

Documenting a Pandemic: COVID-19 Community History Project

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Big ideas. Real-world thinking.



Project Overview



COVID-19 Community History Project at MSU

- The COVID-19 Pandemic has become a unique and significant part of world history. As these historic events continue to affect our everyday lives at Minnesota State University, Mankato and the greater Mankato community, the University Archives plans to document personal experiences in the form of a community history project.
- The University Archives will collect, preserve, and provide access to these COVID-19 Pandemic experiences for current and future researchers. Many of these experiences will be made accessible through our digital collections, freely available on the internet through ARCH, the University Archives digital collections site. We want to ensure we leave behind a substantial record for future scholars and historians.

COVID-19 Community History Project Collection

- Official University communications
- University social media posts
- Oral History Interviews
- Individual Experience
 - Self Interview
 - Journal or Diary
 - Reflective essay
 - Creative work (poetry, photography, drawings, etc.)
 - Other ways as suggested by Participants



“Fiesta Postponed” by Cali Cantu

A large, abstract yellow graphic consisting of several overlapping, curved shapes that resemble flames or a stylized 'S' shape, positioned on the right side of the slide.

Who would contribute to this project?

- **Students in University courses**
 - Some professors may include the oral history or individual experience documentation as part of their course. All donations to the Archives should be voluntary.
- **Members of the Community**
 - Individuals who want to contribute their experiences are welcome to do so.
 - This includes the campus and greater Mankato community.
 - This component of the project was launched June 2020.
- **Student Workers at the University**
 - In collaboration with University Archives staff, Student Supervisors can assign this project as a work task.
 - International Students were hired to specifically work on this project.

Three yellow wavy lines of varying lengths and curves, positioned in the upper right quadrant of the slide, overlapping the text.

Project Management



A LOT of Student Employees

- Project Management Team
- Student Supervisors across campus
 - 18 supervisors from 9 departments
- Project website was integral to communication
- Enhanced Training
 - Supervisors
 - Project expectations and overview
 - All student training
 - Students
 - Project expectations and overview
 - Readings on conducting oral histories, journaling, and more.
 - Weekly themed emails

Public Facing Tools (aka Software)

- LibApps by SpringShare
 - LibGuides
 - Project Website (public)
 - Project Website (student employee)
 - <https://libguides.mnsu.edu/covid19historyproject>
 - LibWizard
 - Training Quiz
 - “My COVID-19 Experience” submission form

COVID-19 Community History Project

This page is designed to support the community history project to document the COVID-19 experience of Minnesota State University, Mankato students, employees, friends and family and community members.

The screenshot shows a website interface for the COVID-19 Community History Project. On the left is a purple navigation menu with a 'HOME' button and several menu items: 'Project Introduction', 'Project Overview', 'Video Introduction to Project', 'About Minnesota State Mankato and the University Archives', 'WHAT IS BEING COLLECTED', 'HOW TO PARTICIPATE', 'PROJECT FORMS AND QUESTIONS', 'HOW TO SUBMIT', 'RESOURCES FOR THIS PROJECT', 'YOUR COVID-19 STORY', 'FAQ', 'STUDENT EMPLOYEE INFORMATION', 'STUDENT SUPERVISOR INFORMATION', and 'CONTACT THE ARCHIVES'. The main content area on the right is titled 'Project Introduction' and contains text about the project's purpose. Below this is a section titled 'Project Overview' with more text. At the bottom, a section titled 'Video Introduction to Project' is partially visible.

HOME

- [Project Introduction](#)
- [Project Overview](#)
- [Video Introduction to Project](#)
- [About Minnesota State Mankato and the University Archives](#)

WHAT IS BEING COLLECTED

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

PROJECT FORMS AND QUESTIONS

HOW TO SUBMIT

RESOURCES FOR THIS PROJECT

YOUR COVID-19 STORY

FAQ

STUDENT EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

STUDENT SUPERVISOR INFORMATION

CONTACT THE ARCHIVES

Project Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic has become a unique and significant part of world history. As these historic events continue to affect our everyday lives at Minnesota State University, Mankato and the greater Mankato community, the University Archives plans to document self-experiences in the form of a community history project to help record our daily lived experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Because every individual's experience is different and valued, the University Archives at Minnesota State University, Mankato will provide expanded documentation on the COVID-19 Pandemic experiences for current and future researchers and make it easily accessible through our physical and digital collections, freely available on the internet. We have no way of knowing how significant of an event this may be at this time, but we want to ensure we leave behind a substantial record of our experiences for future scholars and historians.

Project Overview

To expand access and understanding about the COVID-19 Pandemic experience to current and future individuals, the University Archives will collect documentation and accept donations on the COVID-19 Pandemic experiences for inclusion in the Archives. These materials will be made available through our physical and digital collections. Examples of physical and digital collections can be found by searching our [Collection Guides](#), [ARCH](#), or [Cornerstone](#) websites.

Much of this collection is produced by Minnesota State University, Mankato students by collecting the experiences of their peers, family, friends and members of the campus community. Individual contributions will also be accepted.

Video Introduction to Project

- Video Introduction - COVID-19 Community History Project, Minnesota State University, Mankato

A large, stylized yellow graphic consisting of several curved, overlapping shapes that resemble flames or a stylized 'S' shape, positioned behind the text on the slide.

Thoughts on LibApps

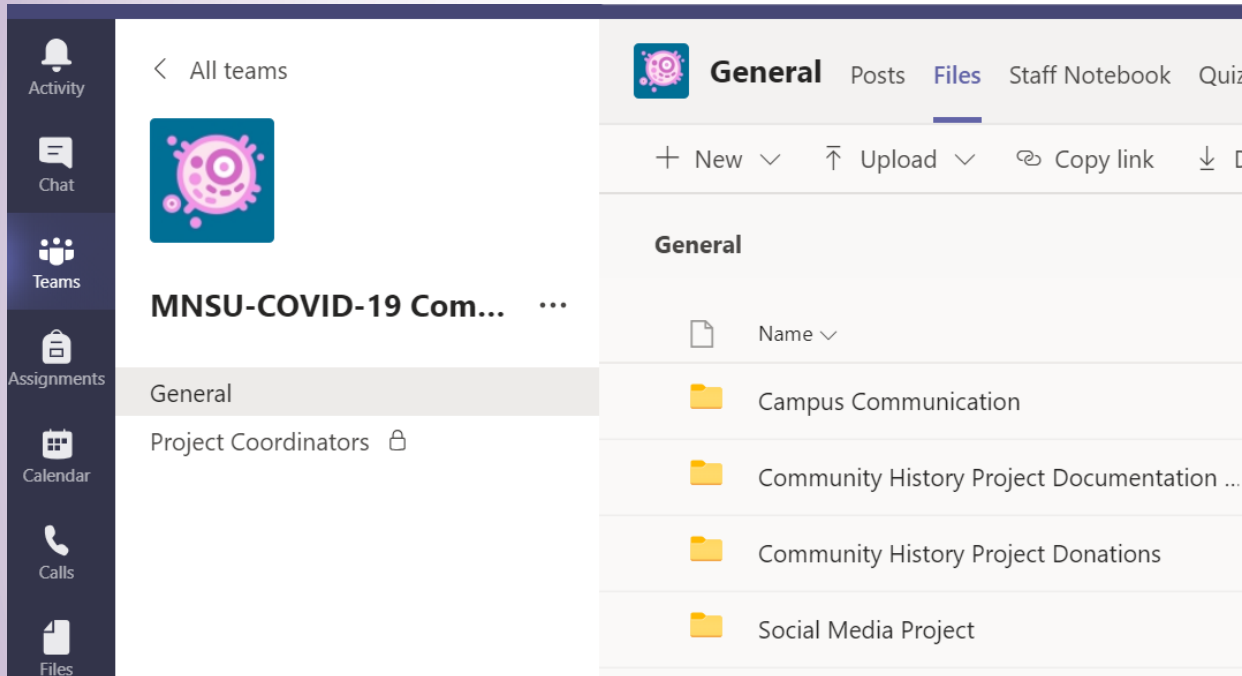
Complications (Minor)

- Quiz was attached to the creator
- Sending the wrong link from the LibGuides

Successes (Lots!)

- Overall ease of use in a team environment
- User friendly for team and project participants
- Use this project as a framework for future collaborations to strengthen University Archives and Southern Minnesota Historical Center collections

Internal Management Tools (aka Software)



- **Microsoft Teams**

- Stored all submissions in a COVID-19 Team
- Excel Tracking Document
- Stored all social media and campus communications

- **Move-It Securely**

- **Shared Email**

- archives@mnsu.edu



Thoughts on Microsoft Teams

Complications

- Can only have one Team open at a time
- Not video friendly

Successes (Lots!)

- Overall ease of use in a team environment
- 1 TB of storage for each team
- Ability to bring a specific document to a person (or groups) attention
- Chat saved lots of time



Project Summary

Project Contributors

- Total Student Employees: 122
 - Student Workers from campus departments
 - International Students
- Total Student Supervisors: 18



Photograph by
Felix Asante

- Students added to project throughout the spring semester and summer.
- Level of engagement varied throughout the project. (June & July participation was high.)

Contributions by Type (As of August 18, 2020)

- Oral Histories (recorded and written)- 396
- Recorded self-interviews – 393
- Drawings/Paintings – 141
- Other creative projects – 251
- Total contributions: 1181



"Closed Restaurants" by Steven Orvaiti



Project Highlights:

- Early submissions reflected fear and anxiousness of the unknown. Over time they have started to reflect hope and an acceptance of new normal.
- Creativity of student submissions
- Students reflected on social justice movement worldwide
- Interviews with people from around the United States and the world
- Many languages used to conduct interviews
- Students working from all over the world
- Valuable collaborations across campus made this project possible

Creative Projects - Artwork

Joshua Lazarus



Jacqueline Asplund



*We Can Beat
This - Together*

Audio Oral History, May 31, 2020

Estrevistador: Y ahora ¿Cómo haces para pasar el tiempo?

Interviewer: Tell us about how you are passing the time.

Entrevistado: Bueno, he aprendido diferentes cosas como dije antes, organizó mejor mi tiempo. Pues, al organizar mejor mi tiempo estoy aprendiendo a tocar el ukulele, cocino, hago ejercicio y leo.

Interviewee: As I said earlier, I have been learning new things since I improved my time management. I am learning to play the ukulele. I cook, exercise, and read.

Portion of an oral history interview
conducted in Spanish and
translated into English

Campus Communications

The screenshot displays a Microsoft Teams interface. At the top left, there is a back arrow and the text "All teams". Below this is a team icon (a blue square with a pink virus-like graphic) and the channel name "MNSU-COVID-19 Com..." followed by a three-dot menu icon. A sidebar on the left shows "General" as the selected channel and "Project Coordinators" with a lock icon below it. The main area shows the "Files" tab selected, with options for "+ New", "Upload", and "Copy link". Below the "Files" tab, the breadcrumb "General > Campus Communication" is visible. A list of files is shown, starting with a "Name" header and a dropdown arrow. The list contains several folders: "Campus and System Messages", "Convocation 2020", "Criminal Justice Program Review", "CSU Blog", "Screenshots of Web Pages", and "Town Halls".

Three yellow wavy lines, resembling flames or stylized waves, are positioned in the upper right quadrant of the slide. They are layered, with the top line being the most prominent and the bottom line being the least.

Next Steps

Sharing the Collection

- Examples of contributions

- Library Social Media channels
- University Archives website
 - <https://library.mnsu.edu/archives/covid-19-project-stories/>

- Archives Collections

- Physical Collection in Archives
- ARCH: University Archives Digital Collections – In development
- Access dates are TBD

- Collection Restrictions

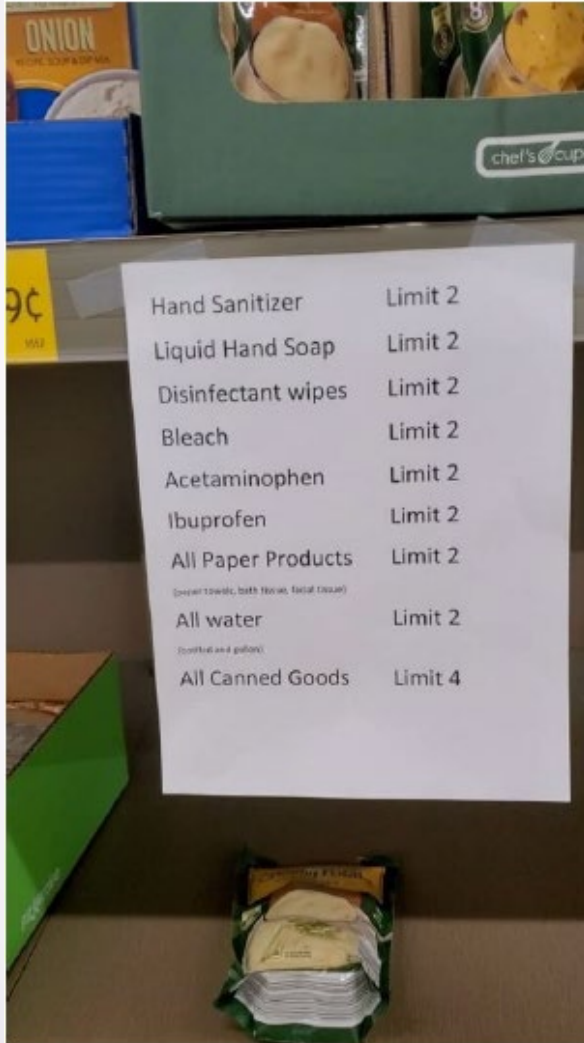
- Restricted for 10 years - 186
- Anonymous - 606
- Physical collection only - 151



Photograph by
Anonymous student of
Ostrander Student
Memorial Bell Tower

Survey Participants

Photograph taken by
Joyce Aigbokhan



- Students – 22 Responses
 - How this project impacted them
 - What they learned
 - What was the most helpful
 - What would they recommend changing
- Supervisors and other campus collaborators – 5 responses
 - What was most helpful
 - What would they recommend changing

A large, abstract yellow graphic consisting of several curved, overlapping shapes that resemble a stylized flame or a series of overlapping petals, positioned behind the main text.

What was the most positive aspect of your participation in the project? (Students)

- Helped me express myself and cope with this stressful time
- Oral history response. Learned lots of difficulties peoples had to face during covid19.
- Participating in this project has helped me unearth many of my talents. For example, this project has made me realized that I can write poems, journals and draw very well and I'm happy to unravel my talents through this project.
- The most positive as aspect is the interaction with interviewees from different backgrounds and how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected them.



What was the most positive aspect of your participation in the project? (Supervisors)

- Having the opportunity to keep my students working throughout the summer was the biggest positive. They were all very appreciative to have a chance to get some hours while our office was closed. It was also neat, and at times humbling, to read and listen to some of the interviews my students did.



Final Thoughts

Complications

- Paying students to be contributors was challenging
- Technology provided both innovation and struggles for this type of project

Successes

- Use this project as a framework for future collaborations to strengthen University Archives and Southern Minnesota Historical Center collections
- Unique, global collection that will stand out amongst other COVID-19 projects done around the country

Questions? Contact the Archives Team

University Archives and Southern Minnesota Historical Center

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Today's Presentation:

https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/lib_services_fac_pubs/181/

Project Website: <https://libguides.mnsu.edu/covid19historyproject>