

From Personal Memory to National Archival Resource: A case study on Shenyang Family Archives



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Background

- **Family Archives** are records in any form like document, photograph, video, audio created by family members in family life and social activities and owned by individual, and preserved for reference.
- **Research on Family Archives in China** started since 1980s and has been one of the most popular archival research field in China.
- **Shenyang Family Archives** is the first digital archives for family memory and the only Theory and Management Demonstration Base for family archives in Mainland China, which was initiated in 2010.

The open resource is accessible for the public through the portal at: <http://www.jtdaw.com/>.



Portal of Shenyang Family Archives



Marriage Licenses for China's first batch of female PhDs in Physics.



A birth certificate in 1953.

Research Design

Research Question:

- What is the relationship between **family archives** and person, family, social and national **memory**?
- What is the role of **family archives** in **national archival resource system**?
- How can the family archives be transformed from **private property** into **public resources**?

Research Method:

- **Case study** on Shenyang Family Archives
- **Text analysis** on family archival management strategy and policies in Shenyang
- **Semi-structured interview** with the archivists in Shenyang.

Research Findings

Resource Hierarchy



Family Stories: Personal memory

- Family stories are hidden in family members' personal ordinary records such as diaries, photos, letters, contracts, certificates and even home appliances invoices.
- Since 2008, more than 160,000 families have established their own records collections with the help from over 1,300 volunteers, under the organization and guidance of Shenyang Archives.
- Since 2013, the public could upload and share their family stories online in Shenyang Family Archives Network.

Local Culture: Root-seeking

- Root-seeking Culture in China originated from the "cultural root-seeking" movement in the literary circle in the 1980s and has been a key part of regional culture since then.
- Since 2015, it has been included in the local civilization development plan in China to foster family trait, write family history, collect family percepts and establish family collection.
- Shenyang Family Archives was designed as the trustworthy repository to preserve the outcome of the local cultural movement and to support the public to seek root from the archives.

National History: From "Jia" to "Guo"

- Jia (family) is the smallest Guo (country) and Guo is the biggest Jia.
- Chinese proverb
- Among the collection of Shenyang Family Archives, records about Educated Youth, army life and college experience are most popular in public, which remember the middle-age group with their youth time in 1970s-1980s and also record a history of great changes in China before and after the reform and opening-up.

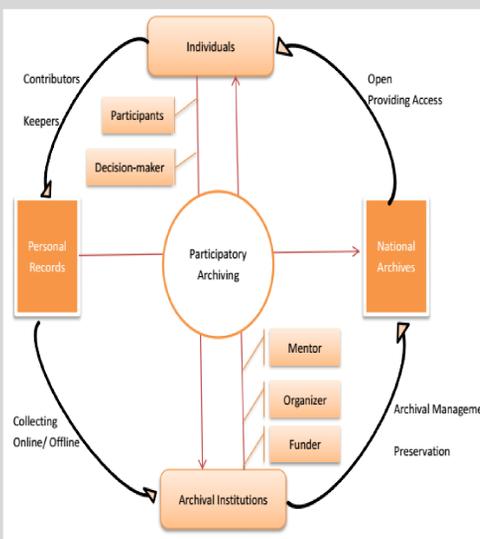


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Governance Framework



Participatory Archiving



Resource Visualization



Online exhibitions of family archives



Blogs about family stories

标题	版块	作者	时间	浏览/点赞
网站“网络记忆”栏目的使用	综合	shh	2011-08-24 19:58:19	18,920/6
家庭档案之趣	综合	点点	2011-09-04 15:51:44	23,124/7
建立家庭档案是每个人义务	综合	陈瑞	2011-01-15 17:48:19	25,914/4
国家建立家庭档案有必要么	综合	陈瑞	2011-01-15 17:43:27	6,425
孙的婚礼	恋爱婚姻	vyl	2010-10-12 18:54:59	24,920/3
快看看看我们人的画报1	综合	陈瑞	2010-10-14 14:51:51	5,257
1989年和我老周	工作经历	点点	2010-12-03 14:51:51	17,916/3
(原创) 天安门上, 难忘岁月(转贴)	综合	多特	2010-11-05 18:58:20	4,105
外孙与姑姑证书, 我与姑姑的回忆	学生时代	点点	2011-02-27 16:58:53	9,104/4
明星宝宝 (金色童年)	综合	点点	2010-11-07 18:58:19	1,156

BBS and social media for interaction and sharing

Conclusion

Advantages of Shenyang Model:

- Acquire funding, archivists and technology directly from the government to support the sustainability of family archiving.
- Collaboration between the professional archivists and the public leads to the normative family archiving and helps the individuals to be trained as archivists outside the archival institutions.
- Family records can be integrated into the national archival resource system and be preserved in the trustworthy repositories.

Limitations of Shenyang Model:

- Individual voice may be silence under the control of governmental archival institutions when making decisions about what records should be collected as national resources.

Future Research

- Find more models of archiving and archival management for family archives in China.
- Figure out a new family-based or communicate-based way of family archiving with a louder voice of the public.

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