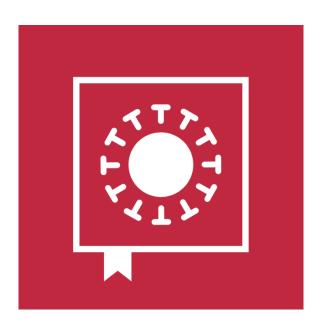# Teaching the Archives Module One

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

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Module 1: Archives 101

• **Essential Questions:** WHAT IS AN ARCHIVE? What does an archivist do, and what complications may arise in doing these jobs successfully? How does record-keeping matter in the context of a democratic government? Who are the stakeholders in an archive, and how are their competing needs addressed?

• **Readings:**

1. Watch on YouTube: "What is an Archive?" *The National Archives UK*, 2013.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URhWOKyve-I
2. Elena S. Danielson, *The Ethical Archivist*, (Society of American Archivists, 2010) 27-33; 43-46.
3. Tom Beazley, Victoria Cain, and Rebecca A. Wingo, "Archiving a Plague Year: Building A Crowdsources Digital Archive of COVID-19." *Perspectives on* History, June 29, 2020. https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2020/archiving-a-plague-year-building-a-crowdsourced-digital-archive-of-covid-19
4. Choose one or read both:
   a. Victoria Lopez, "ICE Plans to Start Destroying Records of Immigrant Abuse, Including Sexual Assault and Deaths in Custody." ACLU Blog. Updated May 29, 2018. https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/ice-and-border-patrol-abuses/ice-plans-start-destroying-records-immigrant
   b. Nora Caplan-Bricker, "The Challenge of Preserving the Historical Record of #MeToo," *The New Yorker,* March 11, 2019.
5. Kate Eichhorn, "Beyond digitisation: a case study of three contemporary feminist collections, Archives and Manuscripts." 42:3, 227-237, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.958866
6. Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" *TED Talk* (2009).
7. *Add course-relevant reading here:*

• **Discussion Questions:**

- What does an archivist do, and what complications may arise in doing those tasks successfully?
- How is record-keeping an essential part of democratic governments?
- How can records that reflect rapidly evolving social movements be collected and preserved?
- How might the needs and goals of archivists, record creators, record subjects, and larger communities differ, and how can they be reconciled?
- Imagine that you're a historian fifty years from now. What sources would you need to access in order to learn about the lives of college students today? Where would you look to find it?

• **Activities:**

1. Browse through the COVID-19 Digital Archive. Choose a topic that interests you that you think may be represented in the archive and see what you can find. Take some time to focus on...
   a. The stories that are included in this archive – whose experiences are front and center?
   b. The Archivist's Code(s) of Ethics (from Danielson, *The Ethical Archivist*) - what are some examples of ways in which the COVID-19 Digital Archive is successful in archiving the COVID-19 pandemic in an ethical manner? What shortcomings do you notice in this archive, and what could be done to remedy them?
   c. User experience – what is it like to navigate the site? How easy is it to find something you're looking for? How easy is it to stumble upon something that interests you?

2. Use the "Global Pandemic Map" to discover how well represented YOUR geographical area is in the COVID-19 Archive.
    a. Is your geographical area well-represented in this archive? Why do you think this is the case?
    b. Think about an item you can add to the COVID-19 Archive that would help 'round out' the collection by representing your geographic area. Pay careful attention to the information you provide to support your item – how will this metadata help a user interpret this item? Use the *Share Your Story Template* to record information about this item before you go to "Share Your Story" to upload an item (https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/Share). Upload your item to the archive.
    c. Share the item you have added to the archive with your partner(s)/groupmates. Explain why you chose this item to upload, and how you described the item when you uploaded it.

• **Pairs Well With:**

- Module 3: Archives and Civic Purpose
- Module 4: Archival Silences
- Module 6: Oral Histories

Share Your Story Template

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). Thank you!