for long" [Rafkat, age 55]). However, researchers often say that they have 'listeners' and 'helpers' among relatives (for instance, those who help organize the material found). The 'listeners' and 'helpers' do not search for the information independently, they might do it 'at the request' of the family historian. Perhaps, the author of the reconstruction has already done extensive research, and other relatives realize that searching for the new information will require additional time and effort.

    b.   Collaborative reconstruction, which is undertaken by a family group. This type of reconstruction is the most common. Here we see the strategy of 'collective enterprise', and its aim is to create a space of 'shared family memory'. While working on the family tree, each participant refers to the 'living memory' – their own and the memory of their immediate and distant relatives. Finally, more relatives are getting involved in the activity – as contributors or, by this moment – investigators, even if they have never been interested in the search process. This is what one of the investigators told us about his achievements in inviting the family to work together: "I involved two more relatives, or even three, although with varying degrees of their enthusiasm" [Gennady, age 57]. Another possibility to expand the community of family genealogists is to get acquainted with the relatives already keen on knowing more about the family history. "I have also found three more relatives who are doing some genealogical research, and even have moved ahead of me in some ways" (...). "Two years ago, I found a young relative who is interested in one of the branches of my family tree, and now we are exploring it together" [Olga, age 61].

These two types of family history reconstruction in the Web rarely operate in pure form. The 'investigator' constantly seeks the help of relatives (basically, at the initial stage of gathering information), so that the 'collective enterprise' may at any time inspire somebody to work personally with the use of archival sources. Participation in the family social network promotes a shift from the predominance of individual activity of the 'investigator' to relatives working together. Eventually, we draw a conclusion that family history reconstruction – is primarily a collective project, while the 'author' of the reconstruction is rather the initiator of the activity. The genealogical tree then grows by itself due to the efforts of each relative interested in the reconstruction. At the same time, living memory continues to play a key role in the construction of amateur family history, despite rich technical possibilities of updating the family archive, compared with those of Shchapov's collection. The main source of the reconstruction still comes from verbal narratives of older relatives.

Photographs in the family social network

Virtual family photos, alongside verbal narratives, become an important impetus to create and participate in the family history reconstruction of the network type. As opposed to classical amateur reconstruction created by Nikolai Shchapov, network reconstruction is based not only on 'living memory', but also on photography as 'a reservoir' of family heritage. "To say the least, a photo can rouse people's interest. In my opinion, photos (rare and old) are one of the most valuable and attractive genealogical sources. It is always interesting to trace common features throughout four to five generations, and it is amazing just to have a look at the person who gave you life and who was born 100-150 years ago" [Vyacheslav, age 25]. "A photo is posted on the site primarily to attract attention. As a rule, only one member of the family is engaged in the search while others are only waiting for the results. That is why a picture on the site is a good result. It is something that people can see. A record of service, for instance, will hardly interest a lot of people, while a picture provokes discussions, and, looking at it, family members can say: "We look very much alike" [Andrei, age 27] (picture 6). "Photos are extremely important in the search process. The smallest details can tell a lot about people, their character and the details of their biography as well as providing the key to further searching" [Elena, age 43]. "Yes, photos play a very important role. As a rule, the same photo, possessed by different families, proves their relationship, and this relationship can be confirmed, even if the documentary evidence is lost" [Irina, age 48]. "I posted a photo depicting my missing grandfather and an unknown person on a social network (later, the unknown man turned out to be my father's brother who had died in the Great Patriotic War. My father and I argued – he said it was grandfather's friend while I said that that was his brother, because they looked very much alike). I have found dozens of people of the same surname and decided

to write to them. Incredible, but two or three of them answered that they have the same picture, but of worse quality" [Vyacheslav, age 25] (picture 7).

PICTURE 6: Respondent's great-grandfather with parents, 1940 or 1941 (family archive) [Andrei, age 27]

PICTURE 7: Respondent's missing grandfather and his brother who had died in the Great Patriotic War (family archive) [Vyacheslav, age 25]

Besides, the photographs provide a visual component that makes the perception of information easier and adds some emotional touch to the whole project. "Photos accompanying the text make it sound more emotional and nostalgic and evoke surprise, admiration, memories of the relatives and of the past" [Elena, age 43] (picture 8). "A family site without photos is not interesting. Nowadays very few people

will read long texts, so photos divide them into parts, thus helping them to understand, and also to create a familiar modern video series" [Irina, age 48].

PICTURE 8: Respondent's great-grandfather with two senior children. Moscow, 1914-1915, the New Year (amateur photograph from personal archive) [Elena, age 43]

Also, it should be noted that the majority of respondents emphasize the importance of their personal interest and involvement in the reconstruction project on the Web. This is one of the basic functions of family photos: to facilitate communication between people. The Internet helps to do this much simpler: you only have to find the page and the album you need and read comments about where and when the picture was taken. This simplified access lacks personal contact: photographs are not shown by someone personally who comments on them, or tells the story of their origin, or shares his or her attitude; the pictures become impersonal and lose their main quality of 'family photos', i.e. there is no personal touch of someone of the family. "When you show photos, say, to the relatives, in the usual way, it is very important how you do it. You may succeed in arousing interest in them, or you may fail. As far as sending family photos via the Internet is concerned, it only makes sense if the relatives are interested in these photographs. If they are ready to perceive – then there will be an effect. Otherwise, it is like sending a post-card with cute kittens" [Andrei, age 27].

A family photo, regardless of the method of its existence, appears a contextually conditioned medium. The context of its functioning as an object becomes verbal communication – or rather, verbally expressed attitude to it. Thus, verbal communication precedes and in many ways serves as a condition for communication by means of pictures.

FamilySpace.ru: summary

The family social network FamilySpace.ru is at the same time the archive of a new type, online database, communicative platform and space of group identification. In this sense, family archive in the Web represents a primary narrative created by the author/initiator of family history reconstruction. This narrative, as an intermediate product, is subject to further processing by other people. The family archive, in this case, turns into a narrative in the process of continuous expansion and development. It makes the family borders flexible and penetrable, and promotes intra-group co-operation. Besides, this archive has an 'audience' – those who have no opportunity to populate an archive, but who are interested in family history, monitor the results of investigation and want to be in touch with relatives.

Family history reconstruction represents, in this case, the interactive multimedia project where texts and photos complement each other. A photo functions as a family photo, being 'inside' the verbal and written layers of interpersonal communication, but, for all that, placed on the Web, it is not a part of immediate verbal communication of family members. Perception of a photo demands from a person to make his or her own efforts to include a photo in a 'family zone', i. e. a zone of his or her ideas of a family, its parts and its boundaries. Written comments to the photo and experience of previous communication with the author/initiator of reconstruction are intended to help users to do this. FamilySpace.ru thus helps to consider photographs, following Elizabeth Edwards, as "relational objects": "The relational view is not simply different people bringing different readings to images. Rather, it is an engagement with the whole social dynamic of photographs over space and time, in which photographs become entities acting and mediating between peoples. The engagement with photographs as socially salient objects both encapsulates and defines relations between people" [Edwards: 31].

Conclusions

The examples of amateur family history reconstruction projects carried out with the help of different communication technologies allow to draw the following conclusions.

The author of offline reconstruction is a single person, as a rule; this is a solo reconstruction. Whereas the author of online reconstruction often acts rather as the initiator of the basic narrative which is subject to further processing by other persons; this is a collaborative reconstruction. In this connection, offline reconstruction seems to be a 'vertical' project carried out and transmitted by the senior family member to younger one in the form of some kind of 'heritage'. Online reconstruction is more likely a 'horizontal' project that is carried out at the same time by several persons belonging to different branches and generations of a family and living in the different cities and even the countries. In either case, 'the archival consciousness' of family members becomes more active. They feel that documents belonging to someone personally is important matter for a wider group. Activity of family historian 'livens up' imagination of other family members concerning what the group is in the past, the present and the future. Family history reconstruction is the source of ideas of a family as the 'imagined' community consisting of the past, present-day and future generations. Shchapov's project was a long work on the family history book, which was published a few decades later after he had died in 1960. Relatives who transmitted their family documents to him were aware of his intention, that was going to be implemented in the future. They had no opportunity to see the results of the project and all the more to take part in its development. While in case of family social network the relatives become immediate viewers of created reconstruction and often become its co-authors. For them it is the project existing in the present and for the present. Family history reconstruction can serve as a 'result' in one case, but as a 'process' in another one. In some way it could be interpreted like autobiography which "… can be understood as both a practice (e.g., "I am doing autobiography") and a product (e.g., "I wrote an autobiography")" [Adams and Manning 2015: 351].

In both cases family historian reproduces his or her idea of identity of a group: its boundaries, structure and number, as well as its development and continuation (both in temporal and geographic sense). Both examples showed that the main impulse and source of such reconstruction are the verbal memory transmitted by the senior family members. Thus, family historian should be located at the level of "communicative memory", which is one of the basic conditions of such a project. Historian develops the narrative transmitted personally by senior members of a group.

Family historian searches and selects family documents with the purpose to place them in newly created narrative. Here it becomes obvious that family history (re)constructing is the project carried out

for readers/viewers/users belonging to the same family group as an author, or for those who will belong to this group in future. In the first case the target audience is *future* generations of a family (Nikolai Shchapov writes family history, being anxious for keeping it 'for children', and his son Yaroslav completes Nikolai's book, and provides it, inter alia, with archival family photographs). In the second case this audience is rather *present-day* generations (respondents restore family history, first of all, in a search of lost and still unknown relatives, and for keeping regular contacts with family members).

The same logic works for family photographs used in the projects of amateur family history reconstruction. Nikolai Shchapov collected old family photos and kept them for *future* viewers. Nikolai's own shots become in full sense 'family photographs' later in the opinion of his son Yaroslav, who included in his father's manuscript the pictures taken by him. For Yaroslav, these pictures are the important history of his father's life and memory of him. As for online reconstruction, the old family photos become the important consolidating part of life of a group *here and now*. It is the photos that become sometimes the main sources of genealogical information, unlike offline projects where information is mainly looked for in verbal and text sources. There is the effect which could be called the 'ageing of medium'. In Nikolai Shchapov's epoch, the photograph was a quite 'new' medium, whose value was not yet rooted so strongly in its link with the past. The past imprinted those years on the photographs was still rather 'recent' past. While for founders and users of FamilySpace.ru, the 100-150 years old photograph is already 'old' medium. The past connected with it is the 'old' past. In case of placement of such an old family photograph online, it starts carrying out the function of expansion of a group toward the past, changing its boundaries at present. Within Shchapov's project the 'old' photos expand the already available information about the persons represented on them, and they play a supporting role in relation to verbal communication. Online project testifies that the 'old' photos often are the only source of information about ancestors, they alone "play a role in voicing a silenced past" [Birkhofer 2008: 53], and they are capable to initiate verbal communication between family members even if those at first did not suspect about each other's existence. Here the photo becomes the source of *collected* (rather than collective) memory (Arthur, 2009) of a group, which is being restructured and has been changing its boundaries in the course of such a collecting[6]. Shchapov's project treats photograph rather as a part of *collective* memory of a group already determined in its boundaries. Offline family history reconstruction project means that family memory is something that is intended to be transmitted in an unchanged form to the future generations, while online projects are aimed at family memory constructing with the purpose to realise and to answer a question what the family is at present.

We see that area of 'communicative memory' – the information transmitted to family historian verbally – appears to be in the center of both types of reconstruction. As the oldest members of the family, whom Shchapov managed to see while they were alive, were born at the beginning of the 19th century, it is the 19th century that attracted his special attention. We also can note that Shchapov's project confirms on microhistorical level the idea that the "century" is a historical period defined by the "semantic, tangible or personal characteristics" (Savelieva, Poletaev 1997: 35). The formal chronological period of a century may not coincide with the period of the same century as the 'place of memory'. Thus, Shchapov's personal 19th century, like the 19th century for the European historiographic tradition, is a 'long' 19th century that finishes in 1914[3]. In the same way, the users of family social network FamilySpace.ru have their own 20th century, namely 'short' 20th century that finishes in 1991.

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[6] 'Collective vs. collected' memory might be potentially linked to the G.C. Bowker's terms "recorded vs. potential" memory (Bowker, 2007: 26).

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Appendix 1

Questions to the participants of genealogical forum "All Russia Family Tree"

1) Your name and age

2) When did you experience the interest in genealogy and history of your family for the first time and what was your first steps in this direction?

3) Do you conduct research alone or are there other family members who conduct research as well?

4) How could you explain the increased interest to genealogy in the last decades?

5) What sources of information about the family do you utilize?

6) Have you faced difficulties in getting access to archival records?

7) How do you estimate efficiency of archival sources on the Internet?

8) What do you think about the differences between traditional and online study of genealogy?

9) Was it easy enough for you to place your family archive in open access on the Web? (Have you had any apprehension in this connection?)

10) Do you focus your attention mostly on the intra-family events or at the external political events which affected your family?

12) Did the study of the family history and genealogy have any influence upon you and your family? (if yes, please specify how)

13) Which type of family photo, in your opinion, is most often used in creation of genealogical web-page?

14) Which role does the family photo play in creation of genealogical web-page? (Which purposes could be reached with its help?)

Appendix 2

Questions to the participants of family social network FamilySpace.ru

1) Your name and age

2) When did you experience the interest in genealogy and history of your family for the first time and what was your first step in this direction?

3) Do you conduct research alone or are there other family members who conduct research as well?

4) What was your purpose when you registered at the family social network?

5) How often do you visit the family social network?

6) What sources of information about the family do you utilize?

7) How do you estimate efficiency of traditional and online archival sources?

8) How could you explain the increased interest in genealogy and family history in the last decades?

9) What do you think about the differences between traditional and online study of family history?

10) Was it easy enough for you to place your family archive in open access on the Web? (Have you had any apprehension in this connection?)

11) Do you focus your attention mostly at the intra-family events or at the external political events which affected your family?

12) Did the study of the family history and genealogy have any influence upon you and your family? (if yes, please specify how)

13) Which type of family photo, in your opinion, is most often used in the family social network?

14) Which role does the family photo play in the family social network? (Which purposes could be reached with its help?)