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HST 580

## **Building a Collection Plan**

*Proposed collection:* Survivor Stories, #isurvived

### **Mission:**

The catalyst of this pandemic year is the pandemic itself, COVID-19. As the pandemic has progressed, over 78 million people worldwide have contracted and recovered from COVID-19. COVID-19 does not discriminate. It is an illness that cuts across demographic differences, infecting all ages, genders, races, sexual orientations, socio-economic statuses, and education levels. Creating a collection centered around the stories of people who have survived their COVID-19 infections further supports the mission of the archive to cultivate submissions from diverse voices, as the virus's infection rate is so widespread. In addition, it will foster unique stories and experiences from a variety of perspectives, because there is such a great diversity in the physical and mental toll of the disease on those who test positive. This collection will also help highlight a vital part of this pandemic experience - physical and mental recovery - in the authentic words of those who had this experience.

### **Collection Scope:**

The purpose of the Survivor Stories collection is to document the experiences of those who battled and overcame COVID-19 infections. It aims to highlight resiliency, celebrate survival, and recognize the long-term impact of the disease on those who are no longer infected but still face lingering effects. The goal is to cultivate stories from the survivor's themselves and to let those who were infected share their experiences in an authentic space. It seeks to illustrate the many different ways COVID-19 has been experienced, from the mildly symptomatic to the long-term hospitalizations.

The key themes and subjects this collection hopes to build are perseverance, reflections, changed outlooks, advice to those never infected, and the aftermath. The long-term goal of this collection is to present a variety of perspectives and firsthand COVID-19 infection experiences. This collection will hopefully include both the stories of resilience from those who had serious cases, as well as the feelings that accompany a mild case. It will hopefully provide a space for those whose outlooks or thoughts about COVID-19 shifted as a result of being infected, and a space for them to share their feelings and concerns now that they are past the initial infection. It also will be a place for those who have lingering effects to share this unique experience. Future generations who access this collection will be able to see the diversity of the way COVID-19 affected the population in the words of those who were infected.

### **Acquisitions:**

This collection can first be built by looking within the archive itself and running queries on terms such as "survivor," "hospital," "ventilator," "long haul," "sick," "symptoms," and "COVID-19."

This collection can be built both by personal stories and by published accounts of survivors already accessible on the internet. A call should be made via social media outlets and at a personal level to bring firsthand submissions from those who were infected.

**Evaluation:**

Survivor Stories fills a current silence in the archive. Despite COVID-19 itself being the catalyst for all that has happened, there is no collection that highlights the experiences of those who have actually had the disease. It is actually difficult to search for survivor accounts, as there is not even controlled vocabulary that would allow an easy search of this type of experience. When considering this collection, I think about how I teach the AIDS epidemic to my students. Growing up during the height of the AIDS epidemic, the central story that was shared again and again was of those who had died. I am not saying this was a mistake - AIDS was not getting the focus it needed to get in this country and the activism that publicized the deaths was necessary. However, as an adult teaching this to students who were born long after the height of the epidemic, I couple the accounts with the accounts of those who died with those who have survived living HIV positive. Most of the documentaries on the AIDS epidemic include interviews with HIV+ persons, some who have been positive since the 1980s. I realize this is not the same situation; COVID-19 is much more contagious, was (except for skeptics) accepted readily, and has not been portrayed as a disease that targets certain groups of people in the way that AIDS was. However, it is similar in the sense that it is a novel virus and the way it is impacting people varies, and the stories of those who survive should have a focus in the archives. In a way, Survivor Stories could function somewhat as a companion to Deathways. While death is certainly another key element of the pandemic experience, so is survival, and this collection would highlight that voice.