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Archiving Bilingual Latin@ Oral Histories

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Abstract

Over the past ten years, digital archives documenting underrepresented communities have been rising. For example, oral and print historical projects about minoritized communities and ethnic cultural heritage centers have existed for decades (Daniel, 2010), yet few are fully accessible online. The increased presence of these types of archives points not only to the need to document the histories of these communities but also to the interest in making this work accessible to all. There is an urgency in documenting, archiving, and curating histories—audio, print, video, and other ephemera—because minoritized communities have consistently faced exclusion from majority historical documents. As precarious and essential as this work is, important projects like the one discussed here are often shared as an in-process version. This process allows us to shape and consider new ways of archiving, perhaps even disrupting traditional collecting and accessioning methods beyond canonical (White) standards. This article shows our interest in developing a decolonized model for archiving digital oral history collections. Indeed, much of the way we are thinking about making the collection accessible is by centering it on bilingual descriptions of each item in the collection signals a non-traditional and, thus, decolonial way of documenting a community.

“Archiving Bilingual Latin@ Oral Histories” is an initiative to make an already existing digital oral history archive accessible to the community it documents. From collecting stories, accessioning, and website design and content, it seeks to work collaboratively with students and the community to present a bilingual archive representing the Latina/o/x community in Ohio.

Keywords: archives; bilingual; Latinx; oral history

Publication Type: case study

Introduction

Over the past ten years, digital archives that document underrepresented communities have been on the rise. For example, oral and print historical projects about minoritized communities and ethnic cultural heritage centers have existed for decades (Daniel, 2010), yet few are fully accessible online. The increased presence of these types of archives points not only to the need to document the histories of these communities but also to the interest in making this work accessible to all. Indeed, there is an urgency in documenting, archiving, and curating histories—audio, print, video, and other ephemera—because minoritized communities have consistently faced exclusion from majority historical documents. As precarious and important as this work is, important projects like the one discussed here are often shared as an in-process version. That is, oral historians, digital archivists, and public humanities scholars make choices that are based on time, access, and support from technical or specialized personnel

and funding, all of which are often scarce. The reasons for the lack of resources are many. Still, one important consideration is what Boyles et al. (2018) have noted: academia, although interested in public digital humanities, still values print monographs over digital labor. Yet, for those of us producing public-facing work, in this case, an oral history that centers on the local community and who engage students in several steps of this work (interview training, digital photography, video editing, and accessioning), digital access is crucial, and the need to make the content available is pressing. Undoubtedly, we are met with these questions: When is a digital archive ready for the public? Do we wait to make a project public until all the elements are completed? How will the community know their contributions are valued if we wait too long to publish them?

Background and Mission of Oral Narratives of Latin@s in Ohio (ONLO)

Archiving bilingual Latina/o/x stories in Ohio responds to these pressing questions and, as such, is an initiative to make an already existing digital oral history archive accessible to the community it documents. It seeks to work collaboratively with students and communities to present a bilingual archive that represents the Latina/o/x population in Ohio during all stages of the process, including collecting stories, accessioning, designing the website, and curating content. The archive, understood as a collection of photographs, video, and audio (Potter, 2007), should be accessible to the community and researchers. Indeed, with this in mind, we continue to work towards designing an archive that is not only just but also an accurate representation of the Latina/o/x community that includes information in Spanish and English.

ONLO, a growing oral history archive about Latinas/os/x in Ohio, documents life stories of the Latina/o/x community across generations, decades, and heritages. The project began in 2014 and has archived over 130 oral histories. The archive itself seeks to provide narratives of Latina/o/x life that counter the overrepresentation of one-sided views, the misrepresentation in the media of this community, and, indeed, the absence of their presence and contributions altogether. While ONLO is not designated as a community archive, we aspire to provide a fair and just representation of the community that reflects their values and identities. Therefore, we want to provide a more inclusive historical record in the way we present each aspect of this collection. Caswell (2014) argues that community archives empower the communities they seek to document, stating that “[p]ower is central to this conversation; the need to uncover and provide a platform for previously marginalized voices” (p. 32). In this sense, ONLO has sought to fill this gap. While we continue to respond to feedback from communities and students who interact with the archive, our effort towards creating a resource that is available to anyone with online¹ access is a step towards helping us make sense of our own histories in relation to this community.

While our collection is unique in that it is, to our knowledge, one of only a handful of digital archives of oral narratives to intentionally present content in both English and Spanish, thus increasing the accessibility of multimedia collections through online resources, early examples include projects such as *From Lunchroom to Boardroom*, a series of recorded interviews and accompanying transcripts from 1991 that document the stories of women who participated in the Queensland Labor Movement between 1930 and 1970 (Horn & Fagg, 2001). In 2000, the University of Queensland Library decided to digitize the collection and created indices that distinguished and organized segments within each interview, thus creating a searchable online database (Horn & Fagg, 2001).

The last five years have also seen a rise in internet services similar to Europeana, which provides access to over 50 million digitized resources from libraries, museums, and other archives across Europe. Beyond simply making their resources available via the internet, close attention is paid to creating metadata to maximize the ease of navigation and, ultimately, the usefulness of a collection (Kuzma & Moscicka, 2018). Nowadays, guides published by organizations such as the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (<https://www.dublincore.org/specifications/dublin-core/dces/>) help to standardize the pieces of information that digital collections provide to their users. They stress the importance of key elements such as the contributor, date, description, and format of a resource, among other descriptors.

Similarly, in the U.S., we have seen an increased number of projects that stress the importance of documenting underrepresented communities. In just the last 20 years, there has been a growing interest in documenting Latina/o/x histories. Projects such as the Bracero History Archive (<https://braceroarchive.org/>), Voces Oral History Center from the University of Texas at Austin (<https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/>), Chicagolandia Oral History Archive (<https://www.chicagolandiaoralhistory.org/>), Cartas a la Familia: De la migración de Jesusita a Jane/Family Letters: On the Migration from Jesusita to Jane (<https://familyletters.unl.edu/>), and Migration is Beautiful (<http://migration.lib.uiowa.edu/>) are a few examples of this increased archival presence in local communities. However, only a few archives, such as Nuestras Raíces: The Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island (nuestrasraicesri.org) and New Roots: Voices from Carolina del Norte/Nuevas Raíces: Voces de Carolina del Norte (<https://newroots.lib.unc.edu/>) offer a bilingual format to their archives. We used many of these collections as examples and as inspiration when thinking about the purpose of our archival work and the impact improvements to the ONLO Collection could have on the future. With the reflections produced by these initiatives serving as launching points, our goal was to adapt these archival and accessioning practices to fit the needs of a community-centric collection of bilingual oral narratives.

Historical and Recent Barriers Facing the ONLO Collection

While the stories are collected in the preferred language of the narrator (Spanish and English) and uploaded to the Center for Folklore Studies (CFS) website at The Ohio State University, little has been done to pay attention to the way in which the archive is inviting to community members, participants, and researchers. This is primarily due to time limitations, personnel access, and funding. These narratives are a central part of the service-learning course at The Ohio State University entitled Spanish in Ohio. Students view or read these oral history narratives as they prepare to work directly with the local Latina/o/x community in Central Ohio. The director of the folklore archives and the ONLO director worked with five students to create an archive that represents the community it seeks to document. In other words, we worked towards creating an archive where component elements (the collection, website content, and the accessioning processes) are all fully bilingual.

Given our COVID-19 restrictions, the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters presented the perfect opportunity to provide students with a unique way to engage with the archive. Under non-pandemic conditions, students are discouraged from working online because a service-learning class's primary goal is to work with the community. The pandemic has taught us that we can continue to work collaboratively and learn from the community in different ways, which has now expanded the way we think about community engagement. For example, while we could not work in person, we could host two virtual presentations to present the work on the archive and

receive feedback. This virtual setting, primarily due to COVID-19, provided a convenient platform for exchanging knowledge and information.

Expanding Accessibility of ONLO through Student Engagement

After expressing interest in working as archival interns, students became familiar with the CFS's Folklore Archives Collections, and they eventually focused on the ONLO Collection to understand the relationship between the ONLO Collection and the larger body of collections housed at the Folklore Archives. Via Zoom, we trained students on how to understand the relationship between archiving, oral history, and social justice. They listened to interviews and discussed the narratives, thereby critically engaging with Latina/o/x stories. A vital element of this work was requesting feedback from the community and having public presentations about the progress of this work, which could help us understand where the gaps might be and assure us that we were moving in the right direction with this project. During their self-guided explorations, students were asked to consider the similarities and differences between the various collections, as well as the unique aspects that stood out to them. Only then was their attention directed to the ONLO Collection in particular. Additionally, students reflected on the value of oral history, the roles of digital archives, and the importance or purpose of archival work. In doing so, they engaged in participatory pedagogy, which Foulis (2018) describes as learning that is promoted by self-reflection on personal experiences in relation to others.

It was important to us that students developed a sense of ownership and mutual collaboration during each step of the process, so they offered insights and were asked to provide feedback on how to name files with the Latina/o/x community in mind. Together, we began to look for ways to modify the finding aid template best to meet collection, researcher, and community needs. Students eventually shared ideas produced by these prompts during a virtual training session that laid the foundation for their internships' relevance and learning objectives. During this introductory meeting, we also reviewed how the students would complete the two primary tasks of their position: establishing and implementing an effective naming scheme for the various files associated with the ONLO Collection and organizing valuable pieces of metadata in an electronic finding aid. Walking through a document that outlined the proper formats for each type of file's names and using archives from the collection as examples, we explained the importance of a consistent naming pattern. We defined the significance of each element in a name stem, specifically regarding a bilingual collection such as ONLO. We also thoroughly discussed the significance of each element, for example, the importance of specifying which narrative a photograph is associated with and describing what information this provides to our viewers. We then introduced students to the finding aid and the metadata categories that we thought would be most useful in terms of accessibility. We made sure to explicitly note how our finding aid is tailored to a collection of oral histories, specifically, one that contains knowledge presented in both English and Spanish. We also emphasized the value of this accompanying resource to the potential of the collection.

Since our restrictions for gathering in-person modified our workflow, instead of solely instructing students on how to complete their tasks, our initial meeting as an archival group operated as an open exchange of ideas, serving to model collaborative work and build community. Questions and concerns introduced by the students were critically thought about, not only in the immediate scope of the ONLO narratives but also regarding oral histories, bilingual collections, and digital archives of cultural value in general. We remained mindful of our roles in shaping how history is perceived and the importance of deviating from historically dominant approaches to archival

work. Doing so allowed us to remain intentional about how our archive should be organized and what information should be available to those interested in the collection. In accordance with views held by others, such as Smithies et al. (2019), we sought to ensure that our archival work was an ongoing process as opposed to an undertaking that would eventually be marked as complete. Specifically, we remained open to changing our approaches throughout the entirety of the semester based on the continuous insight and feedback offered by students during biweekly meetings. For example, concerns about the inclusion of special characters resulted in adjustments to our naming schemes for the future and in corrections to previously named files. This flexibility was also reflected in the approach we took to document our process, namely, the use of an easily editable accessioning guide that was accessible to the entire archival team.

Accessioning the ONLO Collection: Student Tasks and Findings

Following the initial meeting, we provided each student with an external drive, which initially held five folders. Each drive contained the files associated with a different oral narrative from the ONLO Collection. While the collection found on the CFS website presents polished interviews and, in some cases, pictures from that day, each published story is composed of many additional files that collectively form the narrative. For example, artwork in the home of an interviewee, or the interviewee themselves, may have been photographed from multiple angles. Similarly, an interview may have been broken up into multiple clips before being spliced into the published version. Finally, it is also important to note that with this being a bilingual collection, some narratives have transcripts of translations that coincide with the interview. While not every file is presented to viewers of the collection, each contains knowledge and value that helps preserve the histories of the Latino/a/x community in Ohio and should therefore be properly organized and readily available upon request.

After providing them with their respective archives, the first task we asked of the students was renaming each file based on the schemes discussed during the training meeting. The naming schemes for each file type can be found in the appendix, along with examples from the ONLO Collection. This was especially important because students structured descriptive information in a homogenous manner, thereby maximizing the accessibility of the collection. In this sense, the overarching collection, the date of creation, and, in some cases, the specific narrative that a file pertains to were all clearly stated. As the students renamed their files, they meticulously reviewed their work, ensuring that each component was numbered appropriately and that names were free of spelling errors. During this process, students also brought concerns to our attention, and the naming schemes were constantly modified to meet the needs of the collection. For example, in particular, regarding the bilingual nature of the collection, students expressed concerns about how the filenames of translations might be interpreted. Through deliberation by our entire archival group, we came to the consensus that simply naming a file as being a translation was insufficient, and it was necessary also to specify the original language of the interview followed by the language of the translation.

After completing the renaming process, students copied and pasted the new filenames into a collaborative finding aid (see Figures 1 and 2). In doing so, students brought together the narratives they were individually assigned, once again attempting to increase the accessibility of the ONLO Collection. In addition to adding the filenames, the finding aid contained other metadata categories as well, including the location of the interview and the language in which the interview was conducted (see Figure 2). The purpose of this was not only to organize the collection on the basis of additional characteristics but, more importantly, to provide cultural

context about the Latino communities in Ohio that we attempt to present. In other words, while they are crucial for the organization of such an extensive archive, the date of collection, the type of file (see Figure 1), and even the names of the interviewees provide little information about the content of the file when presented alone. Therefore, students helped to contextualize each file in the larger scope of the history of Latinos/as in Ohio by including supplementary information such as keywords or topics that characterized each file, as well as full descriptions of each interview (see Figure 1). Our reason for doing this was to allow specific files or narratives to be easily identified based on students' own interests or backgrounds.

Similar to the naming schemes, the metadata categories were adapted throughout the semester. Initially, only descriptions of the completed interview files were to be included in both English and Spanish. However, after thinking about the specific needs of our collection and our goals of decolonizing traditional archival ideologies, we recognized the importance of extending this practice to every file. By describing these pieces in both English and Spanish, we deliberately increased the accessibility of the collection to include students, scholars, or community members who speak either language. Furthermore, this action signified initial steps towards maintaining a strong connection with those who have contributed to the collection, thus ensuring they continue to be active participants in our archival processes.

Figure 1

	A	B	C	D
1	File Name	Description in English (pull from CFS website)	Description in Spanish (translate from CFS website)	Keywords/Major Topics (English)
2	ONLO20171027EF001.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
3	ONLO20171027EF002.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
4	ONLO20171027EF003.JPG	Interview	Entrevista	
5	ONLO20171027EF004.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
6	ONLO20171027EF005.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
7	ONLO20171027EF006.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
8	ONLO20171027EF007.JPG	Interviewing Adriana	Entrevistando a Adriana	
9	ONLO20171027EF008.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
10	ONLO20171027EF009.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
11	ONLO20171027EF010.JPG	Photo of Adriana during interview	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
12	ONLO20171027EF011.JPG	Photo of Elena Foulis and Adriana	Foto de Elena Foulis y Adriana	
13	ONLO20171027EF012.jpg	Headshot of Adriana	Foto de Adriana durante la entrevista	
14	ONLO20171027EF_Ponce de Leon, Adriana (1 of 3).MTS	Adriana Ponce de Leon is a student at The Ohio Sta	Adriana Ponce de Leon es una estudiante de la Univ	identity, bilingualism, language, family,
15	ONLO20171027EF_Ponce de Leon, Adriana (2 of 3).MTS	Adriana Ponce de Leon is a student at The Ohio Sta	Adriana Ponce de Leon es una estudiante de la Univ	identity, bilingualism, language, family,
16	ONLO20171027EF_Ponce de Leon, Adriana (3 of 3).MTS	Adriana Ponce de Leon is a student at The Ohio Sta	Adriana Ponce de Leon es una estudiante de la Univ	identity, bilingualism, language, family,
17	ONLO20171027EF_Ponce de Leon, Adriana (Youtube).mp4	Adriana Ponce de Leon is a student at The Ohio Sta	Adriana Ponce de Leon es una estudiante de la Univ	identity, bilingualism, language, family,

Figure 2

	E	F	G	H
1	Keywords/Major Topics (Spanish)	Location of Interview	Language(s) of Interview	File Type(s)
2		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
3		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
4		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
5		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
6		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
7		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
8		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
9		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
10		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
11		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
12		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
13		Columbus, Franklin County	n/a	.JPG
14	identidad, bilingüismo, idioma, familia,	Columbus, Franklin County	Spanglish	.MTS
15	identidad, bilingüismo, idioma, familia,	Columbus, Franklin County	Spanglish	.MTS
16	identidad, bilingüismo, idioma, familia,	Columbus, Franklin County	Spanglish	.MTS
17	identidad, bilingüismo, idioma, familia,	Columbus, Franklin County	Spanglish	.mp4

Shifting Archival Practices Towards Decolonial Models

While still very much a work in progress, we are striving towards a decolonial model of archiving digital oral history collections. Indeed, much of the way we are thinking about how to make the collection accessible is by centering it on bilingual descriptions of each item in the collection, which signals a non-traditional and, thus, decolonized way of documenting a community. Risam (2018) warns us about the use of decolonization in digital humanities as a term that signals diversity, that is, merely including more diverse voices and communities while continuing to recreate colonized dynamics. Risam (2018) notes that “the move to decolonize digital humanities requires redress of the traces of colonialism that appear in digital scholarship, which has political and epistemological implications” (p. 79). Perhaps careful attention to these legacies of colonial practices explains why print in academic settings continues to hold more weight, why written histories seem more credible than oral history, and why digital humanities projects are currently seen as creative work in the sense that they produce less rigorous/intellectual work. If the process of decolonization in digital humanities requires that we center the local rather than the global, the work described here is a step towards a decolonial model in archiving and representing the Latina/o/x community in each step of the process.

The collection process of archiving wants to recognize and show the diversity and contribution of the Latina/o/x community locally—in Ohio—but also in relation to how it has been shaped by the majority White population and multiple migrations, forced or not. To offer just one example, when we approached immigrant Latinas/o/x about the project, we often needed to explain it in relation to testimonios, a term more common in Latin America. In general, when we approached U.S.-born Latinas/o/x, this explanation was typically not necessary. Similarly, we invited them to use their preferred language: Spanish or English and to code-switch if that was natural to

them. In the archiving process, we intend to use similar practices to reflect the collection and production of knowledge from this community more clearly and purely. Indeed, we acknowledge that in order to do this work, as Risam (2018) concludes, we must embrace and demonstrate the flexibility needed to execute decolonial strategies as we work to represent a community that is whole and complex.

Community Feedback and Ongoing Discussions

During the public presentation of the students' work at the end of the Fall 2020 semester, a librarian in the audience asked why we departed from the prescribed or traditional way of naming files, as the Library of Congress suggests. We mentioned that those values or metrics did not reflect our work or, even less, our community's ways of knowing. Perhaps, as Winn (2017) notes, we have stepped outside of the role of the archivist to activist, in which we think of library collections and archives within a social justice framework that seeks to amplify and represent our community as fairly, though perhaps not entirely neutral, as possible. Quite frankly, our work is far removed from traditional ways of archiving. Winn (2017) notes that archival programs contribute to the one-size-fits-all mentality in which "[w]e establish and teach a 'neutral' vocabulary and narrative style that conforms to the expectations of the hegemonic default—white, male, heterosexual, gender-normative, upper-middle class, Global North—an allegedly blank canvas against which any deviation will contrast" (para. 8). We add monolingual English-speakers to this list. In fact, Critical Language Awareness applies to the effort of creating an inclusive and equitable representation of the ONLO archive because it acknowledges language—in this case, Spanish and racialized ideologies ascribed to it—in reinforcing damaging power relations that continue to render invisible those who are not White or English dominant/monolingual (Achugar, 2015; Alim, 2005). Arroyo-Ramirez (2016) argues that "[w]ithout this critical awareness archivists run the risk of projecting the (in)visible default onto these collections, which, in turn, influences the outcomes of our processes, and the way we provide access to, and (mis)represent, information" (para. 4). Indeed, one of the goals of working to make this archive accessible to a larger audience—both English- and Spanish-speaking researchers, students, and wider communities—is to make a community visible and to honor the languages they speak. In this regard, allowing languages to exist in a non-hierarchical space also signals a push for equity in linguistics practices. Olivo and Ferrufino's (2019) work on creating a digital Spanish linguistics corpus of anarchist newspapers serves to give access to cultural, linguistic, and historical research for those who are interested. Yet, it provides so much more. It gives open access to documents only previously found in a physical space. Although one could argue that while this corpus primarily serves linguists, it also responds to "[t]he critical necessity of this corpus is demonstrated by the absence of a Spanish corpus of this nature until now," that is, not only must we think of ways that the archives fully represent the community we are working with, in designing a bilingual project, we have moved one step closer to establishing a non-hierarchical multilingual space" (Olivo and Ferrufino, p. 19).

In "Archiving While Black," Farmer (2018) writes about the less visible spaces where Black and other marginalized groups have been excluded. Indeed, we must consider what is represented in libraries, art museums, and digital archives as a decolonial practice. Is what we see in these spaces a representation of whiteness or white standards; does it include other groups in their permanent collections, or is it even made accessible to all groups? Meaning, are exhibits or collections (whether in digital or physical spaces) only showing Black, Latino, or other underrepresented groups during Latinx Heritage or Black History Months, or is there a fair and just representation of this community year-round?

Archiving Latina/o/x stories adopt a decolonial practice to archiving in which the community, the main contributor to this collection, is what we center when naming and providing bilingual descriptions of each item in the files and website. Additionally, bringing in the students' and the community's perspectives allows us to continue to build and modify based on how our students can work and draw knowledge from the archive in a way that honors each participant included in the collection. Becerra-Licha (2017) notes that “[d]igital archiving, moreover, invites archivists to revisit core assumptions about authorship and authority, about context and hierarchy, and about advocacy versus agency” (p. 90). Her description helps us consider the core of decolonial archiving, that is, challenging any practice that would remove the intended purpose of building a platform that documents Latina/o/x voices. Furthermore, Becerra-Licha (2017) pushes us to think of an archive not as a non-static or final product but instead as one that can and should include and address current events. She says, “participatory and post-custodial digital archives initiatives are also visibly and proactively responding to document current events, seeking contributions on an ongoing basis, and documenting events close to home, with an emphasis on a digital presence” (Becerra-Licha, p. 91). While the ongoing work of archiving will respond to these concerns, the ONLO Collection is already doing this. For example, an additional 20 interviews were added to the archive between August 2020 and January 2021 that documented the stories of Latinas/o/x in Ohio during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2021 continued to present COVID-19-related limitations, the Spring 2021 semester provided another opportunity to continue working with students in accessioning the ONLO archive; additionally, students created a survey to gather community feedback from oral history narrators, the Latina/o/x community, and other oral historians about the work that has been done on the website and how each item has been cataloged. At the end of the semester, students gave a public presentation via Zoom. The students presented information about the archive, the work they had completed, and the importance of receiving feedback from our audience. They walked the audience through each item found in the archive and asked them to consider and review the languages, the included information, and the finding aid. Together, we created a survey (in Spanish and English) to be sent out to the community to receive feedback about the changes and for additional suggestions. The information we gathered has already provided us with details about how each person interacts with the archive and areas we can continue to modify. We have also started changing the survey to prompt more responses regarding design, representation, and accessibility.

In addition to Becerra-Licha's (2017) points about modifying archival practices to stay up-to-date with the changing world around us, we argue that approaches should continue to be dynamic with respect to how a community would like to be presented along with their current ideologies, both of which are certainly subject to change over time. In other words, singular consultations with community members or short spurts of outreach efforts are insufficient for the proper and complete decolonization of digital humanities practices. Instead, we posit that cultivating long-lasting relationships between academic institutions and communities are necessary to avoid reverting to unjust practices and to ensure that collaborations that do take place are not sole occurrences. We anticipate that our work with the ONLO Collection will continue to evolve as we present updates, gather feedback, and strengthen our relationships with the Latino/a community in Ohio. Certainly, the work thus far helps us respond to the questions posed at the beginning of this article: The archive is ready as soon as we can collect, edit, and upload the oral history; we do not wait until all the elements are completed because, often, the community is ready to have access to the stories as soon as they are collected, and, perhaps most importantly, because we want our contributors to know their contributions are valuable.

Conclusion

During 2020 and 2021, many inequities resurfaced in our society, such as healthcare access, racism, and police violence against marginalized groups. These social issues are not entirely unrelated to the work of thinking about how we present and represent the stories and lives of people who give their voices to the ONLO project. That is, we not only want to remain true to the way people tell their stories, but we also want to push against prescriptive ways of archiving that might limit access to the same communities the archive documents; in essence, we want to model equity in each step of the work we do to build the archive. Many museums and museum-like collections centered around minoritized groups and cultures have already recognized the importance of decolonizing their curatorial and archival practices by adopting interdisciplinary approaches and actively attempting to incorporate the presented communities into their processes and decision-making. Taking cues from D'Souza (2021), whose call to action is primarily directed at physical exhibits of indigenous art and who maintains that a combination of both strategies, physical and digital, would promote the greatest success, we encourage other oral history archives to follow our lead in increasing the accessibility of the stories they contain by beginning to adopt digital approaches to organization and presentation, as well as by laying the foundation for collaborative partnerships with the very groups that are contributing to our collections. This is an imperfect process because we must pause, reassess, publish, edit, and continue to review and ask for feedback from students, communities, and other scholars engaged in this work. These initial steps, however, are vital for growing and improving already existing oral history archives, facilitating the creation of new collections, and ensuring the proper preservation of the histories that have been ignored and excluded for far too long.

Endnotes

¹ We are aware that many people continue to have limited or no access to broadband and technology. However, the fact that this archive and many other digital archives can be accessed at any given time, signals our interest in providing access to a wide audience.

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