

## **Building Collective Memories Online**

### **SUMMARY**

Although memory has been studied for centuries, in “Mediated Memories in the Digital Age”, Jose Van Djick introduces the concept of its manifestation in digital space. He points out that the term “mediated memories” encompasses aspects of mind, body, technology, and culture (Djick, 2007:xii). He reminds us that memory is not a new phenomenon, but also points out that it is in the World Wide Web where individual, community, society, and history intersect, and thus studying memory in the new digital space is important (Djick, 2007:167). It is this concept that caught my attention, as I have been involved in researching the role of the Web in building collective memories. In the paper below, I will first provide an overview of memory theories since the concept was first introduced and trace how it evolved into contemporary memory theories. Secondly, I will explore Djick’s outlook on how contemporary memory theories manifest in digital space. Thirdly, I will apply these theories to my own research focusing on how individuals, institutions, and governments shape historical and political memories through the Web. My project involves collaboration with East European civil society organizations which are active in investigating and documenting human rights issues, as well as preservation of historical materials through digital archiving. I will briefly touch upon the results of my previous work with these organizations, and show that due to the issues of trust, privacy, access, and low user engagement, these civil society groups’ work so far has not been greatly effective. I will then discuss my latest research focused on increasing user engagement and participation with these civil society institutions. While my previous research focused on the East European countries of Hungary and Russia, due to the scope of this paper, as well as Russia’s difficult, yet interesting political context, this paper applies to the Russian institutions only. The user

engagement and participation research explores youth involvement, search engine optimization, and partnerships with publishing and travel industries. During discussion of the research results, I will provide strategic suggestions on how to improve user engagement with the civil society organizations' materials. I will conclude the paper by highlighting how Djick's concepts apply to my research on user engagement with civil society groups. Finally, I will suggest that Djick's collective memory model should be applied to other areas in digital space.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The question of what memory is and how it relates to society has occupied many thinkers for centuries (Mistral, 2003:2). To highlight the importance of memory, Djick described that personal memories matter because "humans have a vested interest in surviving and therefore they invest in creating and preserving imprints of themselves – their thoughts, appearances, voices, feelings, and ideas" (Djick, 2007:52). Other sociologists and historians stress that societal and cultural memory, often grouped under the term, "collective memory", is also crucial for human survival. Ancient Greeks, such as Aristotle have been fascinated by this topic. However, such old time philosophers were mainly interested in personal memory and ignored its collective nature. Formally, collective memory is often defined as the result of shared experience, ideas, knowledge and cultural practice through which people construct a relationship to the past. The main memory groups include family, ethnic groups, and nations (Misztal, #3, 2003:15). Present day discourse on memory mainly attributes the figure of Maurice Halbwachs as the father of contemporary collective memory theory. Halbwachs, one of Durkheim's best students, conceptualized collective memory as shared social frameworks of individual recollections. He followed Durkheim's belief in that every society has a need for historical continuity. He also believed in the core of Durkheimian concept that social groups shape

individuals and the way they remember. Durkheim suggested that it is in society that people acquire their memories, and it is in society that they “recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Olick, 1998:109). Durkheim’s theory of group mind, however, often creates a gap between mind and society. Durkheim is criticized by his modern day contemporaries for being too vague, but more than that for neglecting to take into account the role that individual plays in collective memory. He is blamed for ignoring the interaction between individual and social memory.

Modern day theorists often include psychological theories to explain the complex nature of collective memory. It was Halbwachs who first introduced psychology into the largely sociological enterprise (Misztal, #4, 2003:17). However, Halbwachs is criticized for neglecting to clearly define the concept of collective memory, leaving us to assume that he supported the Durkheimian theory that collective consciousness is the most significant component (Beim, 2002:3). Furthermore, unlike his teacher, Halbwachs is said to fall short of connecting memory to historical reality (Misztal, #4, 2003:17). More importantly, Halbwachs is discredited for not accounting for the elements of culture in his theories. Other theorists incorporated the concepts of social psychology in their collective memory work. For instance, Lang and Lang studied reputations through interaction of individuals with institutional objects, while Fentress and Wickham analyzed individual and institutional interaction in reputation construction process (Beim, 2002:4). Yet modern day collective memory scholars criticize even these thinkers for concentrating their studies on institutional objects. Such critics point out that these scholars attempt to reformulate classical memory theories of the past by incorporating concepts of competing discourses in their definitions (Beim, 2002:4).

A number of contemporary propositions argue that memory is rooted in the mind and thus in addition to psychological and sociological theories, calls for cognitive explanation. They point out that the notion of collective memory involves not only cognitive interaction between culturally related individuals, but also the interaction between social agents and institutions (Beim, 2002:5). They further go on to say that collective memory structures thought and constrains and enables how individuals remember (Beim, 2002:6).

A particularly interesting subject in memory studies is that of how memory relates to historiography. Halbwachs insisted on a distinction between the two, pointing out that history aims for a universal, objective truth severed from the psychology of social groups, while “every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time” (Savage). Simply put, the major distinction between history and memory is that the former is engaged in the search for truth, while the latter is a recollection of it. Hence, a common notion today is that collective memory is constructed. Thus, our view of the past does not come only from historical scholarship, but also from our relationships to mass media, tourist sites, family tradition, and other spaces of upbringing (Savage). Historiographer David Gross further highlighted this point when he pointed out the dynamic between cognition and sociality, suggesting that “discursive and material artifacts, technologies, and practices are equally infested with culture, thus forming the interface between self and society” (Djick, 2007:12). In his critique on collective memory studies, Kansteiner comments that, “Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals. It can take hold of historically and socially remote events but it often privileges the interests of the contemporary” (Kansteiner, 2002:180). He argues that

cultural memories occur when representations of the past are stored in such places as archives, libraries, and museums, during the process of which new meanings are given to these events in their new social and historical contexts. In fact, deciding which materials get selected for preservation, how they should be presented to the public, and who has access to them also contributes to shaping collective memories. Historiographer Yerushalmi comments on the selective nature of collective memory when he writes that, “While certain memories live on, others are forced out or repressed by the selection of the historian preserving these memories (Olick, 1998:110). Thus, collective memory is often a politically contested space where institutional, personal and societal forces intersect.

It is the collective, personal and societal cross-disciplinary approach to studying memories that has captivated the attention of most recent scholars. Beim looks at this concept through his memory Holocaust Survivor Narrative Structure model, in which he suggests that historical knowledge consists of institutionally legitimized information, personal experiences, and societal remembrance (Beim, 2002:23). Institutionalized information is further broken down into key facts and interpretation, personal experiences are divided between testimonies and moral explanations, and societal remembrance is split into commemorative discourse and cultural objects (Beim, 2002:23). Thus, he introduces a matrix where personal, institutional and societal memories intersect causing collective memory to become collective memory of collected memories (Beim, 2002:22).

In “Mediated Memories in the Digital Age’, Jose Van Djick recaps a similar concept, pointing out that due to collective memory theories’ focus on society, much of the current research on memory concentrates on authenticity versus artificiality, truthful recollection versus

manipulated or false remembrance, comprehensive versus selective memory. He argues that other factors besides institutional fall into the equation, for it is a fact that memories do not remain static throughout their lifetime. He urges us to recognize the non-static quality of memory when he says, “If we accept the morphing and multimodal nature of memory, defined as biocognitive process entwined with its technological-material manifestations and sociological practices, then we can no longer build upon these bipolar frameworks. Every memory is mediated by itself with the help of artificial instruments. Truthful memories are naturally morphed; even the most vivid, detailed, and documented memory is necessarily a selection of modalities and thus never comprehensive. To such a concept of memory, terms such as “true” and “false” no longer apply, because memory is intrinsically a mediated phenomenon – mediated by the vagaries of mind, technology, and culture” (Djick, 2007:178).

Just like Beim and many other contemporary scholars, Djick recognizes that memory is made up of collective, personal and societal factors. What he adds to the equation, however, is his insight into how memories are mediated in the digital world, translating that just like in the offline world, the collective and personal intersect in the digital realm. But in addition to supporting the concept of multi-disciplinary approach to memory in both offline and online environments, he adds that in the digital world it is not just mind and memories that intertwine, but also technology. Djick defines mediated memories as “the activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future of ourselves in relations to others” (Djick, 2007: 21). He asks questions such as, “How do our media tools mold our process of remembering and vice versa” and “How does remembrance affect the way we deploy media devices” (Djick, 2007:2). He further translates the

concepts of collective and personal offline to online by suggesting that personal cultural memory is generated through home media, such as family photography, home videos, and tape recorders, while collective cultural memory is passed through public media, such as television, music records, and professional photography. Recognizing the fact that the public and personal media combine together to shape our individuality and collectivity, Djick tries to abolish the distinction between the two types by suggesting that separating them will only contribute to obscuring how individuals actively contribute to collective media and how collective media shapes their individuality (Djick, 2007:19).

Throughout his book, Djick brings up the movie, “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”, where Joel Barish chooses to undergo a procedure to wipe out memories of his ex-girlfriend, Clementine Kruczynski. Half-way through the procedure, Joel realizes that he would like to keep the good memories of his deteriorated love affair and only erase the bad ones, and thus he tries to fight the technology by hiding the good memories in the unconscious, untargeted corners of the brain where the memory does not belong. Thus, this movie represents a model of memory that is stored in different parts of the brain. Joel’s memories consist of parts that can be erased and other parts that cannot, in addition his memories change into new ones. As Djick suggests, “The movie delicately – even if awkwardly, in an accelerated compression of time – suggests the inseparability of brain and informatics in its fictional depiction of digitized memory” (Djick, 2007:45). It also points to the fact that even though memory objects may be produced digitally, they are shaped by concepts produced before the digital era, and thus with invention of new technology, our methods of remembrance become revised. Such was the case with photography, video, and television, and most recently with the Web.

Djick leaves readers with the notion that although the role of building collective memories through more traditional media, such as books, TV, movies, monuments, and museums, has attracted the attention of researchers, digital technology, particularly the Internet platform, has mainly been overlooked when studying this phenomenon. However, the Internet platform is the new digital space, and it is crucial to understand how interaction and collaboration unfold in it to preserve memories of generations. Its many sub spaces, such as institutional content, personal blogs, and collective forums, to name a few, represent new territories to be explored in collective memory research.

The significance of studying collective memory is often emphasized due to the importance placed on preserving cultural and national heritage, but preservation and manifestation of memories also impacts social and political choices and affects world views. With more and more of the world population turning to the Web as a source of information, it is in digital space where social and political views are often expressed, debated, and formed. However, it is also in digital space where local and national ideas about collective memory now find themselves in the very different context of global information systems. In fact, such Internet giants as Google and Yahoo! are often affected in their content choices by requests from government and human rights agencies. As an example, the French and German law bans the sale and display of anything that denies the existence of Holocaust, causing Google to take down links on its national search engines to anything that violates this law. While Holocaust denial is repugnant, in other cases, national laws often attempt to enforce notions of collective memory for more ethically dubious purposes, such as legitimizing authoritarian regimes or marginalizing minority communities. Thus, politics, national policy, and law can impact cultural preservation



online, as they shape what is selected for preservation and decide which content is retrievable. Furthermore, collective memories are also shaped at an individual level, as the public either accepts official policies or resists them. These examples demonstrate that it is crucial to understand the cultural and sociological forces at play in collective memory in order to help shape better and more equitable policies about transnational Internet governance. Therefore, this area deserves careful and extensive exploration, which is currently lacking attention.

## **FILLING THE GAP**

The gap in understanding how the Web contributes to construction and evolution of collective memory led me to conduct my own research in this area, examining the digital space at both micro and macro level, ranging from individuals and institutions to global communities. The project I began to work on last year is an interesting example where the collective, personal, and societal factors cross over in the online realm. The organizations I worked with are civil society organizations in Eastern Europe. During my studies, I partnered with several institutions in Hungary and Russia, which are involved in reporting and documenting human rights issues in the Eastern European region, as well as digital archiving of historical and literary collections from the past, mainly Cold War era materials. While there are many official collections these institutions are digitizing, one of the more intriguing compilations are the unofficial literary works, films, and radio tapes of the Communist era, known as Samizdat (Russian for “self-produced”). My research followed the theoretical framework of Kansteiner, hypothesizing that while digital archiving of such historical records is beneficial for preservation of national memories, it also determines construction and evolution of collective memory about the history of these Eastern European regions (Kansteiner, 2002).

My initial research involved work with sociology and humanity trained historians, from whom I learned about many applications of collective memory theories in digital archiving. Having a strong technical background with a combined passion for social science, I felt I could also contribute to a more technically focused analysis in this area. Through qualitative interviewing and drawing upon available literature, I discovered that the areas of trust, privacy and access in digitization of these materials play a crucial role in how memories are built and interpreted. I hypothesized that trust can be broken down into authenticity, representation, and embodiment of the object (Cotto, 2006:2).

- **Authenticity** questions the validity of the documents themselves, how they were chosen, and whether they can be trusted to reflect history correctly (Cotto, 2006:15).
- **Representation** questions whether the documents changed in their meaning once they are transferred into digital form (Cotto, 2006:10).
- **Embodiment** has to do with the way the objects are perceived on the screen when users interact with them by performing such simple actions as typing on the keyboard and clicking on hyperlinks. Besides the physical involvement, there is also the psychological interaction of users having to remember the paths of how they get to the information they are retrieving (Cotto, 2006:13).

Initial stages of my research mainly focused on collective memory within an institutional framework. In my conclusions, I urged the archival organizations to pay specific attention to issues such as authenticity versus artificiality, truthful versus false interpretations, privacy of users and information, and user access. However, while examining the areas of trust, privacy and access of these institutions' Web content; I also recognized a weak area that leads to an overall poor effect of the organizations' work. This area includes user engagement and participation, and involves taking into account what Djick's suggests in his collective memory analysis, and that is that institutional, personal, and societal aspects intersect in online

environment, and together form mediated memories. This discovery in my research caused me to take a look at not just how institutions are involved in passing on societal memories through digitization of the archival materials, but also how individuals interact with these materials and how they communicate with institutions and other individuals in an online environment.

## **RESEARCH SETTING**

Taking into consideration the political and social context of the Eastern European region was important in my early research, however the shift in the focus of my work highlighted this fact even more, for increasing user engagement and public awareness may interfere with privacy and freedom of individuals on a grander scale. In addition, since generally the current political situation in Russia is considered less stable than that of Hungary, I chose to focus my current research on Russia's civil society organizations because of the intriguing social and political context of their surroundings. Choosing such space is interesting, for while the Web plays an important role in building collective memories in democratic societies, it plays an even bigger role in capturing memories in non-democratic regimes. With tough authoritarian regimes and media censorship, even just the availability of such information in authoritarian societies is a big achievement. Russia, however, is often considered neither democratic nor non-democratic, but instead transitional. Transition societies are countries that broke with their totalitarian past, but have not yet succeeded in true democracy (Krasnoboka, 2002:5). Relatively little research has been done about the web and its democratizing effects in transition societies, particularly in a non-English setting, thus it is also this fact that led me to explorations of this subject, in addition to Russia's interesting political context.

Krasnoboka highlights the fact that even though in transition countries, such as the former countries of Soviet Union, new media is not strictly controlled as in non-democratic societies, these countries face numerous challenges and issues in voicing their viewpoints through media (Krasnoboka, 2002:5). In Russia, in the past few years, the political situation has become more and more difficult for human rights agencies to exist. Tanya Lokshina, the head of a human rights organization in Russia, says that it has been several years since she had first noticed similarities between what she is going through and what dissidents under the Soviet Union had to go through. In an interview she says, "I'm 30 years of age and a young professional, and I'm suddenly telling my staff what they have to do if the KGB walks in. This belongs in books. This shouldn't be happening" (Feifer, 2007). While in the 80's and 90's mass demonstrations were organized to crumble down the Communist party and Soviet Union, nowadays rights activists have almost no public support and have to survive on much smaller budgets. In fact, the Kremlin has issued bills for increasing control of human rights groups and other NGOs in Russia. While some of such bills may simply make registration difficult, restrict foreign funding, or require detailed reports on NGO activities (Feifer, 2007), other bills are harsher and actually threaten human rights and NGO intervention in Russia (Phaneuf, 2008).

Considering the current political situation in Russia and the possible fear NGOs may experience given the political context, suggestions offered in this paper are hypothetical and up to the discretion of NGOs. In addition, many solutions offered in this paper can be implemented through the help of international organizations, which are bound to more stable and trustable political regimes. However, Russian NGOs should be aware that while on one side having international ties would help in disseminating important information, decrease the possibility of

the NGOs' shutdowns, and provide additional data backup points, on the other side, having international connections may lead to nationalist suspicions of foreign connections and possible accusations of NGOs' alignment with foreigners.

In the following sections, methodology of the research is discussed, followed by the limitation of results, discussion of results, and strategy suggestions based on the research. To protect the privacy of institutions and individuals, the hypothetical human rights organization will be referred to as Octoberite Archives in this paper.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in my research consists of the following steps:

- **Youth Survey Analysis**
- **Google Trends**
- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Analysis**
- **Popular Literature Analysis**
- **Travel and History Association Analysis**
- **Wikipedia Analysis**

With each method described in detail in subsequent sections as to why it was chosen and how it was implemented, below is a summary of the chosen methodology.

### **Methodology Summary**

The main goal of the project was to identify strategies on how civil society groups, such as Octoberite Archives, can be better at increasing public engagement in building collective memories online. Since I had the opportunity to work with high school students at a summer college preparation camp in Russia during the summer of 2008, the project started with research

on youth's involvement in this subject area. After collecting and analyzing data on youth's knowledge of the subject, as well as questions on digital divide situation (which I thought would help in understanding the overall context), the next step in my research led me to focus on Google Trends, a tool that allowed me to interpret how the public uses the Web to search for historical materials. Once such data was collected, I was curious to learn what kind of content searchers encounter when they actually read the sources presented in their result sets. Thus, the next step in my research led me to Search Engine Optimization analysis. After analyzing the data described in the first three steps, and confirming that the human rights agencies would benefit from larger exposure to capture audiences to promote their content, I hypothesized of the possibility of partnerships with publishing and travel companies, and thus conducted the Popular Literature and Travel and History Association analyses. Lastly, included in the last section of methodology is the Wikipedia analysis, which was done during the early stages of my research and conducted for the purpose of studying the political context, associated with 20<sup>th</sup> century historical terms. However, initial research in this area did not reveal noticeable trends or patterns, and thus this method is briefly mentioned in the last methodology section, however the results are not discussed in this paper. This area deserves attention in future research and explorations.

### **Methodology Section #1: Russian Summer Camp Surveys, August 2008**

#### **Why:**

The surveys' purpose was twofold, first to get an idea of the digital divide situation in Russia, and second to understand the young generation's history knowledge about the Cold War and Soviet dissidence, as well as their knowledge about the availability of archives. Both of these

purposes have a larger goal, which is figuring out whether engaging the Russian youth with these civil society organizations would be beneficial.

### **How:**

In August of 2008, as guest lecturer on the digital divide situation in Russia and worldwide, I had the opportunity to survey teenagers at a college preparation summer camp in Russia. The survey asked participants questions about computers and Internet use in classrooms and at home, as well as general questions testing their knowledge about the Cold War period and the availability of historical archives. The surveys were on paper, anonymous, and contained a total of nineteen questions, including multiple choice and open ended questions. These paper surveys were then entered into Excel and basic statistics, such as sums, averages and percentages were calculated and graphs were drawn.

The survey questions that were multiple choice were answered on the following scale:

- **Rarely** (once a month or less)
- **Often** (a couple of times a month)
- **Very Often** (daily or almost daily)
- **No Answer**

*AND*

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **No Answer**

The survey questions that were open ended were graded with partial credit and on the following scale:

- **Correct** (for answers that were entirely correct)
- **Somewhat Correct** (for answers that were partially correct)

- **Incorrect** (for answers that were entirely incorrect)

## Methodology Section #2: Google Trends Analysis

### Why:

- To gain insight into how the web is used for searching by the Russian public
- To understand the current Russian political context by finding out who are the most popular Russian leaders in 20<sup>th</sup> century history and what are the most popular 20<sup>th</sup> century historical terms
- To find out whether authoritarianism is more or less popular than democracy in Russia according to search engine searches

### How:

- Used Google Trends to compare frequency of searches for the following 20<sup>th</sup> century historical leaders:
  - ✓ **Stalin**
  - ✓ **Brezhnev**
  - ✓ **Yeltsin**
  - ✓ **Kruschev**
  - ✓ **Gorbachev**
- Used Google Trends to compare frequency of searches for the following 20<sup>th</sup> century historical terms (“Stalin” was chosen as benchmark, as it had highest rankings in leaders comparison above):
  - ✓ **Stalin**
  - ✓ **Samizdat**
  - ✓ **Gagarin**
  - ✓ **Communism**
  - ✓ **Democracy**
  - ✓ **Human Rights**
  - ✓ **Soviet Union**



✓ **Afghan War**

- After **Search Engine Analysis** was performed (described in #3 below), and it was found which terms were associated with more of authoritarian or democratic tone, I came back to the Google Trends results described above to gain an understanding whether authoritarian or democratic terms are more popular.
- As additional analysis, I used the Google Trends tool to pull reports on authoritarian and democratic terms in pairs, side by side. One report was pulled for each of the following pair of terms:

- ✓ **Stalin, democracy**
- ✓ **Hitler, human rights**
- ✓ **Stalin, Solzhenitsyn**

**Note:**

All terms described above were typed in Cyrillic font to capture Russian audience searches. The scale used was relative. In relative mode, the data is scaled to the average worldwide search traffic for the selected term. When more than one keyword is typed in Google Trends comparisons, the subsequent terms are rated relative to the 1.0 average of the first term. Time period used was all years in which data is available (January of 2004 as the earliest possible data point), and grouped by weeks. For the 20<sup>th</sup> century leaders and 20<sup>th</sup> century historical terms reports described in the first 2 bullet points above, an additional time period of last 12 months was pulled for better visibility. All raw data was exported into Excel for analysis. Screenshots of Google Trends graphs were saved, copied, and pasted into Excel.

**Methodology Section #3: Popular Search Engine Statistics Analysis**

**Why:**

To help understand the current political context in Russia, as well as to learn how the Russian public views Cold War era events of the past.

**How:**

- Analyzed more popular, as well as less popular 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian history terms (from Google Trends analysis in #2 above) through rating the political opinion of the content of search results for particular keyword
- Used top 10 search results per keyword per search engine

**Reasoning:**

As Goldman points out, “A search result ordering has a significant effect on searchers and Web publishers. Searchers usually consider only the top few search results; the top ranked search result get a high percentage of searcher clicks, and clickthrough rates quickly decline from there” (Goldman, 2008:125). Even if many results come back for a certain keyword/keywords, most users tend to ignore majority of the search results. Therefore, our study looks at the top 10 search results per search engine, with the assumption that users most often work only with the top 10 results, without clicking through to the next search page.

The market share of search engines in Russia is split between a few large companies. According to comScore, Yandex, Google, and Rambler ranked as top Russian websites in February of 2008, with Yandex capturing over 47% of the market, Google topping at over 31%, and Rambler taking in 9.7% share of the market (IT Facts, 2008). Considering that other sources consistently rate these search engines highly as well, I captured top 10 search results for certain political keywords in the most popular Russian search engines:

- **Yandex.ru**
- **Rambler.ru**
- **Google.ru**

The keywords chosen included eight terms and were typed into the search boxes using Cyrillic font. Since 10 top results were analyzed per each of the three search engines, there were a total of 30 results per term, and a total of 240 results for all eight terms. The keywords included the following:

- **Stalin**
- **Putin**
- **Putin Stalin**
- **Democracy**
- **Gulag**
- **KGB**
- **Gagarin**
- **USSR**

The 240 results ranged from official sources such as government websites and newspaper sites to nonofficial materials such as personal blogs and discussions. The results were read entirely and rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing authoritarian point of view, 3 representing neutral, and 5 representing a liberal point of view. The reason for choosing these particular eight terms was that each one is a well-known representative of 20<sup>th</sup> century history and can be looked at as authoritarian, neutral, or democratic, depending on the point of view of the article. By analyzing 30 articles per term, and 240 articles total, I hoped to gain an idea of the general political outlook on authority and democracy in Russia, and to better understand the political context that human rights agencies in Russia are dealing with. I could then go back to Google Trends and see

whether popular search terms are associated with more authoritarian, neutral, or democratic viewpoints.

**Note:**

“Putin” keyword was chosen for analysis to gain an understanding of how the Russian public feels about their current leader and government. This would help shed light on whether the current political outlook of the public is more authoritarian or democratic. “Putin Stalin” keyword was chosen to understand whether the Russian public equates the two leaders, considers one better than the other, or thinks of them in yet another context. Such information would help to understand how the public views current leadership in comparison to the past.

**Methodology Section #4: Popular Literature Analysis**

**Why:**

To get an understanding of what kind of literature is currently popular in Russia, and to examine the possibility of combining civil society organizations efforts to promote their materials in conjunction with current popular books and books websites.

**How:**

- Found a top 10 list of current most popular books in Russia
- Analyzed and interpreted the data to figure out whether civil society organizations can promote their materials in such books

**Methodology Section #5: Travel and History Association Analysis**

**Why:**

Since travel often plays a role in promoting national history, it is interesting to understand how travel agencies and their websites cater to different historical periods in Russia. Such information would be valuable in examining the possibility of combining civil society organizations' efforts to promote their materials in conjunction with travel agencies and travel websites.

**How:**

- Collected data from various travel websites about which historical periods are associated with traveling and in which context (association of types of travel with historical periods, places of travel with historical periods, etc.)
- Analyzed and interpreted the data to figure out whether civil society organizations can promote their materials with such travel agencies
- Found literature reviews about combining learning of history with travel

**Methodology Section #6: Wikipedia Analysis**

**Why:**

To get an idea of what kind of control Wikipedia allows for its political terms, in both English and Russian Wikipedia versions. In addition, to figure out whether there is a difference in the way English Wikipedia terms are editable in comparison to Russian ones. Overall, such analysis would help in determining the political context existing in Russia and how the online world is affected by it.

**How:**

Looked at the following list of political terms in both, English and Russian Wikipedia, and figured out whether the content is editable by regular users, by logged in users only, or by everyone:

- **Lenin**
- **Stalin**
- **Yeltsin**
- **Gorbachev**
- **Putin**
- **Medvedev**
- **Cold War**
- **Gulag**
- **Sakharov**

## **LIMITATIONS OF DATA RESULTS**

- Summer camp surveys were given out to a certain population representing a specific geographical region in Russia. Although data results can be generalized to other regions in Russia, it is possible that results can be skewed due to this reason. In addition, students may have misunderstood some terms or misinterpreted some questions, such as the question about the type of Internet connection in students' homes, with 54% of respondents not providing an answer to either dial-up or Broadband categories. Finally, the teenagers represented an above average population of students, since the surveys were taken at a summer college preparation camp that requires entrance exams and commitment to learning.
- Search engine and Google Trends results were analyzed based on methodology used by Google, although results produced by Yandex.ru and Google.ru were similar, Rambler.ru returned different result sets, thus Rambler.ru may have different search algorithms and

methodologies. Applying Google methodology to other search engines may cause some generalizations, although it is likely that most search engines follow similar strategies.

- Search engine results were analyzed and rated according to author's opinion of whether the content was authoritarian, neutral, or democratic on a scale of 1-5 with 1 representing authoritarian point of view, 3 representing neutral point of view, and 5 representing democratic outlook. In future research, it would be beneficial to devise a more advanced system for rating content of search results. Such system may involve several persons rating the materials, and its scale may have firmer definitions of what constitutes authoritarian and democratic viewpoint, in addition, it may be beneficial to extend the Likert scale to a higher than 1-5 point system.

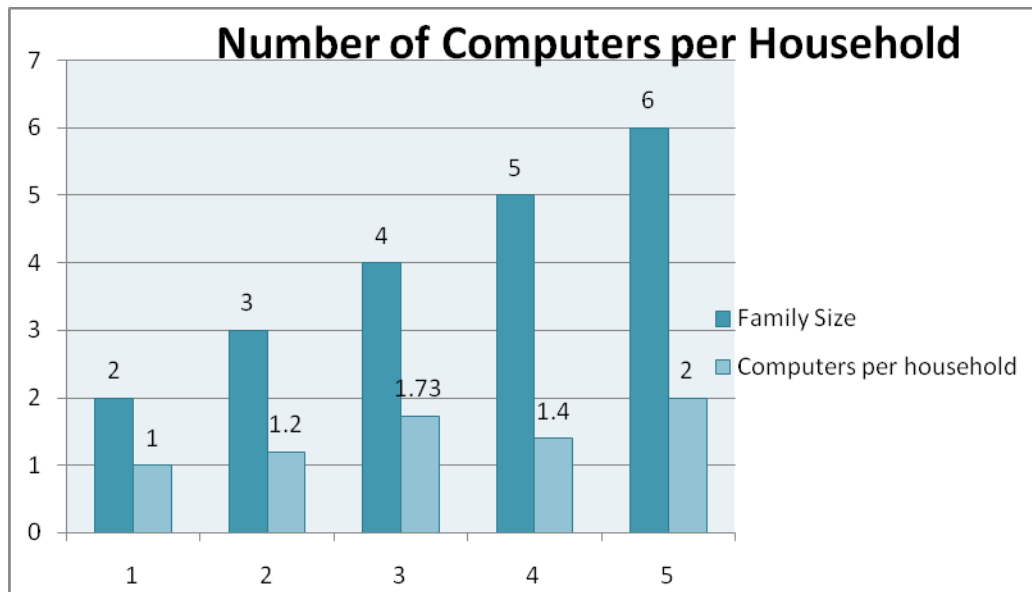
## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **Results Discussion Section #1: Russian Summer Camp Surveys, August 2008**

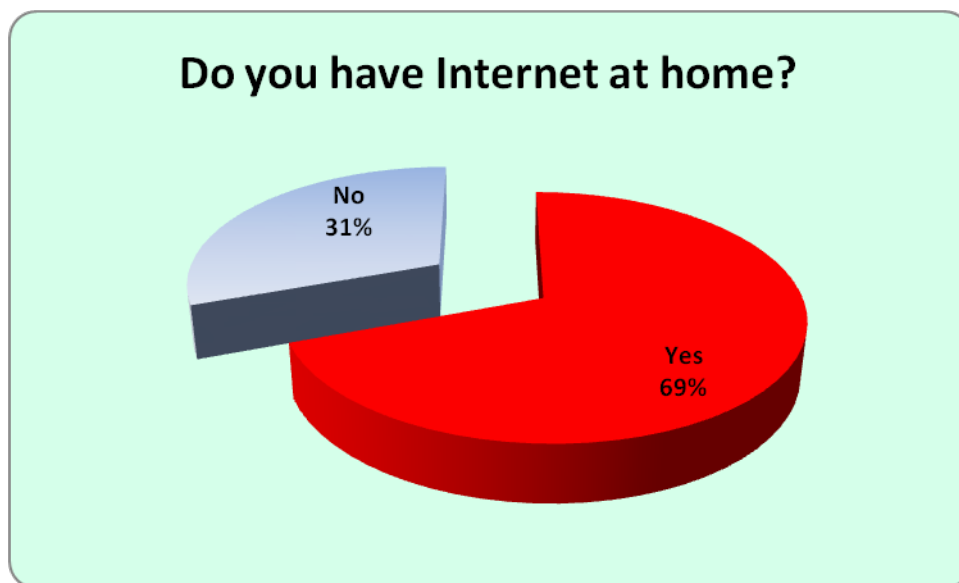
The respondents' medium age was 16, with grade 11 being the median grade in school. All of respondents were from urban areas, with most coming from one specific city in northern region of Russia. Since respondents had to take placement tests in order to get into the summer college preparation camp, their education and knowledge level can be considered above average when compared with average students of the same age and grade level.

While detailed graphs are attached in the appendix (to protect the privacy of individuals, raw survey data is excluded from the appendix), the overall trends from the surveys can be summarized into the following points:

- Most families have 1 computer per 2 persons in the family



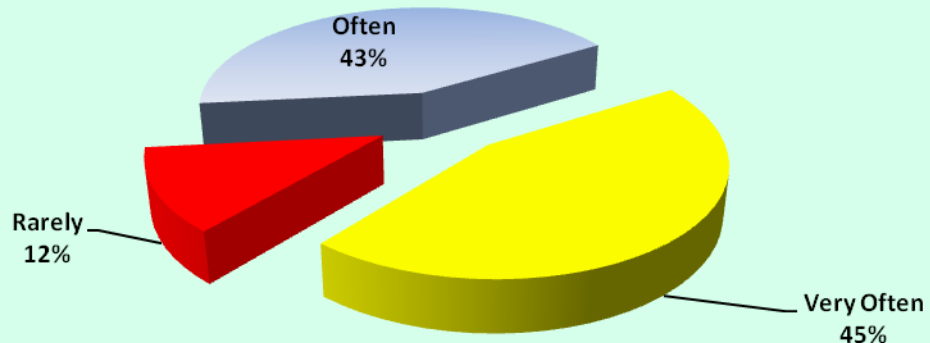
- Majorities of students have Internet connection at home



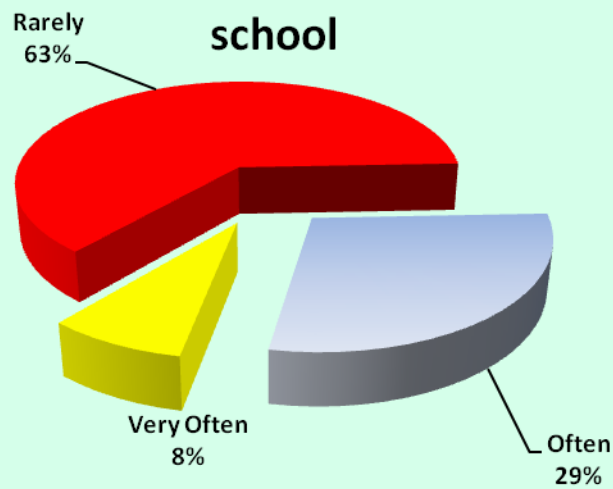
- While most respondents answered that teachers use Internet at school very often or often (88%), students use Internet at school less often (37% answered they use it very often or often)



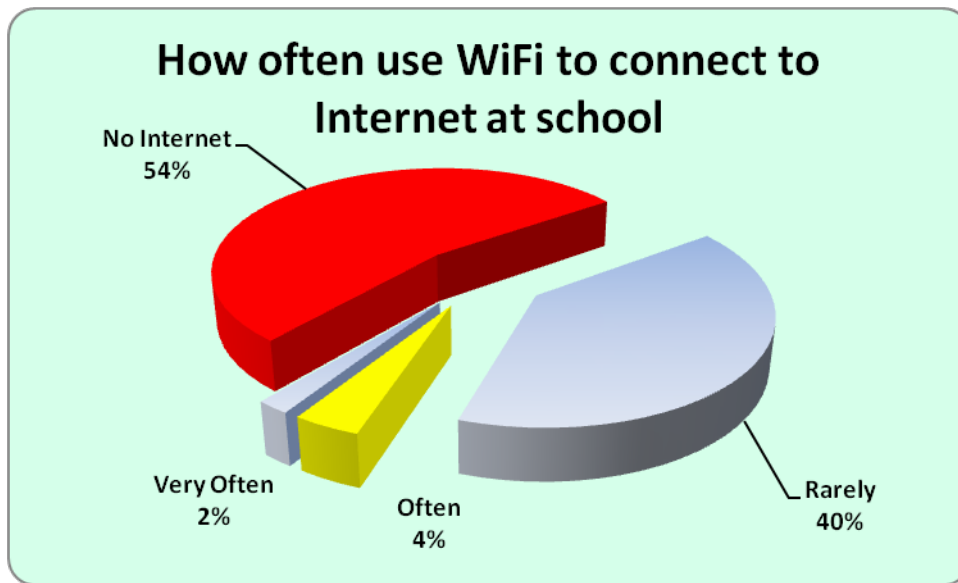
### How often teachers use Internet at school



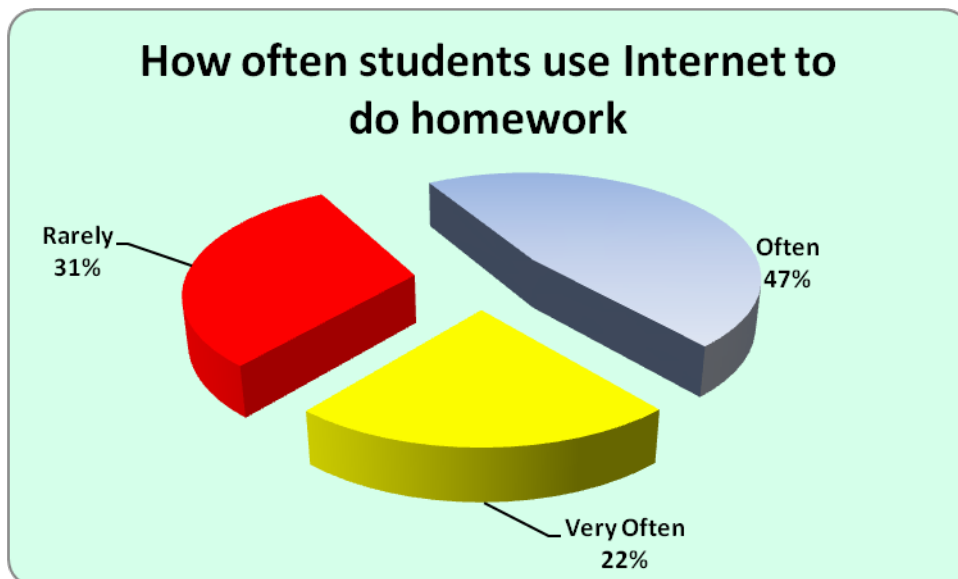
### How often students use Internet at school



- Most schools either do not provide Wi-Fi connection (54%) or it is used rarely (40%)

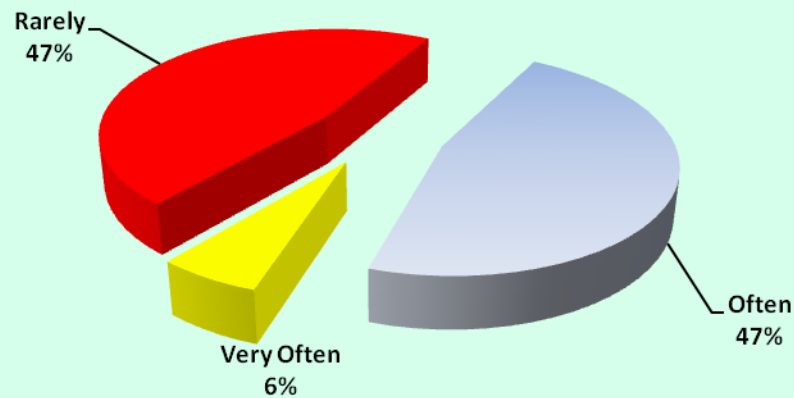


- 69% of students responded that they use Internet very often or often to do their homework

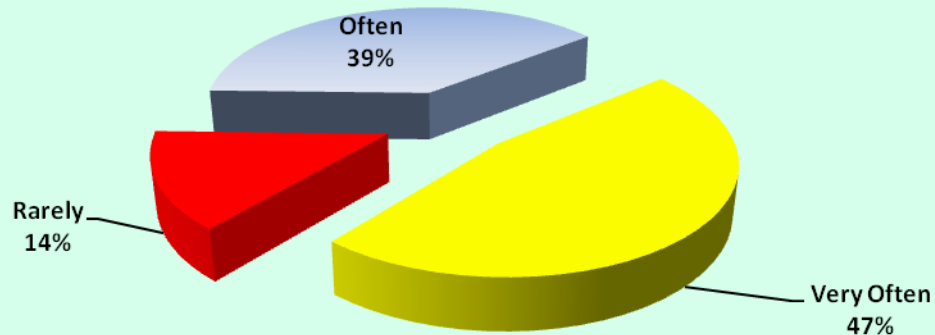


- 53% of students responded that they use print materials very often or often when they need to find information for school, while 86% responded that they use Internet very often or often when they need to find information for school

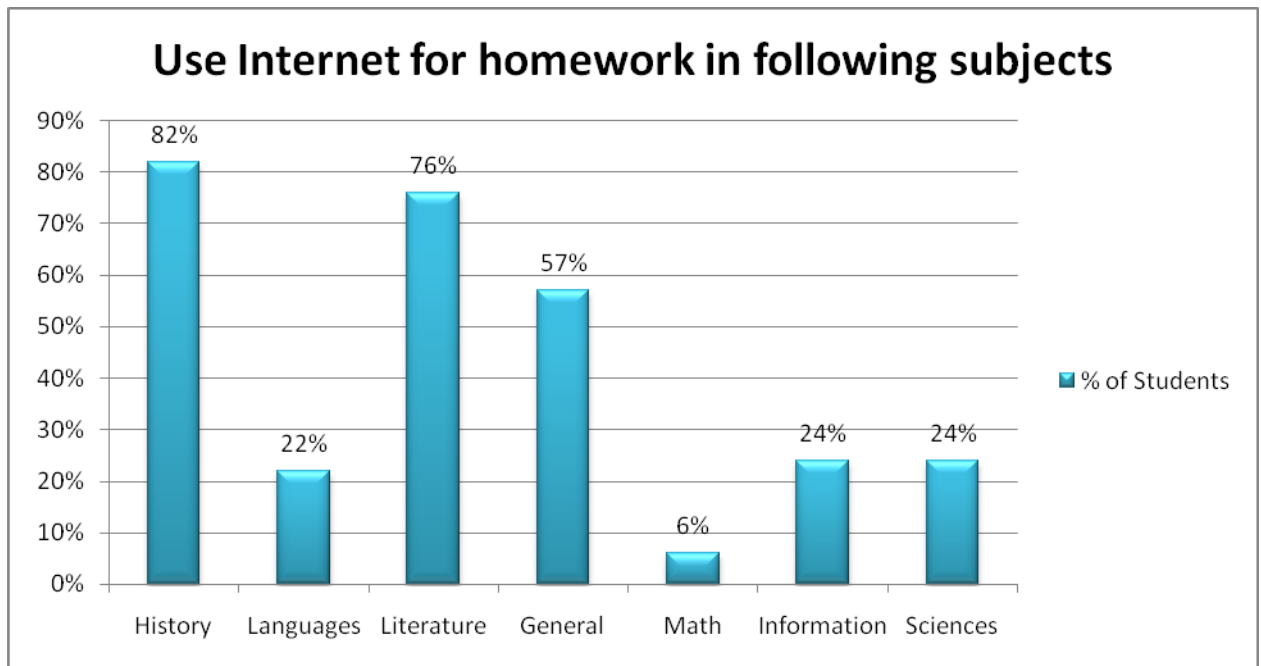
### How often use print materials to find information for school



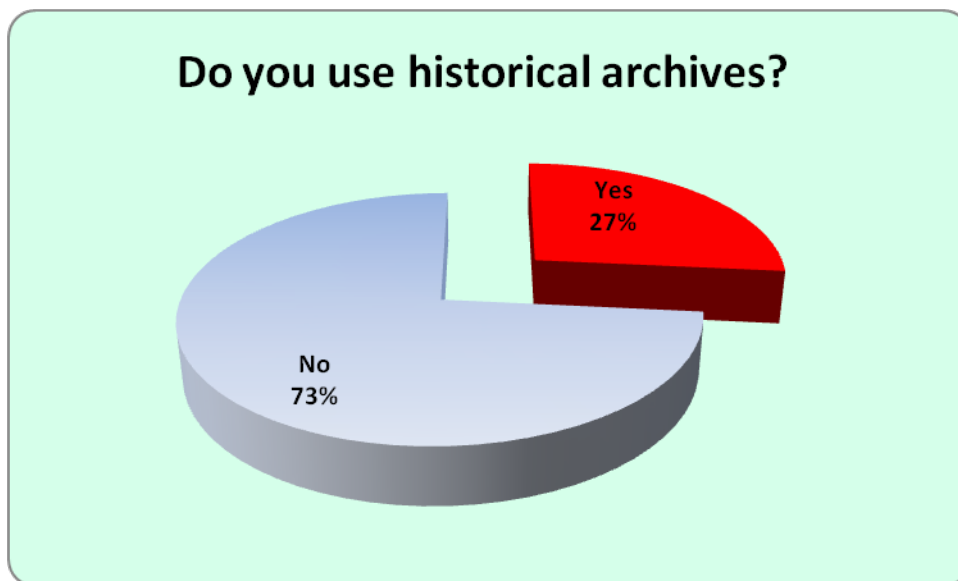
### How often use Internet to find information for school



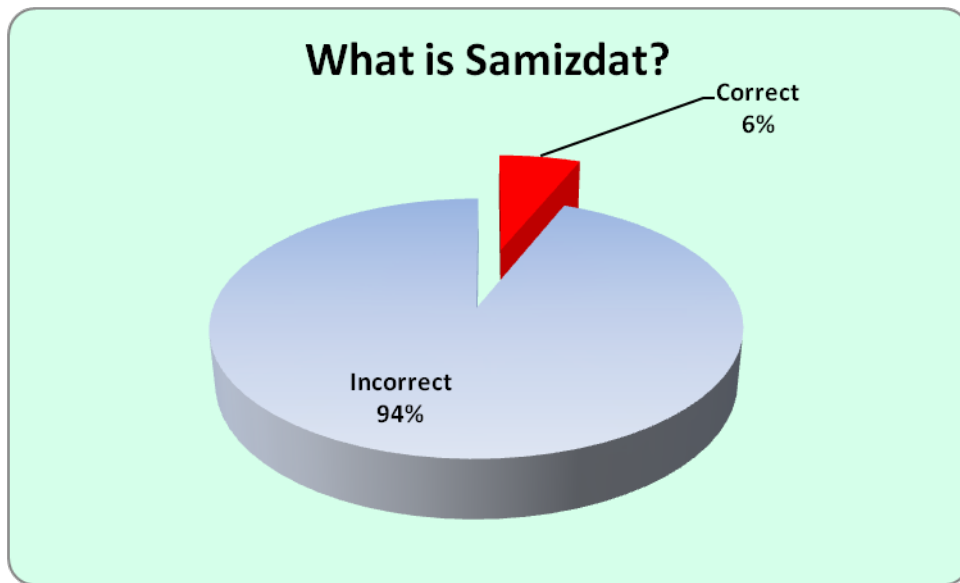
- The subjects that students use Internet most for when doing their homework are History (82%) and Literature (76%)



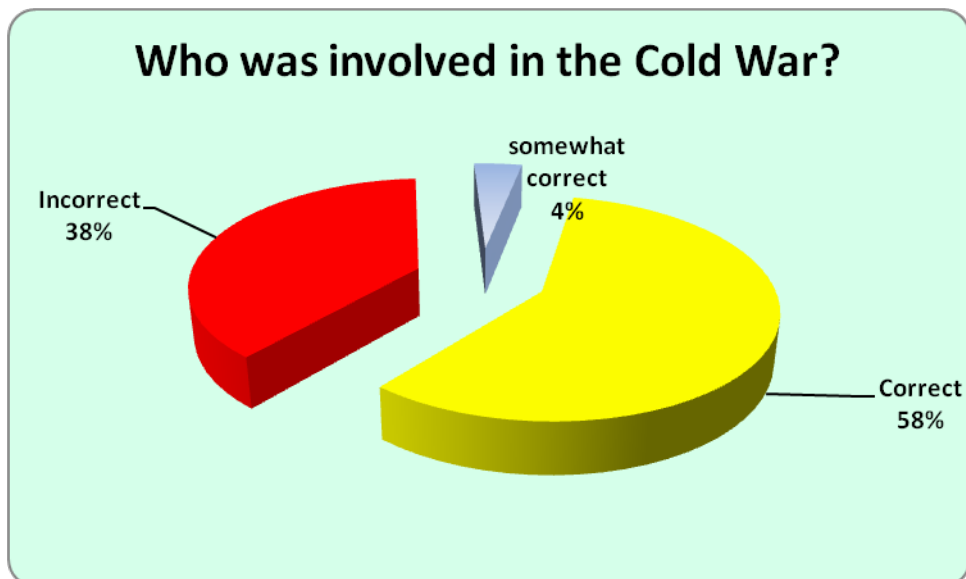
- 73% of students do not use historical archives



- 94% of students do not have knowledge about meaning of Samizdat



- 38% of students answered incorrectly about who was involved in the Cold War, and 4% answered somewhat incorrectly



- 61% of students answered incorrectly about when the Cold war occurred, and 14% answered somewhat incorrectly



Based on the statistics above, I concluded that targeting youth to promote human rights ideas would be beneficial in contributing to their knowledge and education, since students' understanding about the Cold War period is limited. Although majority of students (58%) answered correctly about who was involved in the Cold War, a fairly large percentage answered incorrectly or somewhat correctly. In addition, most students (75%) answered incorrectly or somewhat incorrectly about when the Cold War occurred. Also, many students not only lack knowledge in facts such as when the Cold War occurred and who was involved in it, but they also do not seek such information in historical archives. In addition, the questions focused on digital divide issues revealed that most students have Internet at home, use the Internet as a resource for homework and finding information, in fact more so than they use print materials. Also, history and literature were rated as top subject categories for which Internet is used to do homework in. Thus, human rights agencies can focus some of their efforts on targeting youth to educate them about history and literature of the Cold War period and making such information available to the students through interaction on the Internet.

There is no shortage of studies pointing out that youth often use the Web more often than other age groups, as a result, the Web is often considered an important tool for increasing political knowledge and participation among youth. A recent conference on “How do young people form political opinions” found that parents, teachers, the media, peers and other typical role models are not any less important influences in shaping political opinions in present day era than in previous years (Ditchley, 2007). Since Web is an increasingly popular media type, it can serve as an important tool to help youth learn about history and politics.

A great example of engaging youth in history education is the Oral History Archives Project implemented at the Urban School of San Francisco (Levin, 2003:2). Through participating in documenting the experiences of European Holocaust survivors, high school students have gained an entirely new insight into the history of holocaust. Working in small teams and as part of a history course, students prepare interview questions, travel to survivors’ homes, and conduct interviews via mobile video. Students then transcribe each interview and edit the video files corresponding to the text. They then upload these materials to the website, which contains the interviews with video, audio, and full-text. The Holocaust is the first of many topics that will be explored in the Oral History Archives Project housed at this school located in a San Francisco neighborhood. This course serves as a model for incorporating technology into history classrooms. Much of the work for the class takes place online, including accessing homework assignments and posting reflexive journal entries, sharing research and interview questions, and accessing work of previous year’s students. Most importantly, students are not just learners, but are also contributors, as they digitize their interview work online, so that it is shared with worldwide audience. Deborah, a history teacher involved in the project at Urban, points out the importance of first hand experience in history education, “History is usually

taught. It is the opposite for students to discover history through people who have lived through it. At first, students want to ask about the experience of the Holocaust. They don't always see solutions to grief, death, or love. By the end, they ask compelling questions. They talk and take risks" (Levin, 2003:2). When asked about why it is important to pass on personal stories to new generations, Freda, a holocaust survivor says, "When my generation dies, it will be a battle for the historians to be constantly fighting to keep their story alive. And it is important for people who are threatened by holocausts to know that this can happen to anybody. So if this is part of the human condition it has to be told. And maybe in some way that story will have some impact to change the human consciousness" (Levin, 2003:6).

The last quote from Freda, above, highlights the struggle of passing on collective memories to future generations, which was mentioned earlier in this paper. Most of general memory issues such as truthful vs. non-truthful recollections are pointed out in the collective memory historiography points of the "Theoretical Background" section of this paper. Additional issues associated with the Web medium are described in the trust, privacy and access points of the "Filling the Gap" section of this paper, in which it is outlined that the digital environment brings with it its own set of challenges, such as deciding what gets posted online, who accesses such materials, and how users interact with the data. The Oral History Archives Project focused on holocaust education provides an excellent example of incorporating multimedia in learning and contributing to history through real people with real stories. Such project can serve as a parallel for Octoberite Archives to partner with schools and setting up a similar program, where students are encouraged to work first-hand with Soviet Dissident survivors. Offering such kind of education, will not only build youth user engagement with historical archives providing them

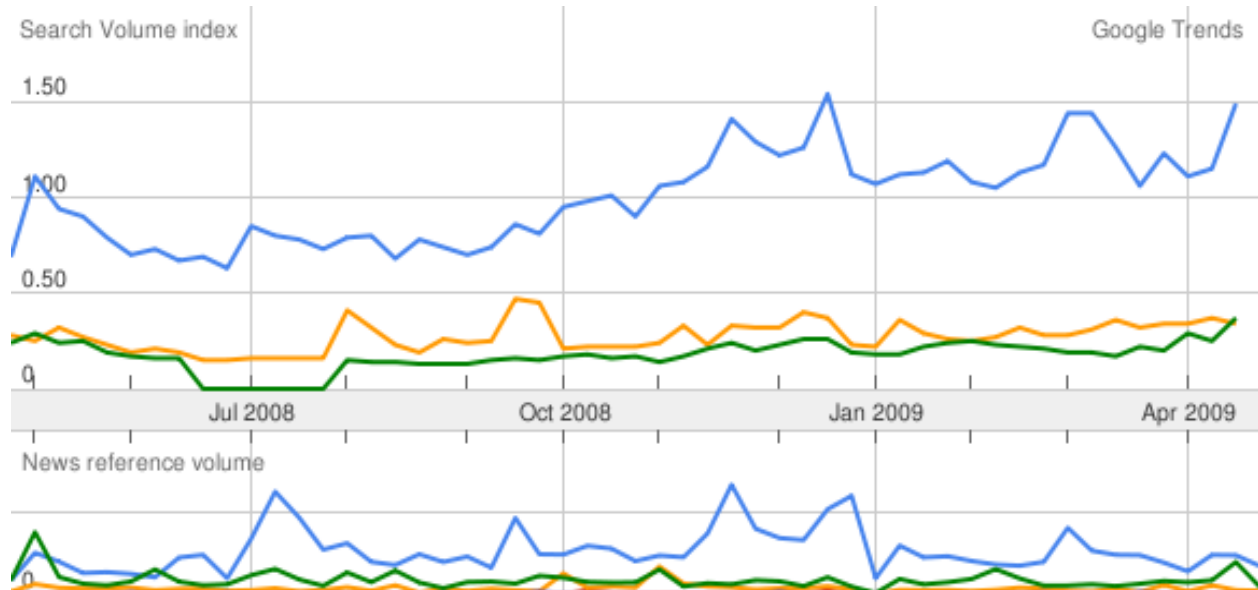


a chance to learn about their national history, but will also allow to record history through real people with real stories.

## Results Discussion Section #2: Google Trends Analysis

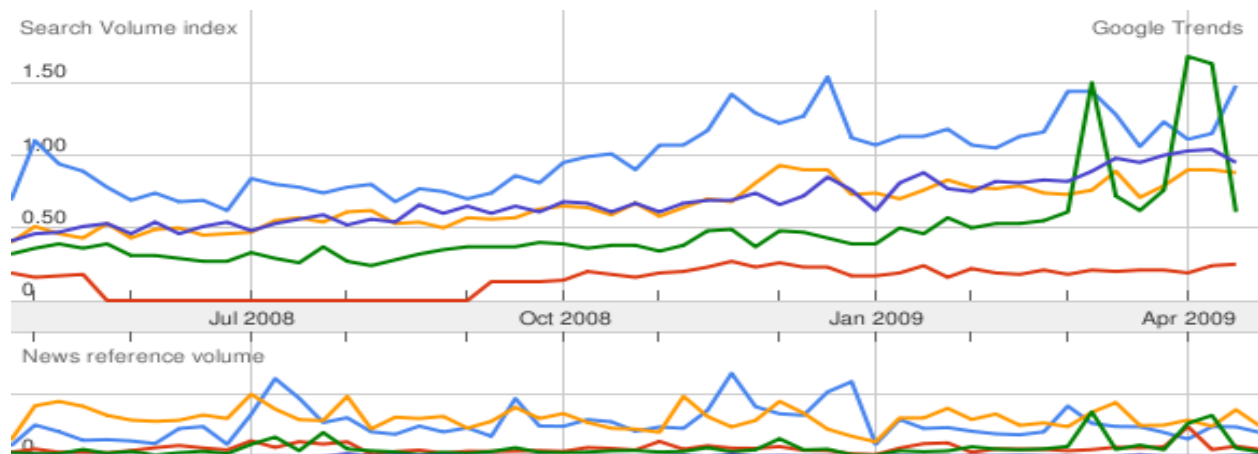
With detailed numbers and graphs attached in the appendix, the 20<sup>th</sup> century leaders report clearly shows Stalin as the top most ranked leader, while more liberal leaders, such as Gorbachev barely show on the graph.

**Stalin 1.00, Brezhnev 0.27, Yeltsin 0.18, Kruschev 0, Gorbachev 0**



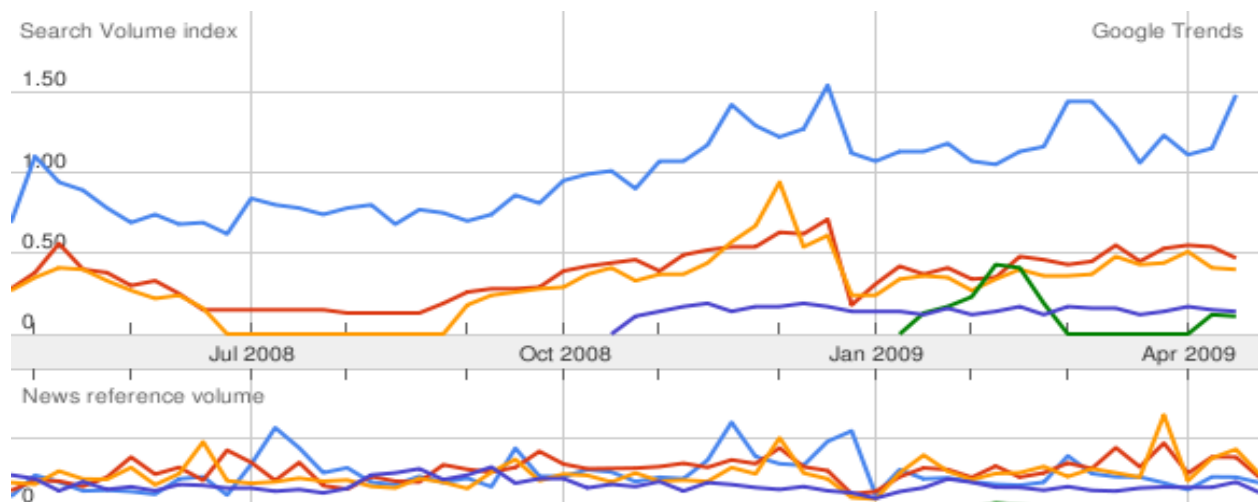
In addition, 20<sup>th</sup> century historical terms reports show that the term “Stalin” came up as highest ranking (“Stalin” is used as benchmark, since 20<sup>th</sup> century leaders report clearly marks it as highest ranking). On the graph with keywords, “Stalin”, “Samizdat”, “KGB”, “Gagarin”, and “Communism”, “Stalin” came up as highest ranking.

**Stalin 1.00, Samizdat 0.68, KGB 0.65, Gagarin 0.48, Communism 0.13**



In addition, on the graph with keywords, “Stalin”, “Democracy”, “Human Rights”, “Soviet Union”, and “Afghan War”, “Stalin” once again came up as highest ranking, while democratic terms such as “Democracy” and “Human Rights” had lower rankings of 0.37 and 0.30 respectively.

**Stalin 1.00, Democracy 0.37, Human Rights 0.30, Soviet Union 0.08, Afghan War 0.03**



Since not all possibilities of 20<sup>th</sup> century historical terms were tested, it is possible that other terms rank higher than “Stalin”, nevertheless the analysis shows enough evidence that the keyword “Stalin” is a popular search term. As another source to prove Stalin’s popularity, a most popular persons report on a popular Russian website, generated on February 26, 2009 and composed of not just leaders, but all persons worldwide, rated Stalin as 7<sup>th</sup> most popular person in daily ratings, 4<sup>th</sup> most popular person in weekly ratings, and 10<sup>th</sup> most popular person overall (“People” website, 2008). In addition, a survey completed in February of 2006 revealed that 47% of Russian citizens consider Stalin’s role in history positive, while only 29% consider his role in history negative (Russian Wikipedia, 2006). In further analysis, I discovered one search term that ranked higher than” Stalin”. This term was, “USSR”, coming in at 3.80 points average compared with 1.0 average for the term “Stalin”. The term “USSR” will be discussed in Search Engine Analysis (#3 below).

After Search Engine Analysis was performed and each search term was associated with either a democratic or authoritarian rating, I went back to Google Trends and pulled pairs of terms to see which one ranked more popular. Authoritarian search terms consistently came up higher than democratic search terms:

- For example, for the search pair, “**Stalin, democracy**”, “Stalin” came up much higher, hitting its highest point at 7.15 points on the week of December 21, 2008, while “democracy” ranked lower in all years, reaching its peak at 2.95 points during the week of December 7, 2008.
- For the pair, “**Hitler, human rights**”, the term “Hitler” came up much higher consistently, hitting its highest mark at 28.8 points on the week of September 14, 2007, while “human rights” term ranked lower, with its peak of just 2.2 points during the week of December 7, 2008.
- For the pair “**Stalin, Solzhenitsyn**”, “Stalin” came up consistently higher once again. Results for “Solzhenitsyn” were quiet low, except for one exception on August 3, 2008

(the day of his death), when a dramatic peak of 27.6 points was reached, only to fall back down to 3.2 points the following week of August 10, 2008.

Sociological research in Russia points out that while in 1998-1999, 70-80% of forum discussions on the Web consisted of liberal conversations, nowadays 60-80% of expressed opinions are with totalitarian outlook (Melnikoff, 2008). My research also shows that authoritarian terms consistently came up higher in comparison to democratic terms, and therefore suggests that the Russian public's online political views are more authoritarian than democratic. Thus, when human rights agencies cater their materials to the public, they need to keep in mind that the public's political outlook is more on the conservative authoritarian side.

### **Results Discussion #3: Popular Search Engine Statistics Analysis**

Getting found on search engines is essential in order to have online prominence, and therefore search engine optimization (SEO) is vital in online marketing. Getting noticed by search engines involves being aware of several issues, as most search engine companies have certain algorithms that they implement. Although more research is required to understand what kind of algorithms are implemented by Russian search engines, such as Yandex and Rambler, I will focus my analysis and recommendations on Google strategies, since such information is available to us and it is likely that the Russian search engines implement similar strategies. In fact, one of the search engines used in my research analysis is Google.ru, which justifies considering Google strategies even more relevant. In addition, my findings show substantial similarities in search results brought back by Google.ru and Yandex.ru, once again highlighting the fact that taking Google strategies into account is relevant to the analysis.

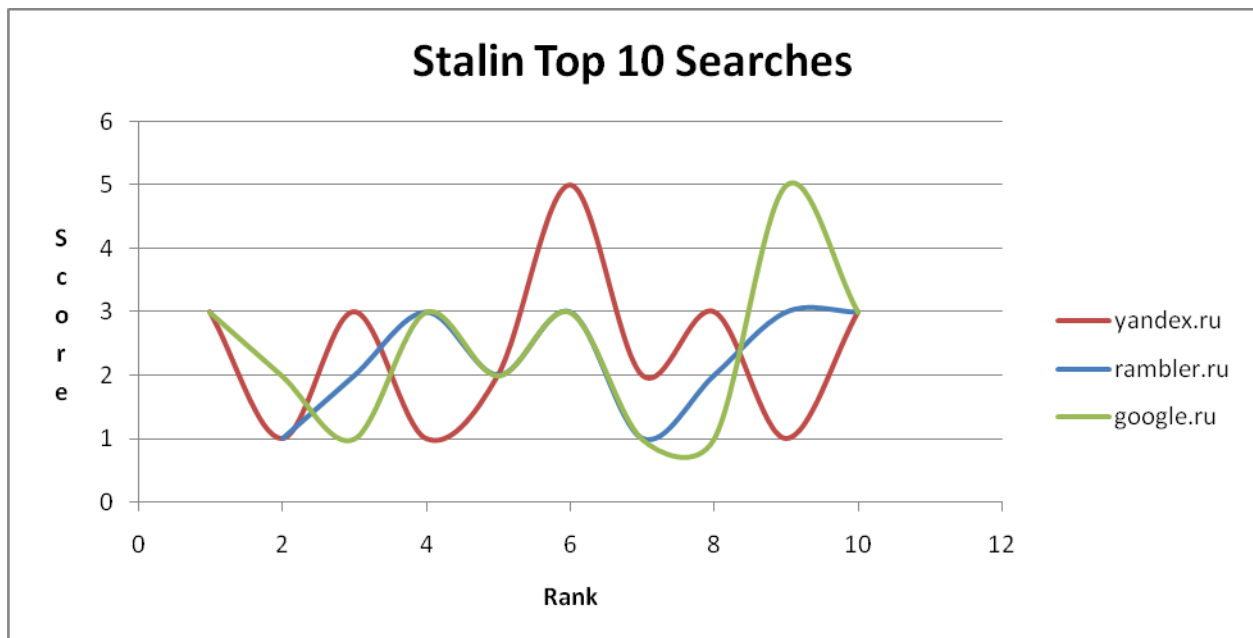
With detailed data outlined in the appendix, search engine analysis revealed which of the terms are associated with authoritarian point of view, and which ones are associated with a

democratic point of view. The “Totals” tab in the Search Engine Results Excel file sums up averages per keyword per search engine, with a final total average (for all 3 search engines) per keyword. In the analysis, “Stalin” has an average rating of 2.3, and “Gulag” has an average rating of 4.1. This means that for “Stalin”, most web pages that came up had totalitarian ideas, such as praising the Soviet Union, or justifying Stalin’s horrific deeds, such as repressions. Web pages that came up for “Gulag” mostly had a democratic tone, pointing out the horrors of repressions and putting down totalitarian regimes.

### “Stalin” Results

**Total: 2.31**

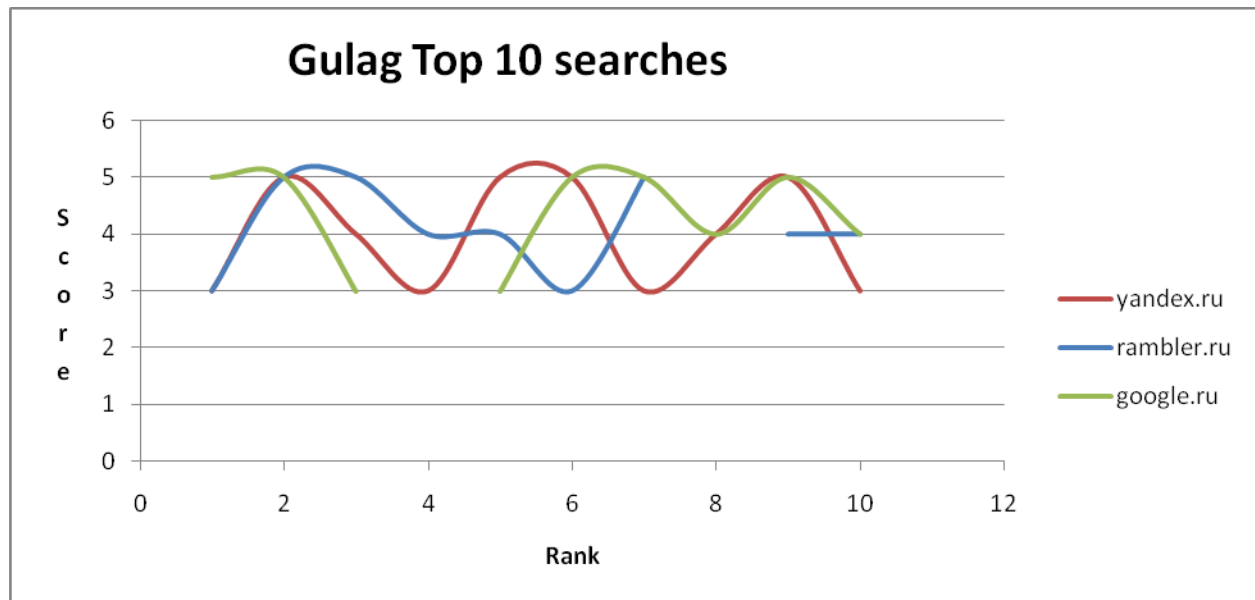
yandex.ru=2.4, rambler.ru=2.13, google.ru=2.4



### “Gulag” Results:

**Total: 4.15**

yandex.ru=4, rambler.ru=4.11, google.ru=4.33



In my analysis, terms other than “Stalin” and “Gulag”, did not have such striking differences between democratic and authoritarian points of view, for they all averaged close to 3.0, yet they were not exactly neutral, and were either a little bit below or above the 3.0 score. The more popular terms (according to Google Trends) contained a bit of an authoritarian bias, while the less popular terms contained more of a democratic outlook. For example, “USSR”, a quiet popular term in Google Trends (3.80 score) and in fact the only term analyzed that rated higher than “Stalin”, turned out to have an authoritarian bias, with a 2.91 search engine analysis score. Another somewhat popular term, “Gagarin” (0.48 Google Trends score), also turned out to have an authoritarian bias with a 2.78 search engine analysis score. A less popular Google Trends term, “Democracy” (0.37 score), turned out to have more of a democratic outlook, with a 3.62 search engine analysis score.

In the search engine analysis, a few trends were noticed that are worth mentioning here. One is that some of these terms returned irrelevant results not associated with the historical

meaning of the terms. For example, the term, “KGB”, had many irrelevant results, especially in Rambler.ru, where only 1 result out of 10 was relevant. Another theme noticed among all search terms analyzed is that many articles were nostalgic about the Soviet past, especially those written by young adult authors, the generation who witnessed the crash of the Soviet Union as teenagers, and are now nostalgic about Soviet cartoons, foods, jokes, etc. The existence of tremendous amounts of post-socialist nostalgia is pointed out in a political Russian study completed by Mendelson and Gerber, where the authors highlight that “Nearly every page of Peter Baker and Susan Glasser’s recent book, “Kremlin Rising”, contains some relevant vignette illustrating the theme of Soviet and Stalinist nostalgia on topics ranging from the war in Chechnya to the takeover of independent media to the rise of Putin’s KGB cronies to positions of power” (Mendelson, Gerber, 2005:92). This same study also highlights that Soviet nostalgia is an impediment to Russian democratization, since longing for the Soviet and Stalinist past hints at the positive aspects of a totalitarian regime.

Considering my research findings, a helpful strategy for Octoberite Archives is to not just consider democratic terms in search engine optimization, as they probably do already due to the nature of their human rights agenda, but also consider optimizing for authoritarian search terms, such that when people search for “Stalin” for example, they also get a democratic point of view in their search results. In addition, Octoberite Archives should also focus optimizing for keywords that are losing their historical meaning due to commercialization. For example, the term “KGB” came up with endless security software and safety advertisings, while if this keyword is optimized for by the archival organizations, it could gain its original historical meaning back.

While optimizing, civil society organizations should be aware of what is called the “search engine bias”. Goldman warns us, “Automation gives search engines a veneer of objectivity and credibility. Machines, not humans, appear to make the crucial judgments, creating the impression that search engines bypass the structural biases and skewed data presentations inherent in any human-edited media”(Goldman, 2008:122). However, search engines are media companies, and just like any other media company; they too can manipulate users’ experiences. As a result, skewed search results are produced, and such concept is called, “search engine bias”. Search engine bias often consists of the following:

- **Indexing**

Search engines do not index all data available on the Web, but instead deliberately or accidentally omit some web pages or incorporate parts of it. Even when a web page is indexed, search engines may choose to exclude it from results due to violations, non-compliances, or other factors.

- **Ranking**

Search engines use complex algorithms to determine the order of search results. These ranking algorithms involve human effort in deciding how to implement ranking decisions. Goldman highlights that it is in search engine companies’ best interest to adjust search results based on popularity, for search engine placement affects users’ experiences. He comments, “If the top few search results do not satisfy the searcher’s objectives, the searcher may deem the search a failure. Therefore, to maximize searcher perceptions of search success, search engines generally tune their ranking algorithms to support majority interests (and the Websites catering to them)



often receive marginal exposure to search results (Goldman, 2008:125)". As an example, Google's popularity metric, PageRank, considers inbound links on a website as popularity votes, and links from more popular websites count as more than links from lesser known websites. In addition, PageRank's voting mechanism causes websites that are able to afford the marketing expenses and advertising to come up higher in the search results (Goldman, 2008:126).

Keeping in mind the possibility of search engine bias, as well as my research conclusion that both, authoritarian and democratic search terms need to be considered for search engine optimization, below are several areas mentioned in latest search engine optimization research, and need to be taken into consideration when optimizing websites.

#### **1) Optimizing Pages (Delany, 2008:39)**

- **Keywords in meta tags**

While in the past the use of these html headings was crucial in finding documents, these tags are outdated and no longer make much of a difference. This is partly due to the fact that people abused meta keyword tags in the past, such as putting the same keyword in multiple times, thus now search engines generally ignore these tags.

- **Words**

Keep your pages fairly short, as the amount of text per keyword matters. For example, the same word showing up 10 times on a short page would count more than the same word showing up 10 times on a long page.

- **Page Elements**

Classic html header tags such as <h1> and <h2> are noticed by Google, as opposed to <span> tags. Thus, if the header tags contain keywords in them, there is more chance for the search

engines to notice it. Also, page titles are given a lot of weight by Google, thus placing keywords in the titles of pages is essential. In addition, naming files with meaningful names, such as “cold\_war.html” would be noticed by search engines more than a name such as “cold\_w.html”.

## **2) Becoming Authoritative (Delany, 2008:40)**

- **Linking**

The more sites link to you, the better, however, be aware of link spammers, which are random sites that exchange links in the hope of gaining recognition by Google search engines. Search engines punish such sites, and in fact often change their algorithms to accommodate for dealing with such unrespectable sites. It is important to link with sites that are respectable and contain good resources about your subject.

- **Press Releases**

Press releases and articles that you write for other sites are another way to improve linking relationships that contribute to better search engine optimization. Making sure to use keywords and urls in press releases is also important.

- **Submissions to Search Engines**

Submit your pages and authoritative pages that link to you to Google, so that the benefits show up in the search index

### **Note:**

In the search engine analysis, the keywords “Putin” and “Putin Stalin” were analyzed for the purpose of figuring out how the Russian public views their current leader, as well as how they see him in comparison with his authoritarian predecessor, Stalin. The total average score for “Putin” was 3.13, and the total average score for “Putin Stalin” was 3.46, which is pointing to a bit more of a democratic outlook. However, the term “Putin Stalin” on Yandex.ru had quiet

striking contrasts, meaning that many articles described the Putin administration praising Stalin and justifying his actions, yet other articles were against such ideas. Although the overall score was neutral, an important point to keep in mind is that there is a movement in Russia which is nostalgic about socialism and communism and is fighting hard to bring back the Soviet times. In fact, this trend was noticed not just in “Putin Stalin” keyword analysis, but in most other terms where the overall score was more or less neutral, yet those articles that were associated with authoritarianism, praised totalitarianism and put down democracy.

#### **Results Discussion Section #4: Popular Literature Analysis**

According to Moscow’s House of Books, the most well-known and largest bookstore in Moscow, the following 10 books were most popular on February 26, 2009 (Moscow House of Books). Please note that the listings below were translated from Russian into English language, while some of them had full titles translated, others list just the main genre the book falls under.

- **#1) “World Without Russia” (after Cold War analysis)**
- **#2) Fantasy**
- **#3) Fantasy**
- **#4) Fantasy Romance**
- **#5) Russian Language Studying**
- **#6) Detective**
- **#7) Secret**
- **#8) Madagascar Label Collections – cartoon**
- **#9) Children**
- **#10) Mathematics**

In the results listed above, it is intriguing that “World Without Russia” came up as #1 bestseller, as this book’s topic has to do with after Cold War analysis. Such high ranking of this book suggests that the public does indeed value knowledge about the history of the Cold War

period. The book is written by Yevgeniy Primakov, the former Prime Minister of Russia, who in his new masterpiece discusses “some of the most intriguing mysteries of modern times, from the collapse of the USSR to the wars in Iraq and Kosovo” (Sabov, 2009). Most importantly, the author presents various view points about the Cold War, and thus this book would be a great example of a partnership that Octoberite Archives could form. By linking to and advertising with historical books such as this one, Octoberite Archives could promote their materials and educate the public about this historical time period.

While other books on this top 10 list do not fall into the history category, there are a few other subject areas that would make sense for the human rights organizations to get involved in. One such area is Russian Language Studying which caters to foreigners, and thus could be an interesting link to educate non-locals about Russian history. In addition, combining efforts with children’s books could also be beneficial in capturing the attention of youth and engaging them in education about national history.

However, one aspect to keep in mind when partnering with publishing companies is the danger of commercialization. According to Wikipedia, commercialization is the process or cycle of introducing a new product into the market. Human rights agencies, however, have a different agenda than commercial organizations do, “The civic virtues of democracy are essentially humanist, for they emphasize tolerance of the wide diversity of beliefs and lifestyles, and they are committed to defending human rights” (Kurtz, 2009). Therefore, when partnering with other types of organizations, human rights agencies should be aware of the different messages that such companies promote, and be careful of the possibility of commercialization of democratic

ideals. In addition due to these reasons, they may also meet some resistance from the publishers when trying to form partnerships with them.

## **Results Discussion Section #5: Travel and History Association Analysis**

The analysis of various travel websites revealed that the most popular historical period associated with travelling is the tsar period, for many travel agencies advertise visitation to the beautiful Russian palaces and kingdoms while describing the history of the tsars in 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia. Such agencies are mostly family vacation oriented, concentrating on sightseeing in cities, packaging 5-star hotel accommodations along with the tours. Although not as popular as the tsar period tourism pitch, several websites also advertise tourism to the Ural Mountains region and Siberia, some of them mentioning the history of the Gulag camps. The latter agencies focus their advertising on nature and backpacking in the mountains and thus cater to a different type of tourist. In fact, during the Cold War, Russian tourism was focused on local tourism, such as backpacking in the mountains, since ideas from the West were forbidden, and so was the outside travel world.

Thus, an idea for Octoberite Archives, in order to promote education about the Cold War time period, could be to partner with the latter agencies described above and to focus their efforts on tying history with heritage sites, such as Gulags. Partnering with naturalist/backpacker type travel agencies that cater to the Cold War time period may also bring a certain type of nostalgia or curiosity about this historical period. Partnership would involve not only bringing the educational information and content to the travel websites, but also making a presence in technology, such as delivering content through phones, for example iPhones, where information would be offered to travelers on the spot while walking by a particular heritage site. Bringing

the data to people in this way would invoke emotional resonance and contribute to history education.

Tourism industry has long been identified with different motivations that explain why people choose to travel, especially when it comes to visiting heritage sites. While traditionally the two most common reasons for visiting heritage sites included education, such as willingness to learn, and entertainment, such as the tourists' desire to be entertained, more recent research suggests that the desire of tourists to be exposed to their own heritage is another explanation of why tourists visit heritage sites (Poria, Butler, Airey, 2004:4). Therefore, while the first two reasons here forth mentioned justify catering travel to foreign tourists as well as local ones, the last reason is justification for catering to local tourists such that they can identify with their national history. As an example, in search engine analysis (#3 above), a website that came up high in the result set for the keyword, "Gulag", is a travel website offering tours to the beautiful Ural mountains region and the Gulag camps, including introduction to the history of the region and camps. In fact, hiking to the Gulag camps and exploration at the camps is offered as a several day package tour, where travelers have the opportunity to learn about what happened and get a feel for the horrors that Soviet dissidents experienced at these camps. If Octoberite Archives partners with such travel websites as this one, not only will it educate the public about Cold War history through text and photos on the websites, but it will also encourage tourism to these regions which will in turn educate the public about Cold War history. In addition, linking to such sites will contribute to having more outside links going in and out of Octoberite Archive's website and hopefully contribute to a better overall linking reputation, which may in turn increase the human rights agency's ranking in search engines.

However, just as in partnership with publishing companies, human rights agencies should be aware about the possibility of commercialization. Travel agencies may have their own agenda that are not just about promoting history education, but are also about offering quality of service and comfort to the tourist. For example, travel agencies may promote packages and nice accommodations for traveling to the Gulag regions. While such comforts may improve the quality of service and sales, they can also impact education about Gulags in a different direction. For example, travel agencies may present Gulags as a much nicer destination to travel to than it actually was during the Cold War, in the process, conforming to the public's expectations and failing to educate them about the reality of horrors that were experienced by Soviet dissidents at the camps. In addition due to these reasons and just as in partnerships with publishers, civil society organizations may also meet some resistance from the travel agents when trying to form partnerships with them.

## **Results Discussion Section #6: Wikipedia Analysis**

With detailed results attached in the appendix, there were no noticeable patterns detected in what kind of terms were editable by everyone, partially protected, or non-editable. In addition, no major differences were noticed between English and Russian Wikipedia entries, however, this area deserves further exploration in future research.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are several areas in my research that were not fully explored due to time constraints or other limitations, however several areas deserve attention in future research and include the following:

- Performing a more extensive and detailed Wikipedia entries analysis
- Exploring the design and implementation of a more advanced system for the rating of content of search engine results. This may mean having more persons involved in reading and evaluating the materials. A concrete scale with more precise definitions of what constitutes authoritarian and democratic viewpoints would help in standardizing the results. In addition, an evaluation needs to be conducted as to whether the rating scale used should be on the 1-5 point range as was currently implemented for this project, or whether it would be more beneficial to use a different point range.
- Researching how youth use the web for searching. For example, distributing a survey with questions on which search engines are used for historical research by students, what kind of keywords the students type in when they search, how they filter their results, how they interpret the content, etc.
- Implementing a more detailed exploration of forum and discussion spaces in order to better understand how the Russian public uses the Web medium as a discussion tool to form political opinions and remembering the past
- Applying collective memory research to other political areas besides Russian civil society organizations. For example, exploring online politics of China or Cuba
- Current research points out some interesting findings about the Web in transitional societies, for even though Russia has no official Internet censorship or extremely strict Internet rules or restrictions, research revealed that the overall state of the Web is still far from democratic. This calls into question the larger issues of democratizing impacts of



the Web. Exploring such issues would contribute to learning about the effects of the Web on democracy.

- Finally, future research would benefit from extending collective memory theories online to areas other than politics

## CONCLUSION

Since research suggests that the Internet platform is largely understudied in collective memory research, my study focuses on this digital space in analyzing how collective memories are built online through history and education. With communism gone, societies in transition of political regimes are an interesting platform to study, for their political context effects the way the Web is used, and in turn, the way collective memories are passed on to future generations. Our particular case focuses on civil society organizations in Russia, which collect and disseminate information about the Cold War period. The suggestions offered in this paper are strategies on increasing user engagement and participation with these materials and include the following areas: youth engagement, search engine optimization, and partnerships with publishing and travel companies. All strategies are based on Djick's idea that the personal and collective intersect online and together form mediated collective memories. Increasing user engagement will affect the way users interact with the civil society organizations' materials online and in turn contribute to personal and societal factors of Djick's model, while how institutions choose to bring and present the information to the users will contribute to the institutional piece of the model. Finally, while it is important to apply Djick's model in the world of online politics, it should also be considered when capturing memories in all digital space, for "Memories are never

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a simple inheritance from the past: people make media to shape memories, and memories shape people to make media” (Djick, 2008:180).

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