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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hurricane Archive Collects over 5000 Online Stories and Images

NEW ORLEANS, August 15, 2006—Courtney Giarrusso and her family followed a Crescent City tradition and decided to ride out Hurricane Katrina on the top floors of the Fairmont Hotel in downtown New Orleans. Little did they know that the levee flooding would trap them in the hotel and later destroy their Lakeview home, which was designed to accommodate Courtney's needs as a quadriplegic. Since she returned to New Orleans in December, Courtney has encountered many more challenges, including finding a permanent health care attendant and finishing college.

Giarrusso's accounts are just one example of the compelling stories and images collected in the *Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB)* <http://www.hurricanearchive.org> from those who lived through the hurricanes. (Read Courtney's stories: <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/41> <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/2287>.) Created by the University of New Orleans and the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, with funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, *HDMB* stands as a formidable digital archive with over 5,000 entries. Each object gives readers unmatched perspective into the lives of those who survived, evacuated from, responded to, and began to rebuild after Katrina and Rita. *HDMB* offers Katrina and Rita survivors a permanent place to leave their memories so that historians will use their stories when writing about these storms in the future.

HDMB is a digital archive that seeks contributions from anyone and is available for everyone to read or browse. First-hand accounts, on-scene images, blog postings, podcasts, and videos 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. For example, one contributor photographed a heart-wrenching moment at a Red Cross Shelter in Citronelle, Alabama, when an elderly couple returned from their damaged home with the only belongings they could salvage: a small box of jewelry and a few photos (<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/2166>). Hurricanearchive.org seeks to save those moments, so they are not permanently lost.

For those without Internet access, they may phone 504-208-3883 to record a story on voicemail. New Orleans musician **Delfeayo Marsalis** welcomes contributors in the recorded announcement.

In addition to individuals' experiences, *HDMB* features special collections from institutions, such as the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Contributing over 900 photographs taken along the Gulf Coast in September and October 2005, the National Museum of American History shared its collection exclusively with *HDMB*. Currently, those images are available to the general public only through www.hurricanearchive.org. Working with various partners, such as the Louisiana State Museum, the National Hansen's Disease Museum, the 102nd Military History Detachment from the Kansas Army National Guard, and the Katrina's Kids Project, *HDMB* is documenting institutional, military, and non-profit responses to Katrina and Rita.

Hurricanearchive.org continues to collect all experiences related to the storms, whether one was directly affected or volunteered from hundreds of miles away. It 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."

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.

About CHNM

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. 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.

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Highlights from the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank

Stories:

“Had the levees not breached I would still have my deceased son's books. Photos and family heirlooms are now gone. Grief and anger are not new to me, but this was so completely unnecessary.” <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/2369>

“One type of disaster (flooding) and two very very different results: a fast surge of water in Pass Christian wreaked absolute havoc. Walls broken, furniture moved (there are lots of dings and scuffs and marks in the ceiling where as best we can guess, the floating refrigerator was banging), windows gone.
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/36>

“I volunteered to serve in New Orleans as a Chaplain for the United States Public Health Service...I spent my days in New Orleans driving into some of the worst hit areas overseeing the recovery of the people who lost their lives during the storm and flooding.”
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/2326>

Images:

Homeowners discover the rubble left where their home stood in Pass Christian, MS:
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/70>

Interior of a mold-infested and damaged home in New Orleans:
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/2260>

A photograph that survived flooding in New Orleans gives one family a lasting memory of their son who died in 2002:
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=1853>

A New Orleanian cleans out her refrigerator after a 2-month absence:
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/192>

No homes remain in Holly Beach, LA following Hurricane Rita:
<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/object/1842>