

# Teaching the Archives Module Five

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



**July 2020**

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Funded by the New England Humanities Consortium

## Module 5: Rapid Response Collecting

• **Essential Questions:** What is Rapid Response Collecting (RRC)? What are the best practices of RRC, and why is it an important type of collecting? What are the challenges of RRC?

• **Readings:**

1. Meghan Brady, excerpts from “Contemporaneous Collecting” (PhD diss., Seton Hall University, 2019), pp. 1-7, 36-58, 70-71. [Note: the entire dissertation is included in the readings; please remind students to only read the pages listed above.] <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2697/>
2. Michelle Casswell and Marika Cifor, “[From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives](#),” *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016) pp. 23-43. [Note: This may be a difficult reading for undergraduate students. The *Archives in Context* podcast featuring Michelle Caswell (Season 1, Episode 3: January 28, 2019) or another text may be more appropriate for your class.]
3. Pamela Schwartz, Whitney Broadaway, Emilie S. Arnold, Adam M. Ware, and Jessica Domingo. “Rapid-Response Collecting after the Pulse Nightclub Massacre.” *The Public Historian* 40, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): pp. 105–14. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2018.40.1.105>.
4. [The Society of American Archivists’ Documenting in Times of Crisis Resource Kit](https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/documenting-in-times-of-crisis-a-resource-kit) (<https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/documenting-in-times-of-crisis-a-resource-kit>)
5. Choose AT LEAST TWO:
  - a. Roger Christman, “The accidental web archive: The Tragedy at Virginia Tech Collection.” *History @ Work* (March 14, 2018). <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/the-accidental-web-archive-the-tragedy-at-virginia-tech-collection/>
  - b. Graham Bowley, “In an Era of Strife, Museums Collect History as it Happens.” *The New York Times* (October 1, 2017). <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/01/arts/design/african-american-museum-collects-charlottesville-artifacts.html>
  - c. Alex Marshall, “Posters, banners, Boarding Passes: Museums Try to Get a Head Start on History.” *The New York Times* (June 18, 2018). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/arts/design/rapid-response-collecting-ireland-berlin.html>
  - d. Sarah Cascone, “Signs of the Times: Museums are Collecting Protest Posters From the 2018 Women’s March.” *artnet News* (January 22, 2018). <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/museums-already-enshrining-2018-womens-march-us-history-1204031>
  - e. Pamela Schwartz, “Information PLEASE: Preserving History as it Happens: Orange County Regional History Center undertook rapid-response collecting after Pulse nightclub shooting.” *Museum Magazine* (May/June 2018).
  - f. Caroline Enos, “What was it like to live through the pandemic, grandpa? University archives seek items that capture COVID-19 history.” *The Boston Globe* (June 26, 2020). <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/06/26/metro/what-was-it-like-live-through-pandemic-grandpa-university-archives-look-items-that-capture-covid-19-history/>

6. *Add course-relevant reading here:*

• **Discussion Questions:**

- What are some of the challenges with rapid response collecting? In what ways can archivists and museum personnel mitigate them?
- What are the ‘best practices’ of RRC? What can collecting teams learn from RRC examples that can be applied to other types of archival work?
- Who should be in charge of rapid response collecting during/after a major event in a community? Why? Who are the stakeholders, and how might their goals overlap or differ?
- What other recent events or movements do you think could or should be archived through RRC? Why? Who should be in charge of the collecting? Of the curating? Of granting/limiting access to the collection? Why?

• **Activities:**

1. Work with your partner(s) to compare and contrast two or more different examples of RCC from the readings (reading 5, choose two or more from a-e). Pay particular attention to how collaborative and connected to the community the rapid response collecting was, and to examples of empathetic responsiveness on the part of the collecting teams. Use the *RRC Project Comparison Template* to organize your thoughts, and to capture the following information:
  - a. Description of the event(s)/movement(s)
  - b. Who collected items for the projects
  - c. Who were the stakeholders in the communities
  - d. Examples of RRC ‘best practices’
  - e. Eventual location (archive, museum, library, etc.) housing the items collected
  - f. Community response to the RRC project
  
2. Pretend you’re a historian 50 years from now, and that you’re researching an event for which archivists undertook a rapid response collecting project (see included list). Think of a topic related to the event that you chose that you’d like to learn more about, and use the corresponding digital archive as your source for research materials. Fill out a *RRC Project Research Organization Template* with the following information:
  - a. Name and description of your topic
  - b. 1-3 research questions you will try to answer
  - c. 3-5 items from the digital archive that you’re using (include the item’s title and a brief description)
  - d. A brief (1-2 paragraph) summary of your research process. Which sources were the most helpful in answering your research questions? What parts of the research process were easiest, and which were more difficult? What other resources would you have liked to find to help answer your questions?

Pulse Nightclub RRC Archive: <https://oneorlandocollection.com>

Ebola Response Digital Archive: <http://www.ebola-anthropology.net>

Boston Marathon Bombing: <https://marathon.library.northeastern.edu>

• **Pairs Well With:**

- Module 2: Digital Archives
- Module 3: Archives and Civic Purpose
- Module 6: Oral Histories

***RRC Project Comparison Template***

	<b><i>Example 1</i></b>	<b><i>Example 2</i></b>
<i>Name/description</i> of the event(s)/movement(s):		
<i>Collecting team(s)</i> : Who collected items for the projects?		
<i>Stakeholders</i> : Who were the stakeholders in the communities?		
Examples of RRC ‘ <i>best practices</i> ’:		
<i>Location</i> : Where are the items that were collected housed?		
What was the <i>community response</i> to the RRC project?		

Summary of what you and your partner learned from these two examples:

**RRC Project Research Organization Template**

<i>Topic:</i>		
<i>Research Questions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>		
<i>RCC Project Archive Item 1:</i>	<i>Item Title/URL:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
<i>RCC Project Archive Item 2:</i>	<i>Item Title/URL:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
<i>RCC Project Archive Item 3:</i>	<i>Item Title/URL:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
<i>RCC Project Archive Item 4:</i>	<i>Item Title/URL:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
<i>RCC Project Archive Item 5:</i>	<i>Item Title/URL:</i>	<i>Description:</i>

Summary of your research process:

**• 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!