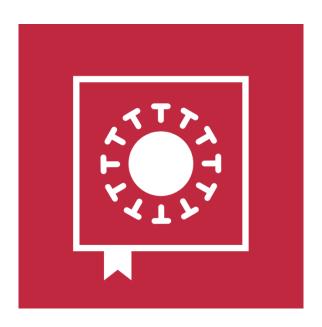# Teaching the Archives Module Two

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

## July 2020

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# Module 2: Digital Archives

• **Essential Questions:** How does the digital realm change the nature of archives?  Who are the stakeholders in a digital archive?  How are privacy and access concerns balanced by digital archivists?  What are the biggest challenges to archival work in the 21st century? How is metadata active interpretation?

• **Readings:**

1. Jill Lepore, "The Cobweb: Can the Internet be Archived?" *The New Yorker*, January 19, 2015.
2. Kritika Aragwal, "Doing Right Online: Archivists Shape an Ethics for the Digital Age." *Perspectives on History*. November 1, 2016.  https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2016/doing-right-online-archivists-shape-an-ethics-for-the-digital-age
3. Elena S. Danielson, *The Ethical Archivist*, (Society of American Archivists, 2010), pp. 144-163.
4. Choose one or read both:
    a. Francine Barone, David Zeitlyn, and Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, "Learning from Failure: The case of the disappearing Web site." *First Monday*, Volume 20, Number 5. May 4, 2015.  https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/5852/4456
    b. Podcast: *Archives in Context – Season 2, Episode 2 – Laura Millar (September 24, 2019). 29 minutes.*
5. FOR HELPFUL DEFINITIONS: Trevor Owens, "What do you Mean by an Archive? Genres of Usage for Digital Preservers" February 27, 2014.  From the Library of Congress Blog, *The Signal.* Accessed June 1, 2020.  https://blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2014/02/what-do-you-mean-by-archive-genres-of-usage-for-digital-preservers/
6. *Add course-relevant reading here:*


• **Discussion Questions:**

- What are the particular challenges and attributes of *digital* archives?
- Is the 21st century a "black hole of information"?  With so many documents "born digital," how do we adequately store and provide access to them?
- What are some of the ways digital archives (like the COVID-19 Digital Archive) are creating and maintaining records?
- What is metadata? What are metadata standards? How is metadata active interpretation?
- Who are the stakeholders in a digital archive?
- How are privacy and access concerns balanced by digital archivists?

• **Activities:**

1. Using the Internet Archive and the Wayback Machine for research
    a. To start to get a feel for how to use the Wayback Machine, look at archived editions of websites by pasting any URL into the Wayback Machine search bar (https://archive.org).  What are the attributes of this site, and what are its limitations?
    b. Next, work with your partner(s) and the Library of Congress's collections of archived web pages (https://www.loc.gov/websites/collections) to conduct some research on a topic represented in their collection that interests you.  You and your partner(s) should fill out one *Current and Archived Website Research Organization Template* with the following information:
        i. Name and description of your topic
        ii. 1-3 research questions you will try to answer
        iii.        3 *current* websites you find through a Google search that help answer your research question(s) (provide the URL and a brief description of the information you found there)

          iv.     3 *archived* websites you find through the LOC archived web page collection that help answer your research question(s) (provide the URL and a brief description of the information you found there)

          v. A brief (1-2 paragraph) summary of your research process. Who did what? 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?

2. COVID-19 Archive
   a. Pretend you're a historian 50 years from now, and that you're researching the COVID-19 pandemic. Think of a topic related to the pandemic that you'd like to learn more about, and use the COVID-19 Digital Archive (https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/welcome) as your source for research materials. Fill out a *COVID-19 Digital Archive Research Organization Template* with the following information:
      i. Name and description of your topic
      ii. 1-3 research questions you will try to answer
      iii.     3-5 items from the COVID-19 Digital Archive collection (include the item's title and a brief description)
         1. At least one of these items should be *born digital* (are they perma-linked? Is the repository to which they are linked actually permanent, or are there contingencies?)
      iv.     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?

• **Pairs Well With:**

- Module 4: Archival Silences
- Module 5: Rapid Response Collecting
- Module 6: Oral Histories

### *Current and Archived Website Research Organization Template*

| Topic: | | |
|---|---|---|
| Research Questions:<br>• <br>• <br>• | | |
| Current Website Source 1: | URL: | Information found: |
| Current Website Source 2: | URL: | Information found: |
| Current Website Source 3: | URL: | Information found: |
| ARCHIVED Website Source 1: | URL: | Information found: |
| ARCHIVED Website Source 2: | URL: | Information found: |
| ARCHIVED Website Source 3: | URL: | Information found: |

Summary of your research process:

## *COVID-19 Digital Archive Research Organization Template*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Topic:* | | |
| *Research Questions:*<br>• <br>• <br>• | | |
| *COVID-19 Digital Archive Item 1:* | *Item Title/URL:* | *Description:* |
| *COVID-19 Digital Archive Item 2:* | *Item Title/URL:* | *Description:* |
| *COVID-19 Digital Archive Item 3:* | *Item Title/URL:* | *Description:* |
| *COVID-19 Digital Archive Item 4:* | *Item Title/URL:* | *Description:* |
| *COVID-19 Digital Archive Item 5:* | *Item Title/URL:* | *Description:* |

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). Thank you!