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Timeline literature

Autobiography, Digitality and Platformisation

Interdisciplinary workshop, 30.–31.5.2024, Berlin Campus der FernUniversität, Kurfürstendamm 21

At the beginning of the 21st century, services as LifeJournal introduced a new form of public life storytelling to the internet. Marking a transitional period between web 1.0 and web 2.0, the blogging-platform allowed users to share observations, photos, thoughts and communicate with each other in semi-public space with adjustable privacy levels. This gave rise to a digital genre of diary written in real time, which serves as private chronicle and public life story.

“User-friendly” social media platforms, to which the most users migrated from 2010 onwards, utilised the metaphor of timeline and / or archive for the arrangement of digital text, images and video. This turned commercial platforms such as Facebook and Instagram into storytelling machines, where users and bloggers publicly document and perform chosen parts of their lives. This digital form of storytelling is shaped by business models based on data collection.

The interdisciplinary workshop brings together literary and cultural studies perspectives on the transformation of auto-biographical techniques in the digital age. To this end we will undertake a historical contextualisation of research on analogue auto/biographical narratives in literature, diaries and photo albums. The aim is to open up to modes of self-invention and their transformation in the course of digitalisation. Further, we will discuss ways how platform based life storytelling creates a new configuration of the intersection between private and public realms. Participants will discuss the consequences of the digitalisation of different forms of auto/biographical narratives and the role of specific practices of archiving and erasing data.

In the frame of the workshop, we also strive to address the correlation between intimate publics and users' perception of (online) security vis à vis the state driven securitisation of the digital realm. This implies a closer look into the dynamics between auto/biographical production and platformisation in times of war, occupation, repression and the absence of freedom. As any research in this field needs to cope with digital forms of violence, we dedicate a separate panel to reflect the adoption of auto-ethnographical methods to carry out research on digital life storytelling in times of war.

The working language of the workshop is English.

Please send an abstract until 24.3.24 to yaraslava.ananka@uni-leipzig.de!

The workshop is organized in the frame of the NFG026 emerging scholars group “Digital Histories of Violence in the 21st Century” funded by Hans-Böckler-Stiftung as a cooperation by the Public History Department at FernUniversität in Hagen and the Institute for Slavonic Philology at Universität Leipzig. Travel costs will be reimbursed, and accommodation provided.