



Documenting a Pandemic: COVID-19 Community History Project

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Big ideas. Real-world thinking.

Background

- Minnesota State University, Mankato
 - Public, comprehensive university
 - Located in southern Minnesota
 - More than 14,000 students, including more than 1,170 international students from 89 countries
 - Over 130 undergraduate programs and 85 graduate programs, including several doctoral programs.*
- University Archives and Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 - <https://library.mnsu.edu/archives>
 - Digital Collections
 - ARCH - <https://arch.lib.mnsu.edu/>
 - Cornerstone - <https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/>



* "[Fast Facts](#)," Minnesota State University, Mankato, accessed 2/8/2021.



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



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.

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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.

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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

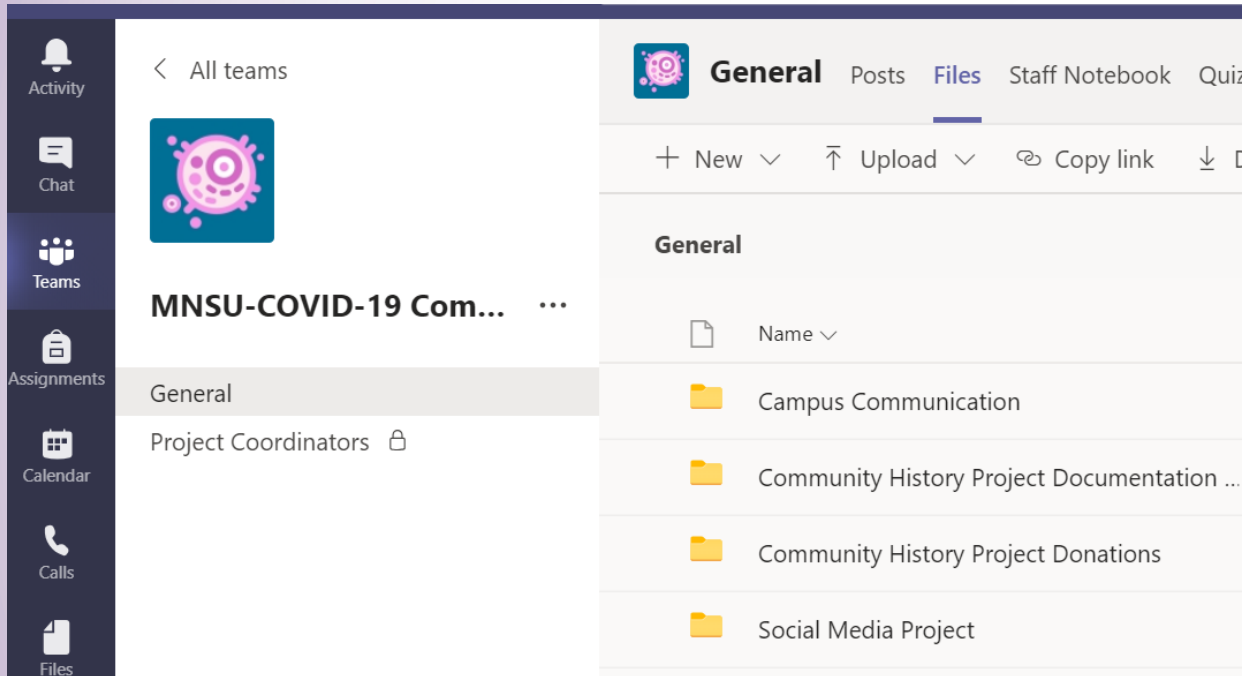
To expand access and understanding about the COVID-19 Pandemic experience to current and future individuals, the University Archives will collect documentation and accept donations on the COVID-19 Pandemic experiences for inclusion in the Archives. These materials will be made available through our physical 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

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



Project Summary

Project Contributors

- Total Students: 124
 - 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

- Oral Histories (recorded and written)- 396
- Recorded self-interviews – 395
- Drawings/Paintings – 141
- Other creative projects – 251
- Total contributions: 1183



“Closed Restaurants” by Steven Orvaiti

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

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Next Steps

Processing the Collection

- Archives Collections

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

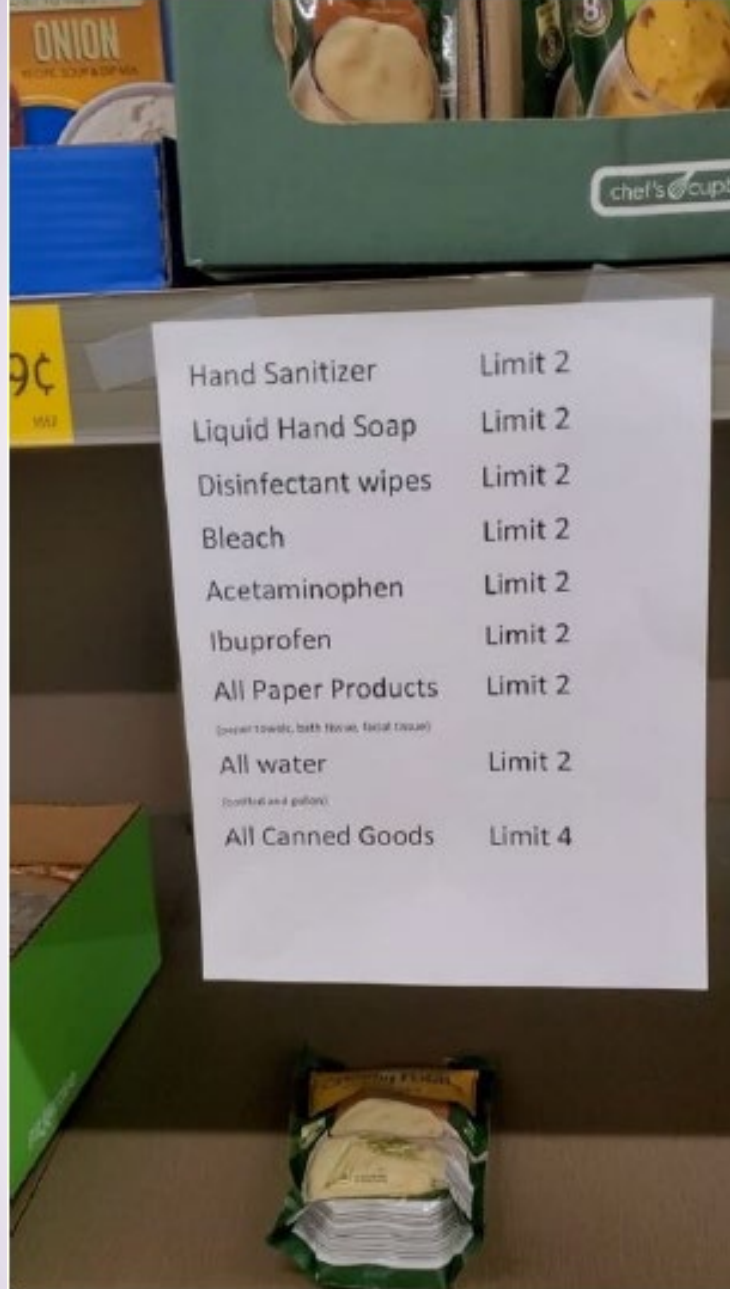
- Collection Restrictions

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



Photograph by
Anonymous student of
Ostrander Student
Memorial Bell Tower

Photograph taken by
Joyce Aigbokhan



Survey of Contributors

- Students – 22 Responses
 - How this project impacted them
 - What they learned
 - What was the most helpful
 - What would they recommend changing



COVID-19 Community History Project

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
- Global collection of COVID-19 projects experiences.



Reuse Project Framework

Examples of new projects

- [#No Justice, No Peace Community History Project](#)
- [Mankato Kiwanis 100th Anniversary Oral History Project](#)

Elements reused

- Website structure (LibGuides)
- Training resources
- Submission forms (pdfs)
- Online submissions (web form)
- Web based tools for interviews
- FAQ

Wrap Up

University Archives and Southern Minnesota Historical Center

Phone: 507-389-1029

Email: archives@mnsu.edu

Today's

Presentation: https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/lib_services_fac_pubs/184/

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

