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Local Woman Helping Save Pandemic History

WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TX, July 5, 2020 - History professors at [Arizona State University](#), in conjunction with historians around the world and one from right here in Williamson County, have created a way to preserve the history we are all living through right now. They created the [Journal of the Plague Year digital archive](#). Digital archives are unique because it allows crowdsourcing. Anyone can add to it at any time. The goal of the [JOTPY](#) is to preserve the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of life during the Covid-19 Pandemic so future generations will have some understanding of what we have all been through.

An archive, either physical or digital, is a place where items from the past are stored. This is where historians go to do their work. While digital archives are relatively new, they have been used to document several big events like 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. This archive, named after a 1722 novel by Daniel Defoe, began in mid-March just after President Trump declared a national emergency in response to the pandemic. It already has 7,000 items including photographs, social media posts, memes, emails, video, artwork, news articles and pictures or scans of physical items such as paper journals.

A local Leander woman, Chris Twing, began working on the archive in May as an intern and part of her academic work toward a master's degree in history. "Even before I knew about the project, I had started a sort of archive of my own. I was saving posts from social media that showed the empty shelves at HEB and pictures of nurses and doctors holding signs, asking us to stay home. As someone learning to be a historian doing this just seemed natural." Since joining the JOTPY team she has added many of the items she saved.

She also notes, "anytime an archive is created someone's story is missed because that is the nature of collecting but being digital and crowdsourced this archive has a way of democratizing itself." Anyone can contribute. Many are familiar with the old adage that history is written by the victors, but as public history professor and co-founder of the archive, Dr. Mark Tebeau explains, "history is not written by the victors but those who leave records." Will you be part of the record?

Share your story, image, video, artwork, etc. to the archive by submitting it on this easy to use [web form](#).

END

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