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## **Russian Archives in the Virtual Space: Present and Future**

The XXI century society is the information society. Nowadays more and more communications are performed by means of Internet. It is impossible to imagine many kinds of activities without interactive virtual environment, its vast possibilities.

Internet is the perspective and powerful channel of information service for the archives users. The creation of websites is of great importance for the popularization of archives, strengthening of the authority of the archival sphere in society and development of cooperation with international archival community.

The rich documental heritage of Russia and other countries of the world held in Russian archives, is represented in the form of reference information within the frames of such projects as “Guide “Archives of Russia””, “Central Fond Catalogue” (information on collections of 12 federal archives), as well as data bases.

The data base “Guides to the Russian Archives” which comprises 94 reference books of guide-type including 34 guides on federal archives and 65 on regional ones published from 1987 to 2008 has been placed on the portal “Archives of Russia” since 2004. This data base includes descriptions of approximately 160 thousands of archival fonds. This resource is of a great interest for the wide range of researchers but it is not an operative data base owing to that some guides were published quite long time ago and thereafter the information on new arrivals can't be reflected in the data base.

The general portal “Archives of Russia” ([www.rusarchives.ru](http://www.rusarchives.ru)), the oldest archival website in the Russian Federation has become available in Internet since 30<sup>th</sup> of January, 2001. It contains detailed information about Federal Archival Agency, federal archives and their activities, as well as the permanently updated information about all archive administrations and state archives of regions of the Russian Federation. Almost each state archive of Russia has its own website. 6 out of 15 federal archives don't have their own websites however the information about their activities is placed on the portal “Archives of Russia” as well as all the other without their websites.

Own websites have:

Archive administrations in republics, regions, areas, Moscow and Saint-Petersburg  
– 51

## Regional archives including republic – 37

It should be mentioned that nowadays the information on the archive administrations and their entities in charge is on the websites of the state authorities of the appropriate regions of the Russian Federation. Thereby it could be stated, that the Russian archives of different categories are widely represented in the Internet.

The number of subscribers to archives news distributed by the Support service of the website “Archives of Russia” is constantly growing and by July, 2012 makes up 1383 people.

The portal is constantly developing and is being enriched by the new websites. The website of the Federal Archival Agency (Rosarchiv), the website “Victory. 1941-1945” (thousands of unique photographs on the history of the Great Patriotic War and also frames of the newsreel), data base “Guides to the Russian Archives” are currently on the portal.

The portal “Archives of Russia” (including the official website of Rosarchiv) as the result of the social monitoring concerning information openness preserved respectable 5<sup>th</sup> place among all websites of the federal executives.

The distribution in December 2011 on the portal “Archives of Russia” a testing version of the program complex “Central Fond Catalogue” with information on the fonds of a number of federal archives became a significant event in arrangement of the direct access to the information about documents of the Archival Fond of the Russian Federation. The Central Fond Catalogue is a data base assuming the regular (annual) updating of data received from the archives.

The Federal Archival Agency is planning the phased replenishing of the Central Fond Catalogue.

Currently in the data base there are data on the archival fonds from 12 of 15 federal archives of Russia.

The information of the Central Fond Catalogue will be gradually replenished and updated by inclusion of the data received from the rest federal archives as well as from the regions of the Russian Federation. At the moment Central Fond Catalogue gives opportunity of searching information on 73 thousands of fonds from the federal archives.

The testing version of Central Fond Catalogue is implementing the search of information by words (word combination, date) which are set in searching line which allows to receive the list of fond titles containing requested information (simple search). It is possible to specify the search space by choosing region,

archive (archives) and the attributes of description of the archival fonds (the title of the fond, the fond annotation, the fond historical information, the title of the inventory, the inventory annotation, the title of storage unit).

The attendance of the resource is growing. For the last three months from 6 to 7 thousands of Russian and foreign users visited the Central Fond Catalogue.

In perspective the organization of the access to the program complex “Central Fond Catalogue” through the portal “State services” to the citizens and by means of special web service through the system of interdepartmental electronic coordination to the federal executives.

The website “Victory. 1941-1945” was opened on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, 2004. The basis of exposition was formed by photography documents from the fonds of specialized archives – the Russian State Archive of Film and Photography, the Central State Archive of Film and Photography of Saint-Petersburg, the Central Archive of Audiovisual Documentation of Moscow, and also the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History preserving the most complete and valuable collections of photography documents on the history of the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. The photography documents provided by the state archives of 33 regions of the Russian Federation were included in the exposition. The photographs of the USA army press service, photographs withdrawn from Wehrmacht war prisoners, the exposure of the Ministry of propaganda of the III Reich, photomaterials collected by representatives of the Extraordinary State Commission\* .

2575 photography documents and film fragments from the Russian State Archive of Film and Photography are currently represented on the website.

The catalogues (RGAKFD, RGALI, RGIA), electronic inventories (GARF, RGALI, RGIA) the access to which is also possible through the portal and the website of Rosarchiv are distributed on the websites of the federal archives.

The demanded by users online-projects “Strengthened by the Great Patriotic War”, the collections of documents on “Katyn Problem”, “Famine in the USSR. 1930-1934” “The Way to Nuremberg”, “OUN and UPA in 1939-1956” were published on the portal and website of Rosarchiv.

The statistics of the last years shows the increase of users’ interest to archival information

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\* fully: "Extraordinary State Commission for ascertaining and investigating crimes perpetrated by the German-Fascist invaders and their accomplices, and the damage inflicted by them on citizens, collective farms, social organisations, State enterprises and institutions of the U.S.S.R”

Year	2005	2011
The number of unique visitors of the portal	339446	1220281
The website “Victory”	70113	342369
The volume of downloaded files	5,41 gb	1190,08 gb
The website “Victory	189,11 gb	2647,71 gb

Recently Rosarchiv has given much attention to the popularization of archival documents using information technologies and remote access which gives opportunity to the unlimited number of users to study the archival materials.

So the organization of the virtual exposition devoted to 1150 anniversary of the Russian statehood and its distribution in Internet on the specialized portal “Archives of Russia” are planned in 2012.

Images of the archival documents of XII-XX – history relics and symbols of the Russian statehood (“Russkaya Pravda”, codes of law, spiritual charters of grand dukes) will make up the content of the exposition. It is also planned to open the exposition devoted to this date in the Council of Federation of Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

The preparation of a number of events dedicated to 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of overcoming of Time of Troubles in Russia (1598-1613): the presentation of the electronic project and publications on this theme, the conduction of exhibition “The Overcoming of the Time of Troubles”, the organization of an international conference is being carried out. The electronic project “The Overcoming of Time of Troubles, the end of XVI – the beginning of XVII and Strengthening of Russian Statehood” was prepared together with the Administration of the Kostroma region, the Committee on Archives Affairs of the Kostroma region and the State Archive of the Kostroma region.

The Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, the Central Archive of Nizhny Novgorod region, the State Archive of Yaroslavl region, the Kostroma State Historic, Architecture and Art Culture Preserve, Historical and Archaeological Museum (Ipatievskiy monastery), television company “Kadr”, The Russian State Archive of Scientific and Technical Documentation (RGANTD) acted as co-executors of this project.

486 items are selected and digitized for the project: 255 archival documents, 91 researches, 41 of them are digitized for the electronic library of the project, 37 museum artifacts, 101 illustrations and photographs, 2 videos.

Besides electronic images of the items (more than 7 thousands) and videos the project includes also a historical sketch on the topic, scientific description and annotation to documents, the bibliography of the question, the full-text library.

The project will be distributed on the specialized portal “Archives of Russia” and will be available for the users. The users can become familiar with the texts of the documents of the end of XVI – the beginning of the XVII, researches and museum artifacts. The software used allows to increase, preserve and to print the images; the search by the key word is provided.

With the aim to provide remote access to the digital content it is suggested to perform the gradual unification of the information resources of the federal archives. One of the examples of such work is the currently launched interarchival project “The Documents of the Soviet Epoch” The project assumes an integration of created data bases and collections of digitized copies of archival documents preserved in federal archives and which are in open access, academic documental publications and up to date monographic researches.

The result will be provided as a website on the portal “Archives of Russia”. The realization of several projects is also in plans of 2012 and following years: this is a virtual exhibition hall and virtual excursions to the archives. The visitors of this hall and virtual exhibitions can become familiar with digitized expositions of archival exhibitions, virtual exhibitions, perform excursions to federal archives during these events they will see unique documents, holdings, restoration laboratories, reading halls of the archives.

The project “Archives – to school” supposes the creation of virtual reading book on the school course “History of Russia” with relevant annotations and comments.

Though by now diverse and great material which can be used for preparation for the classes and out-of-school activities is distributed in Internet, on the official website of the Federal Archival Agency, specialized portal “Archives of Russia”, on the websites of other archival institutions.

Particularly it should be said about the project of computerization of the Comintern Archive (data base “Electronic Archive of Comintern”) – the first experience of digitization of documents and it initiated the access to particular documental collections by means of Internet. The Archive of Comintern (3<sup>rd</sup> International) is preserved in RGASPI. It consists of 66 fonds, divided into 521 inventories and comprises 230 thousands of files. The work on the project carried out under the auspices of the General Secretary of the Council of Europe was implemented with the participation of the archival institutions of Germany, Switzerland, Spain, France, Italy, Sweden as well as the Archive of Institute “Open Society” (Budapest) and the Library of Congress (USA). The project lasted 6 years, its total cost made up to 1,3-1,4 millions USD. The result of this work was a data base,

containing descriptions of documents of the Archive of Comintern on the level of fond, inventory, file and – partially- on the level of document with total volume 239602 records and collection with 1059354 scanned images of documents. The access to the database itself is opened in free mode (after registration) and access to the digitized images is possible only after paid subscription.

Currently the DB “Archive of Comintern” is enriched by documents of collection “International Brigades” (Spanish: *Brigadas Internacionales*) of the Republican Army of Spain; total volume – 6 inventories, 3068 records (titles of documents). 16126 pages of documents are digitized up to this moment.

Thank you for attention.