The behavior and perception of personal digital archiving of Chinese university students

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Background

- Personal records are a kind of unique documentary evidence for both individual and the society.

- College students are heavy users of the Internet compared to the general population.

- It is important to understand what are university students’ perception and behavior of personal digital archiving.
Research Questions

• What are Chinese university students’ understanding of and behaviour in archiving email and Q-zone (i.e., a social networking website created by Tencent) records?

• What are the problems in Chinese university students’ email and Q-zone records archiving?

• In university students’ email and Q-zone records preservation, who should be responsible for providing necessary guidance and suggestion? What are the relationships among these parties? What responsibilities does each party have?
Research Methods

• Questionnaire: Sinn et al. (2011)’s questionnaire was used, with slight adaption, to collect data on Chinese university students’ understanding of and behaviour in email and Q-zone records archiving

• Interview: information professionals were interviewed to solicit their opinions on which parties should be responsible for university students’ personal web records archiving and what are their responsibilities
Questionnaire Results:
Demographic information

Economics 19.05%
Law 3.30%
Education 1.47%
Literature 6.59%
History 0.73%
Science 8.06%
Engineering 13.55%
Agriculture 3.66%
Medicine 2.93%
Management 40.66%
Chinese university students’ email accounts, length of use, and use frequency

- How many E-mail accounts do you have?
  - None: 21.81%
  - One: 39.53%
  - Two: 15.78%
  - Three: 6.96%
  - Four: 3.30%
  - Five and more: 8.42%

- Frequency of logging the E-mail
  - Everyday: 47.92%
  - Per week: 36.98%
  - Per month: 1.50%
  - Less than per month: 10.57%
Chinese university students’ Q-zone accounts, length of use, and use frequency

How many Q-zone accounts do you have?

- None: 8.79%
- One: 11.30%
- Two: 24.54%
- Three: 13.06%
- Four: 9.15%
- Five or more: 27.47%

Frequency of logging the Q-zone:

- Everyday: 33.64%
- Per week: 22.75%
- Per month: 3.30%
- Less than per month: 10.33%
What do Chinese university students use email for? (multiple choice)

- Handling school related things: 75.82%
- Handling work or business related things: 65.20%
- Signing up websites: 56.04%
- Subscription: 23.08%
- Communicating with friends and families: 26.01%
- Not use E-mail: 4.03%
- Writing logs or diaries: 5.49%
- Saving information: 17.95%
- Others: 1.83%
What do Chinese university students use Q-zone for? (multiple choice)

- Others: 1.10%
- Saving information: 29.67%
- Publishing personal E-books and papers: 2.56%
- Exhibiting personal crafts: 37.00%
- Handling work related information: 18.68%
- Communicating with friends and families: 64.10%
- Sharing personal interests: 61.90%
- Sharing vocational interest and professional...: 46.52%
- Writing logs or diaries: 41.03%
- Not use Q-zone: 3.30%
University students’ perception of and attitudes towards email and Q-zone records preservation
University students’ perception of and attitudes towards email and Q-zone records preservation

• University students value personal records in email and Q-zone the most, because of their spiritual and emotional significance.

• Even though email is no longer the main way for informal communication in personal life and entertainment, its importance in personal records preservation remain unchanged.

• Retention period of personal records depends on their significance in personal history.
Feeling on the loss of email and Q-zone records

- Information communicated with friends or families
- Work or business related information
- School related information
- Interested information and E-journals
- Subscriptions and website information
- Personal history information

- Logs or diaries
- Vocational interest and information
- Personal interested information
- Comments from friends or families
- Work related information
- Personal E-books and papers
- Others

- Not sure
- Not mind
- A little unhappy
- Unhappy
- Very unhappy
• University students have positive attitudes on personal web records preservation.

• University students commonly believe that email or Q-zone records are useful, valuable, thereby, should be preserved.

• University students regard email and Q-zone as important places for personal records preservation; email and Q-zone service provider should undertake such responsibilities.

• The longer university students believe the records should be preserved, the unhappier they are when the records are lost. This is consistent with Sinn et al. (2011)’s finding.
Email and Q-zone records preservation risk awareness and avoidance behaviour

- 42.86% respondents have considered the risks
- 43.59% respondents have never considered these risks
- 13.55% respondents are not sure
Email and Q-zone records preservation risk awareness and avoidance behaviour

How long do you backup E-mail or Q-zone?

- Once a day: 7.69%
- Once a week: 11.97%
- Once a month: 16.24%
- Once a year: 10.26%
- Seldom: 40.17%
- Not at all: 13.67%

How do you backup E-mail or Q-zone?

- Save in the computer: 64.10%
- Save in CD, DVD, floppy disk and etc.: 38.46%
- Save in other Q-zone accounts: 25.64%
- Save in other E-mail accounts: 23.93%
- Save in other internet platform: 12.82%
- Others: 3.42%
- Type on the paper: 10.26%
Difficulties encountered in the preservation of email and Q-zone records

- Unknown how to save information in E-mail or Q-zone: 25.00%
- Arrangement information unavailable: 42.31%
- Saving function unavailable: 50.00%
- Type information only: 7.69%
- No saving function provided by ISP: 28.85%
- Others: 1.92%
• About 25% respondents say that, due to the lack of knowledge on the personal records archiving function of email and Q-zone, they encountered difficulties in records archiving.

• When web service provider fails to provide effective function for email and Q-zone records preservation, only 40% respondents sought other preservation tools, devices, applications or systems.

• Only 5% respondents tried other preservation tools or devices (e.g., Outlook, Thunderbird, the “Save As” function in web browser, Furl, or Google desktop)

Email and Q-zone records archiving behaviour
Email and Q-zone records archiving behaviour (Con’t)

• Sources of difficulties and obstacles in email and Q-zone records archiving
  
  o Web service provider
  
  o University students themselves: students are not active in email and Q-zone records preservation
Features good archiving tools should have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extensive data format</td>
<td>36.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>33.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairability</td>
<td>54.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrievability</td>
<td>49.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big storage capacity</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility</td>
<td>51.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to use</td>
<td>44.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parties responsible for personal web records preservation and their relationships
Parties responsible for personal web records preservation and their relationships: Web user (for this study, it is university students)

• Understand the importance of email and Q-zone records.

• Increase personal web records preservation awareness, and be more active.

• Learn related tool and function for web records preservation and improve practical abilities and information organization ability.

• Increase risk awareness, and raise habits to regularly back up email and Q-zone records.
Parties responsible for personal web records preservation and their relationships: information professionals

- Influence other web users with their higher personal records preservation awareness and provide guidance on the actions to be taken for personal records preservation.

- Encourage more research studies on email and Q-zone records preservation, e.g., records value assessment, organization and search, and provide theoretical foundation for practice.

- Understand web users’ needs for records preservation and different user group’s special needs, and translate their needs to system functional requirements.

- Study user experience and be involved in web service provider’s system design.

- Identify effective strategies to eliminate duplication in email preservation.
Parties responsible for personal web records preservation and their relationships: internet service provider

- Improve web platform, provide better user experience, increase security and confidentiality, improve search functionality, and ensure the stability of web platform.
- Provide batch download, management, and classification functions.
- Provide various web services for different user groups to satisfy different needs.
- Better information feedback function, and respond promptly to users’ feedback.
- Increase collaboration with information professionals, and seek their comments and suggestions.
Thank you!