Rhode Island COVID-19 Archive
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About These Materials
The Rhode Island COVID-19 Archive (RICA) is a joint partnership between the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS) and the Providence Public Library (PPL). RIHS and PPL are aiming to create a crowdsourced digital archive to document and share the COVID-19 experience in Rhode Island. RICA is a state-wide "people's archive," dedicated to getting as many voices and perspectives as possible to tell the story of the pandemic.

These materials guide students through a set of activities that will allow them to explore the role of the archive as well as providing them with prompts to create their own potential entries to contribute.

Learning Objectives

Students will learn and think critically about the importance of archives in memory and how we recall history as a society.

Students will act as the curators to their own museums or public educational spaces. They will make choices on how to tell future generations about their time living through a pandemic. They will decide how to interpret that history for other people (through art, public discourse, pictures, videos, etc.)

Students will examine and self reflect on their own experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and create an entry that tells their story to potentially be contributed to the public archive.

Definitions

Archive- a place to store historic records that provide information about a specific group of people, institution, or place. Physical archives can be accessed in person or sometimes online if the archive materials have been scanned.

Curated- for the purposes of this lesson, we use the phrase curated to mean, crafted with a specific intent in mind, meant to share a specific perspective.

Digital Archive- an archive that only exists digitally and can be accessed digitally.

Intentional Collecting- Collecting information for an archive while keeping in mind stories that the collector wishes to be told and gaps in existing archives. For example, many American archives do not contain records about the experiences of people of color. So today, many American institutions aim to collect records that can speak to those stories.

<u>Activity 1: The Importance of Archives</u>

The Rhode Island COVID-19 was designed to collect and share the experiences of all Rhode Islanders during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, archives come in all different shapes and sizes. In this lesson, we'll explore the importance of archives and the role that they play in our collective memory/history. To do this, we will read some relevant articles and watch a couple of TedTalks on the subject.

Reading: "The Importance of Archives"
https://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/aarc.53.2.d6rh3w55028u4h14

Questions pertaining to "The Importance of Archives":

1. Why are archives of "central importance to a democratic society?"

2. How do we choose what to save?

College Activity Packet

Reading: "Why Archives?"
https://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.6

Question pertaining to "Why Archives?":

3. What would happen if archives died?

Video: "Archives Have the Power to Boost Marginalized Voices"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsNPlBBi1lE

Questions pertaining to "Archives Have the Power to Boost Marginalized Voices"

4. As Dominique Luster says in the video, "if your history isn't recorded and preserved, did you exist?" What are your thoughts on this?

5. What do you think of history as "a series of strategically curated decisions?"

Video: "Closing the Gender Gap in the Historical Record through Stories in Womens' Archives"
https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_funke_butler_closing_the_gender_gap_in_the_historical_record_through_stories_in_women_s_archives

Questions pertaining to "Closing the Gender Gap in the Historical Record through Stories in Womens' Archives"

6. What is the role of archives in advancing equality?

7. What does it mean to be you (and the identities that are a part of you in this time and place)? How would this be presented in the archive?

8. What materials do you choose to save?

Reading: "Historical Archives Once Silenced Marginalized Voices. Now Pandemic Archivists Want Them to be Heard."
https://www.chronicle.com/article/Historical-Archives-Once/248693

Questions pertaining to "Historical Archives Once Silenced Marginalized Voices. Now Pandemic Archivists Want Them to be Heard."

     9. What stories do you think your personal archive tells?

     10. Are there gaps and could you fill them?

     11. What records help your archive tell its most important stories?

Activity 2: Reflections of a College Student during the Coronavirus Pandemic

In the Rhode Island COVID-19 Archive people share all kinds of information including written notes, photographs, artwork, and recording of sounds in their everyday lives. This activity could be submitted into the Public Contributions Collection found here: https://ricovidarchive.org/items/browse?collection=1

Here are some things to reflect on:

1. How has COVID-19 changed your thoughts about the future? Has it impacted your thoughts on life after college?

2. How has virtual learning changed your relation with the learning experience and education?

3. What have been the worst and best parts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

4. How will you tell your story of this time when you're older? Why will you make certain storytelling choices?

5. How do you want the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 to be remembered by posterity? What do you think should be emphasized?

Activity 3: Creating Your Own Contribution for the Rhode Island COVID-19 Archive

Using these prompts and anything else that comes to mind, create a reflection of where you're at, right now, during this coronavirus pandemic. You can write, draw, record a video or audio performance, etc. It can be long or short. When you're all done, we encourage you to share your completed project on the COVID-19 Archive. You can submit your project here: https://ricovidarchive.org/contribution. Even if you don't want to submit it to the archive, please share your project and thoughts on this activity with us at education@rihs.org.