

Hurricane Digital Memory Bank Summary

Two months following Hurricane Katrina, the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB) www.hurricanearchive.org was born. HDMB uses electronic media to collect, preserve, and present the stories and digital record of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. The goal is both to foster some positive legacies by allowing the people affected by these storms to tell their stories and to assist historians and archivists in preserving the record of current events.

First-hand accounts, on-scene images, blog postings, podcasts, and other audio files are some of the materials being collected. Digital technology offers people the opportunity to record experiences in the moment, but many of those digital recordings are quickly discarded. Hurricanearchive.org seeks to save those creations in a permanent database for scholars and a wide audience for generations to come. For those without computer access, they may phone 504-208-3883 to record their stories.

To date, HDMB has collected over 5,000 stories, images, and other digital files.

The University of New Orleans and the Center for History and New Media, CHNM, at George Mason University created this digital history project in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and other Gulf area partners, with funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Hurricanearchive.org builds on prior work to collect and preserve history online, especially through CHNM's ECHO (<http://echo.gmu.edu>) science and technology history project and the September 11 Digital Archive (<http://www.911digitalarchive.org>), which gathered more than 150,000 digital objects related to the attacks. The Library of Congress permanently houses those materials. Both projects are part of a growing practice of using the Internet to preserve the past through "digital memory banks."

Sloan Foundation Grant Deliverables

December 31, 2006

- Receive one million page views
- Collect 3000 database objects
- Connect with Gulf Coast cultural, academic, community, and relief organizations

May 31, 2007

- Launch automated collecting tool launched
- Retool survey builder with 15 clones or installations/downloads

May 31, 2008

- Launch four new memory bank projects
- Publish a Guide to Building a Digital Memory Bank
- Publish 5 articles in newsletters and/or journals
- Present HDMB and practice of digital memory banking at 4 conferences

Progress on Deliverables

- Collected over 5000 objects (most not uploaded yet)
- Received over 500,000 page views
- Made great progress in developing a do-it-yourself digital memory bank site builder
- Presented at 2 conferences
- Established Gulf area contacts and partnered with a variety of organizations (see Current List of Partners below)

Current List of Partners

Museums and Cultural Organizations:

- Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History
- Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities
- Louisiana State Museum
- Mississippi Humanities Council
- Museum of the Gulf Coast
- National Hansen's Disease Museum
- Historic Naval Ships Association

Universities:

- University of Southern Mississippi
- University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

Media:

- PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer
- Beaumont Enterprise

Military and Humanitarian Efforts:

- 102nd Military History Detachment from the Kansas Army National Guard
- Katrina Kids Project
- Student Hurricane Network
- The New Orleans Oral History Project, a Humid City Production

About CHNM

Since 1994, the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University (<http://chnm.gmu.edu>) has used digital media and computer technology to democratize history to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past. CHNM maintains a wide range of online history projects directed at diverse topics and audiences, making them available at no cost through its website. CHNM combines cutting edge digital media with the latest and best historical scholarship to promote an inclusive and democratic understanding of the past as well as a broad historical literacy.

About University of New Orleans

The University of New Orleans (UNO) is Louisiana's premier urban university. Facing massive challenges following Hurricane Katrina, UNO resumed its Fall 2005 semester in early October with a combination of on-line and on-site courses offered on satellite campuses. UNO was the only New Orleans university to reopen in 2005. Building upon its rich academic research tradition, UNO sponsors a group of projects to identify, record, and alleviate the effects of Katrina on the citizens of Louisiana. An important goal of the university is to provide appropriate physical and electronic venues for storing and disseminating the collected data as the Gulf Coast rebuilds.