

Marie Dicker
Professor Nasstrom
History Internship
08 December 2020

Internship Reflection

Hands down the most memorable submission I curated was about a Native American reservation and its hardships. They were promised a small amount of money to aid their people due to the pandemic, however it was three months later and they still did not get the money allegedly allocated by the government. They went on to insinuate that the government was saving face by publicly covering all bases and promising money to minority groups that they didn't end up paying. This post made me extremely angry that groups in need still had not gotten money yet, while my friends and family were still able to get \$600 a week on unemployment. It really showcased the great divide in our country and how minority groups are often pushed aside. More often their stories are not aired or taken seriously, but the archive was a safe place to post them.

Another memorable post was very simple and humorous. It was submitted by a college boy who obviously had to submit to the archive for class. I curated about fifteen items of his, each one progressively more simpler than the others. The post was a simple two sentences about how he ordered pizza the night before and asked his siblings not to eat it. The next morning he went to eat the last saved slice, but could not find it. This meant that one of the siblings ate it and he was very angry. I find this post memorable as I can definitely relate to my siblings and I clashing last semester when I came home from college. The pandemic put added stress on each of us and sometimes it was very hard to not fight over petty things: like a slice of pizza.

Another aspect of this post that I found to be the most relatable part was the lack of motivation. As stated earlier these submissions were required by a class of some kind (as they had an event identifier), and as fellow student and curator I could see how little effort was put into these posts. All of his items were made the same day and were a few sentences about the day's occurrences. This is relatable because when we first went online I had lost all motivation for school. Lots of work seemed to be busy work. I was not used to the Zoom format and had trouble translating classes to home life (especially organic chemistry). There was a lack of human connection between classmates that I had taken for granted. I put off assignments until the last minute because I could not focus at home. My siblings, mom, dad, cats, grandma, and home-life in general distracted me endlessly. I feel that this lack of motivation during that spring semester was universal among most college students because being uprooted in a sudden manner is not easy. Being thrown back into home-life is also not easy because most people make two separate lives for themselves. That being said it is hard to have them work together synchronously.

After rereading “Archiving of a Plague Year” I see how far the archive has come since June. If I were charged with writing an update to the article I would expand on the notion of silences and emphasize how hard they are to collect. Not only may people suffering not want to share, but also many communities are afraid to speak up for risk of intense repercussions. This may be due to our extremely polarizing political climate right now with an emphasis on anti-immigrant policies. In addition to this, I would also describe the archive more in depth. I would talk about the different collections we have, such as the San Francisco Bay Area collection, the Boston collection, the Lost Graduation collection, etc. This would help the reader

already have an idea of what is on the website and can help them be more organized if they wish to submit a story to the archive.

In the article “Archiving the Plague Year,” the authors talked about silences in minority communities such as Latinx, African American, and Indigenous. They also mentioned the elderly community. All of these silences I noticed while archiving over 200 items on JOTPY website. I believed the elderly were underrepresented purely of the fact that many may not know how to work computers or do not have enough technological knowledge to be able to submit to the archive. Minority communities may have been underrepresented because they are afraid to voice their struggles or currently do not even know the archive exists. This may be a consequence of the current methods of advertising the archive.

Due to the pandemic, financial instability has been extremely prevalent and disproportionately affects minority groups. Many of these groups may not have access to the internet, which would be another reason they would not know of the archive. This brings me to another point, that I have not seen many posts about financial struggle. Currently I know of several college students who do not have access to stable wifi, do not have their own laptops, or did not have a home to go back to once school went online.

Another major exclusion I was surprised to find was the lack of submissions from healthcare workers. At first I did not notice this silence, but after discussing with my classmates I realized that I too had not curated a single item from a healthcare worker. While there are many items on staying sanitized, wearing masks, and keeping generally hygienic these posts came from civilians and gave no insight to hospital life. This is very weird to me because in the early stages of the pandemic I felt as if hospital life was greatly captured on the news with interviews on hospital staff, nurses, and doctors. Maybe there is a silence in the archive because healthcare

workers have been severely overworked since the onset of this pandemic and do not have the free time to submit to the archive. Also, as of December 2020, the pandemic has only worsened, meaning longer hours and more shifts for healthcare workers.

Lastly, another silence that had not crossed my mind was the lack of posts about the election or the political climate surrounding the death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Given how polarized our country has been I figured there would be posts about campaign ads or websites linking us to political candidates and their promises. Also a lot of political movements right now are highly focused on social media (to be able to reach the most number of people). Despite this, I have still not seen any posts of the Black Lives Matter movement or other movements in response to grievances.

My thinking throughout this class on the silences within the archive has evolved immensely. Now I realize that more has to be done to reach out to communities who are underrepresented. At first I thought spreading the word of the archive to my family and immediate friends from home would be a great idea. However, I come from a predominantly wealthy white town, which would only perpetuate the divide seen within the archive currently. Now I try to communicate to groups that will add to the archive's variety and give it a story they have not heard before.

This internship has been extremely valuable to me and has been instrumental in making me feel part of a college community during the pandemic. I curated countless items about online learning, the transition to Zoom classes in March, and the theme of feeling very isolated during quarantine. All of these items resonated immensely with me as I, a full-time college student, went from seeing multiple people everyday to seeing almost no one but my immediate family for

the next three months. The relatable college experience across a vast range of the U.S. and multiple foreign countries was eerie.

In another light, I did curate a lot of experiences that I could not personally relate with, but definitely learned from. A lot of different Native American stories were curated near the end of my curatorial run, talking about limited resources and floods of people coming into their land to find a safe place from the virus. I was lucky enough during this time to be able to have all the resources I need to survive, do online school, and just continue life as normally as it could be. However, curating these submissions was eye-opening because Native American stories are underrepresented in general but especially in the mainstream media. It was nice to see a glimpse of their experience and expand on their hardships.

In no way has this internship been disappointing or problematic. The one thing I would have liked to see is a more active push early on in the archive's conception for more variety in items. Although, with that being said, now there has been a realization of how one-sided the archive can be at times. I hope this push for diversity within the archive continues with vigor. Overall, I was very pleased with this internship experience and think for it being totally online it was extremely well put together.

Working as a curator, as I have said earlier, has really opened my eyes to a lot of injustices and hardships that other groups are facing. With school being online 24/7, I find that I don't always keep up to date on the news, or look at my phone to "take a break" from homework. This means that sometimes I tended to be out of the loop from current events, especially if I was studying for an exam. The archive aided me in reflecting on the past and curating events I may not have known of or only saw a close-minded perspective.

My experience of the pandemic has shaped how I have curated because I am able to relate to lots of different types of stories. I am a college student online right now, I spent time in my small suburban town back home, I have lived in San Francisco for the past seven months, and I have been working two jobs on top of school. This means that I have city experience, suburbia experience, online class experience, and financial hardships and can relate to a lot of stories in the archive.

My two jobs happen to be in the healthcare industry. One is a job as a dental surgery assistant in downtown San Francisco where I aid the dentist in performing periodontal surgeries. In order to do this job I have to be in full PPE almost all the time when I am at work. This means I wear an N95, face shield, full body covering, hair net, and surgical grade gloves. At our office we also have multiple air filtering machines running, the windows open, and a machine specifically for surgery that is a suction device placed right in front of the patient's mouth in order to protect the dentist and I from the air particles being emitted. In my other job I am an intern at an orthopedic surgeon's office. Here I have less of a hands-on role, but shadow the doctor during clinic days, and aid the research team on research days. This office also has a full-blown physical therapy section, so I have witnessed patients still being able to work out at this time (which is virtually unheard of in cities). Through these jobs I have been able to see a side of the healthcare industry that is not documented as often. I have seen many news reports about hospitals but not about smaller businesses. This gave me an upper hand in curating the healthcare industry in general and relating to the long hours (as I worked at the dental place from 7-5 on Tuesdays) and the pain from wearing the face shield and masks for so long.

This internship experience has been extremely enlightening to me by exposing me to perspectives that I would have never been exposed to previously, but also showing that I am not

alone in the events I am experiencing as a city-goer, college student, daughter, and healthcare worker.