

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

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## **Abstract:**

A notable characteristic of personal archiving nowadays is the growing availability of different archiving media and formats and increased opportunities to reformat materials (e.g., digitization, digital printing services). To provide guidance for personal archiving, information professionals have mainly focused on developing and introducing best practices and tools for digitization and the long-term preservation of personal collections. Less attention has been paid to the nuanced thoughts behind people’s choices of personal archiving media in their everyday lived experiences, especially in contexts outside of “Western” cultures. This study examined incidents of personal archiving where Chinese adults opted for “going analog”: they either clearly preferred analog versions of materials over digital versions or intentionally created analog counterparts of their digital materials. The incidents were drawn from semi-structured interviews with 32 participants collected for a broader Ph.D. dissertation and analyzed using a general inductive approach. The analysis revealed illuminating thoughts and experiences connected to “going analog,” such as avoiding enhanced visual representations, sustaining motor memory for Chinese writing, “forcing” selection, adding “truly” personal imprints, facilitating more embodied engagement, and accommodating elders. To conclude, the choice of analog may be shaped by ideas about representations of self, uniqueness, and add-on value and may vary by the type of materials and envisioned use situations. Taking these ideas into account may help information professionals deliver more empathetic personal archiving support by covering a fuller “analog to digital to analog” process and assisting in finding the best of both analog and digital worlds for individual needs.

## **About the author:**

***Ruohua Han*** is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Information Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She holds a Bachelor in Management Science degree and a Master in Management Science degree from Renmin University of China, majoring in Archival Studies. Her research interests are in personal and collective memory, personal and family archiving, and community archives. Currently, her main research focus is on using qualitative methods to investigate people's ideas, practices, and experiences related to personal archives and archiving and how information professionals can better understand, facilitate, and support these kinds of everyday information activities. She has published articles on digitization in personal and community archiving contexts, collective memory, and archival history and concepts in China.