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: 27.81%
- One: 39.56%
- Two: 15.78%
- Three: 8.42%
- Four: 5.79%
- Five or more: 6.96%

Frequency of logging the E-mail

- Everyday: 47.32%
- Per week: 36.98%
- Per month: 1.59%
- 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: 24.54%
- One: 11.30%
- Two: 13.06%
- Three: 27.47%
- Four: 8.79%
- Five and above: 9.18%

Frequency of logging the Q-zone

- Everyday: 63.84%
- Per week: 22.73%
- 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)

- 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%

Others: 1.10%
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
• 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

| Issue                                                                 | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 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

- Extensive data format: 36.26%
- Accessibility: 33.70%
- Transferability: 47.62%
- Repairability: 54.58%
- Retrievability: 49.45%
- Big storage capacity: 66.67%
- Compatibility: 51.65%
- Easy to use: 44.69%
- Others: 0.73%

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Parties responsible for personal web records preservation and their relationships

- User (university students)
- Information professionals
- ISP
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 !