

# Teaching the Archives Module Six

## *A Journal of a Plague Year: An Archive of Covid-19*



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## Module 6: Oral Histories

• **Essential Questions:** How has oral history brought to light the stories of groups whose history might otherwise have been hidden? How has the practice empowered individuals and been employed for advocacy? What are the advantages and disadvantages to using oral histories?

• **Readings:**

1. Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History." *History Workshop*, No. 12 (Autumn 1981): 96-107.
2. Mark Tebeau, "Listening to the City: Oral History and Place in the Digital Era." *The Oral History Review*, 40.1 (2013): pp. 25-35
3. Alexander Freund, "Under Storytelling's Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age." *The Oral History Review*, 42.1 (2015): pp. 96-132
4. Choose one or read both:
  - a. Columbia Center for Oral History, "[Documenting and Interpreting Conflict Through Oral History](#)"
  - b. [The COVID-19 Oral History Project Training Workshops](#)
5. [Oral History Association's Principles and Best Practices](#)
6. *Add course-relevant reading here:*

• **Discussion Questions:**

- How has oral history brought to light the stories of groups whose history might otherwise have been hidden?
- How has the practice of doing oral histories empowered individuals and been employed for advocacy?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages to using oral histories?
- [Post-activity] What did you learn about conducting oral histories from your experience as an interviewer?

• **Activities:**

1. Listen to and analyze 1 oral history on the COVID-19 Archive. Use the *Oral History Analysis Template* to help you organize your thoughts, and be prepared to share your analysis with your partner(s).
  - a. How would you describe/summarize the oral history you listened to?
  - b. How would you describe the subject of the oral history? What was this individual's demeanor? How comfortable did they seem talking with the interviewer?
  - c. How would you characterize the interviewer? What kinds of patterns did you notice in this individual's style of asking questions and the subject's responsiveness?
  - d. Which "best practices" were in effect, and what could have been done differently to improve the quality of the oral history you watched/listened to/read?
2. Conduct one oral history with a *friend or a family member* for the COVID-19 Archive
  - a. Who will be your subject? What questions will you ask? How will you record this oral history?
  - b. Describe your experience conducting this oral history.
  - c. How did your experience differ from your expectations, based on the oral history you watched/listened to/read in the COVID-19 Archive?
  - d. Which of the "best practices" was the most helpful for you?
  - e. Use the *Share Your Story Template* to record information about this oral history before you go to "Share Your Story" to upload it (<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/Share> ). Upload your item to the archive.
  - f. As you prepare to conduct a second oral history, what would you like to work on as an interviewer?
3. Conduct one oral history with *someone who does not look like you – someone whose background is different from yours* – for the COVID-19 Archive
  - a. Who will be your subject? What questions will you ask? How will you record this oral history?
  - b. Describe your experience conducting this oral history.
  - c. What is different about conducting this oral history than the previous one?
  - d. Which of the "best practices" was the most helpful for you?

- e. Use the *Share Your Story Template* to record information about this oral history before you go to “Share Your Story” to upload it (<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/Share> ). Upload your item to the archive.

• **Pairs Well With:**

- Module 1: Archives 101
- Module 4: Archival Silences
- Module 5: Rapid Response Collecting

**Oral History Analysis Template**

Overall impressions:	Impressions of the SUBJECT:	Impressions of the INTERVIEWER:	Best Practices:

**Share Your Story Template: Oral History #1**

Item/Object	(insert file or photo here)
Give your story a title.	
What sort of object is this: text story, photograph, screenshot, drawing, meme, etc.? And where did you find it?	
Tell us a story; share your experience. Describe what the object or story you've uploaded says about the pandemic, and/or why what you've submitted is important to you.	
Use one-word hashtags (separated by commas) to describe your story. For example: Where did it originate? How does this object make you feel? How does this object relate to the pandemic?	
Enter a URL associated with this object, if relevant.	
Who originally created this object? (If you created this object, such as photo, then your name goes here.)	
Give this story a date.	

**Share Your Story Template: Oral History #2**

Item/Object	(insert file or photo here)
Give your story a title.	
What sort of object is this: text story, photograph, screenshot, drawing, meme, etc.? And where did you find it?	
Tell us a story; share your experience. Describe what the object or story you've uploaded says about the pandemic, and/or why what you've submitted is important to you.	
Use one-word hashtags (separated by commas) to describe your story. For example: Where did it originate? How does this	

object make you feel? How does this object relate to the pandemic?	
Enter a URL associated with this object, if relevant.	
Who originally created this object? (If you created this object, such as photo, then your name goes here.)	
Give this story a date.	

• **Feedback:**

We want to hear from you and your students about how using this module went! Please let us know what worked and what didn't by taking a few minutes to fill out this [survey \(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qP3F3zqYq1c3b3EG-1V89qpV6bk4a0MZTOP02cIDTaQ/edit?usp=sharing\)](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qP3F3zqYq1c3b3EG-1V89qpV6bk4a0MZTOP02cIDTaQ/edit?usp=sharing). Thank you!