

Archivists Rally to Document COVID-19

During the gravest public health and economic crises in modern history, archivists are taking action to collect and preserve materials on the COVID-19 pandemic

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, UNITED STATES, May 13, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the midst of one of the gravest public health and economic crises in modern history, archivists are taking action to collect and preserve materials documenting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their communities and the nation. Materials include audio and video media, social media posts, websites, emails and letters, journals and diaries, photographs, oral histories, creative writings, and works of visual and performance art.

In response to social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders, archivists have set up electronic submission forms on their institutional websites, hosted online webinars, and launched new sites inviting local community members to contribute records of their pandemic experiences for preservation. With contributors' permission, archivists also are making materials freely accessible online to provide a testament to the far-reaching and disruptive impacts of COVID-19 on everyday American life. [Here are examples of just some of these projects:](#)

- Brooklyn Public Library (New York) invites submissions to Our Streets, Our Stories, an oral history archives detailing residents' pandemic experiences.
- The Columbia Archives launched Chronicling Columbia's Resilience in a Pandemic: Together at a Distance to collect writing, artwork, and videos documenting the COVID-19 stories of Columbia, Maryland, residents.
- The Cumberland County Historical Society (Pennsylvania) has launched the digital archives Cumberland County during COVID-19: Archiving History as it Happens.
- Troy University's Wiregrass Archive seeks contributions of materials to preserve the day-to-day effects of the crisis on the Alabama community.
- The University of Minnesota Duluth Archives and Special Collections has launched the COVID-19 Community Archives Project.
- Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives invites Iowans to contribute to COVID-19 Stories Projects.
- The University of Northern Colorado Archives and Special Collections has launched Coronavirus at UNC: Archive Your Story, which shares resources for chronicling and donating COVID-19 stories.
- Arizona State University, in collaboration with archivists, faculty, and graduate students from around the world, invites the public to share their stories in the project A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of COVID-19.

- Monique Sugimoto, archivist and local history librarian at Los Angeles County's Palos Verdes Library District, has written an open letter to the Palos Verdes Peninsula community to encourage pandemic-related submissions to the Your Story Is the Peninsula's Story public documentation initiative.

Beyond local communities, archivists have been collecting and preserving thousands of individual websites that capture the effects of COVID-19 on American society. Archived websites document how individuals and communities are coping with the crisis, how health care workers and volunteers are mobilizing to care for those infected, how governments at all levels are responding, and how local and national media are covering the pandemic. [Examples of web archiving projects include:](#)

- The National Library of Medicine is archiving web and social media content as part of its Global Health Events web archive.
- The Icahn School of Medicine's Coronavirus Web Archive documents the Mount Sinai Institutions' response to the pandemic.
- The University of Dayton's COVID-19 Pandemic and the U.S. Church Collections documents the response of the Catholic Church in the United States.
- The East Baton Rouge Parish Library (Louisiana) is collecting websites documenting the impact of the pandemic in that city.
- The University of Nevada, Las Vegas's Coronavirus Web Archive consists of websites documenting the Las Vegas Valley response to the pandemic.
- The University of California San Francisco's COVID-19 and Smoking Web Archive captures sites related to tobacco industry messaging about smoking and vaping during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Archivists are the professionals who work every day to document history as it happens so that it is preserved for future generations. You can help in their efforts by sharing your own experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Contact your local archives, historical society, museum, or library today to donate a journal, photos, or other materials highlighting your personal experience during this public health crisis.

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Founded in 1936, the Society of American Archivists, archivists.org, is North America's oldest and largest national archival professional association. SAA's mission is to serve the educational and informational needs of 6,000 individual and institutional members and to provide leadership to ensure the identification, preservation, and use of records of historical value. [Learn more about pandemic response resources available and how communities](#) are documenting the COVID-19 pandemic.

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