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SURVIVING STRATIFIED DISASTERS: Collaborative Approach to Collecting and Preserving Oral Histories

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Oral History Lab (OHL), General Library
University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez



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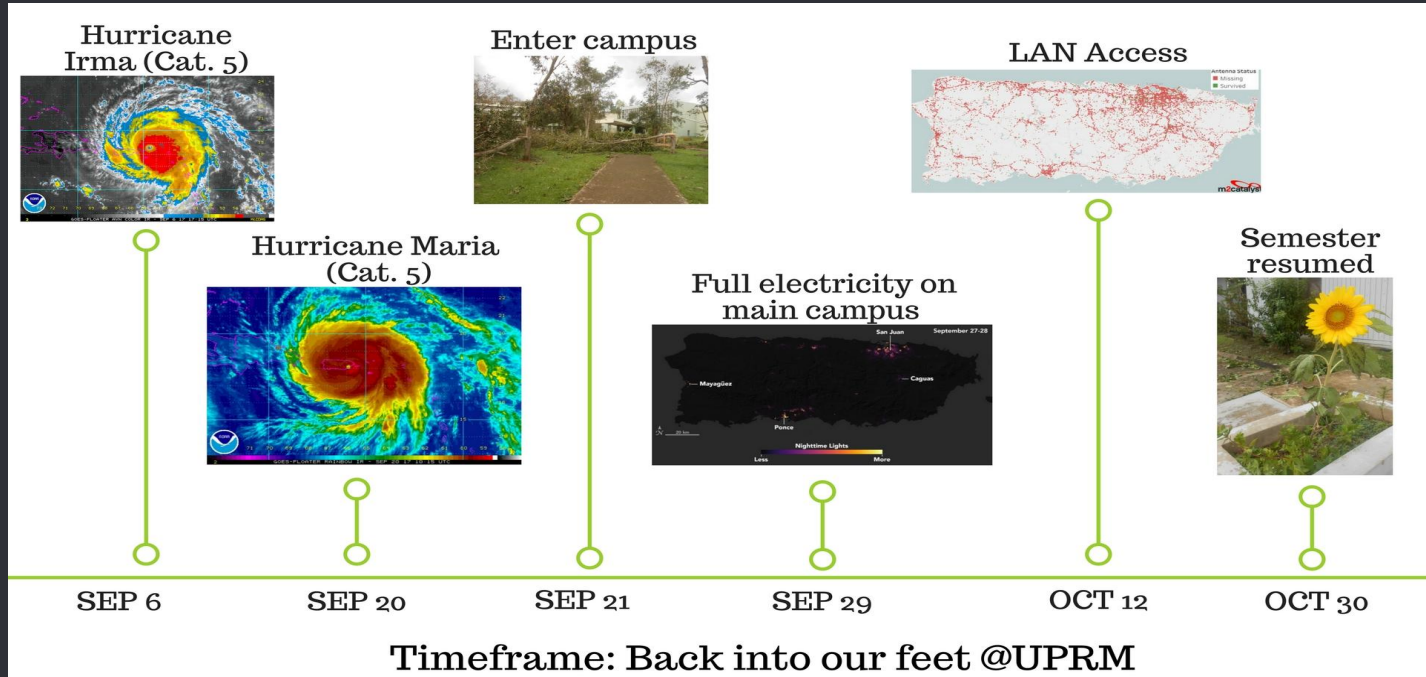
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STRATIFIED DISASTERS

- 2016 • Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), U.S. federal law, established a fiscal control board which led to the imposition of harsh austerity measures
- 2017 • Hurricanes Irma and María caused extreme devastation and revealed social inequalities, food insecurity, and health care inefficiencies
- 2019 • Swarm of earthquakes which eventually numbered in the thousands (including one with a magnitude of 6.4 on the Richter scale) on January 7, 2020
- 2020 • The government imposed strict sheltered in place measures to attend to the health emergency due to the COVID 19 pandemic
- 2022 • Massive island-wide blackout

BUILDING RESILIENCE: SURVIVING AND COPING WITH THE TRAUMA



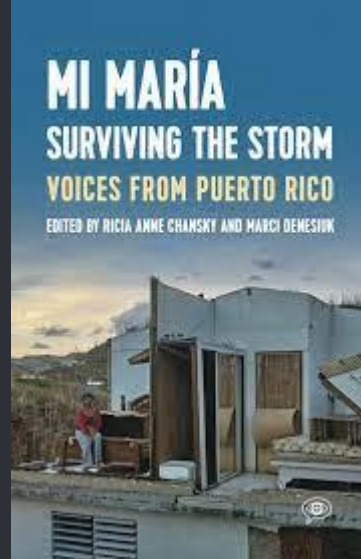
TIGER TEAM (STUDENTS,



• TEAMING UP WITH STUDENTS



- TEAMING UP WITH STUDENTS



• ORAL HISTORY LAB (OHL)

LISTENING TO PUERTO RICO

THE PROMISE OF ORAL HISTORY ON-CAMPUS AND BEYOND

RECINTO UNIVERSITARIO DE MAYAGÜEZ
CAAM
UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, GENERAL
LIBRARY, AND FILM CERTIFICATE

Funded by

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

Grant Award# ZDH-284106-22

• ORAL HISTORY LAB (OHL) TEAM

Film Program

Library

English Department



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The OHL will be housed in the General Library and will be a space focused on the collection, preservation, and broad dissemination of oral histories from around the Puerto Rican archipelago, particularly those that touch upon the experiences of community members as they have navigated the many challenges of these difficult times.

ORAL HISTORY LAB - WORK PLAN

Implementation Phase
Spring Semester (January to May)

Production Phase
Summer (June to July)

Dissemination Phase
Fall Semester (August to December)

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

1

- Hire three adjunct faculty members
 - Teach 2 oral history courses
 - Teach 2 documentary filmmaking courses
- Filmmaking courses created 2 types of projects:
 - Oral history documentaries to be part of the permanent collection
 - Behind the scenes process and “how-to” videos that will serve as demonstration videos for future students and oral history projects
- Oral History courses created 2 types of projects:
 - Oral history collection of life stories
 - Self-reflexive methodology essays that will serve as training modules for future students

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Renovate a physical space to create the Oral History Lab (OHL)

1

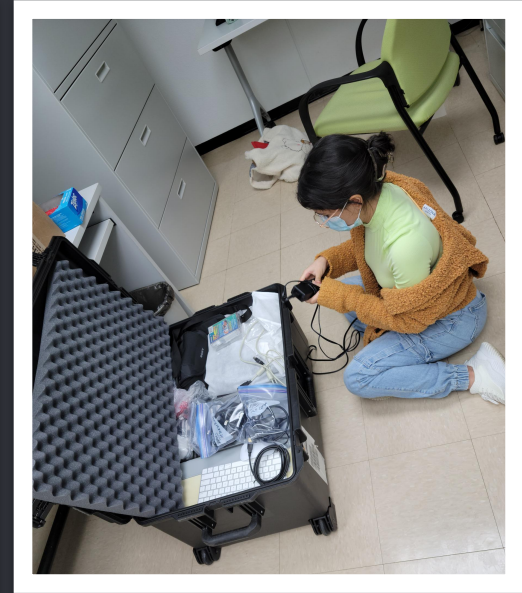
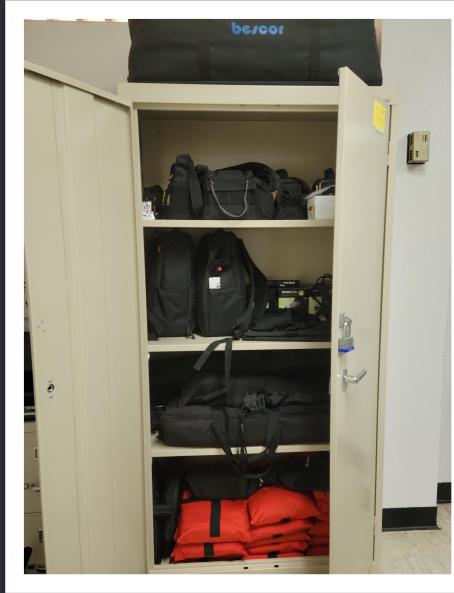


- Interview Room
- Four Private Editing Rooms

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Acquire new equipment and consolidate equipment for Oral History Lab (OHL) or to checkout by students at the library

1



IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Digital Preservation Infrastructure

- Formalize relationship with digital humanities consultant and other experts
- Organize a multi-part workshop series on topics related to digital archiving, community archiving, metadata best practices, and curation, management, and preservation of digital media
- Establish best practices to govern the management of digital assets produced by the OHL

1

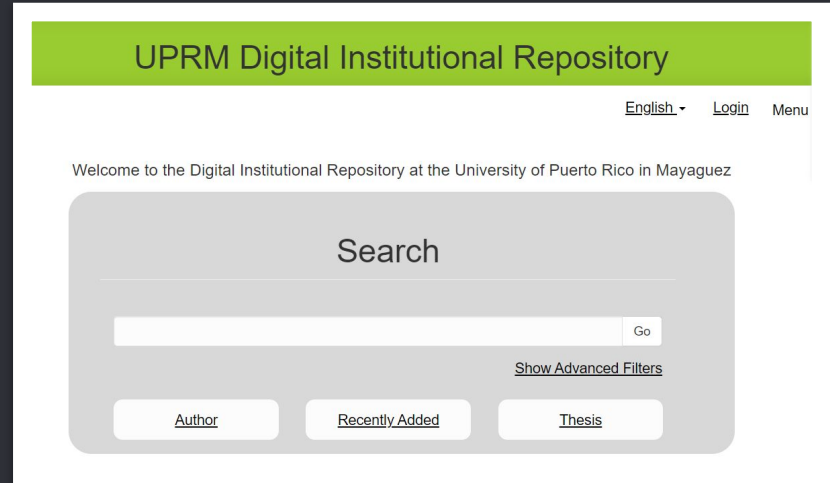
The poster is for Preservation Week 2022, held from April 24-30. The specific event is on Friday, April 29, from 2:30 to 4:00 PM. The title of the workshop is 'PRESERVACIÓN DIGITAL: PRINCIPIOS BÁSICOS Y FUNDAMENTOS' (Digital Preservation: Basic Principles and Fundamentals), presented by Caroline Gil Rodríguez, a conservator and archivist from New York. The event is part of the Oral History Lab (OHL) at the Biblioteca General. The poster features logos for the University of Puerto Rico, ArchiRED (La Red de Archivos de Puerto Rico), GRIC, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. A circular portrait of Caroline Gil Rodríguez is included on the right side.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Digital Preservation Infrastructure

- Upgrade Scholar@UPRM, our institutional repository, to the new Dspace 7 platform to provide access and disseminate digital assets

1



IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Digital Preservation Infrastructure

- Develop Oral History Interview Metadata Manual to ensure the proper description of assets

1

Files types

- Video Recordings
 - Audio Recordings
 - Text Documents
 - Transcripts
 - Translations
 - Images
- File Naming Convention
 - Controlled Vocabulary
 - Date Formats
 - New Fields and Definitions
 - Narrator
 - Interviewer

2

PRODUCTION PHASE

- Ingest OHL's output
- Deposit oral histories in a digital collection in Scholar@UPRM
- Inaugurate OHL's initial sample collection
- Create Online Training Modules and Guides/Replicable Model

3

DISSEMINATION PHASE

- Develop new oral history and documentary filmmaking outputs
- Continue developing self-reflexive methodologies
- Organize two (2) symposia to promote OHL services:
 - One directed at the university community
 - One directed at various community-based organizations

• NEXT STEPS

- Complete the NEH proposed work plan
- Select a visualization platform and implement it for OHL
- Create a digital preservation policy for UPR-Mayaguez
- Look for new funding to maintain and expand the OHL services

We have just started ... More to come!



American Council of
Learned Societies

PRESS RELEASE

ACLS Announces 2022 ACLS Digital Justice Grant Awardees

Program Supports Fifteen Digital Humanities
Projects that Diversify the Digital Domain

Published: May 31, 2022

Speaking into Silences: Building Community Archives across the Puerto Rican Archipelago

Leveraging the resources of the Oral History Lab @UPRM—and the experience of its interdisciplinary leadership team—the proposed project facilitates the development of community-led oral history for social justice projects from inception to dissemination: tailoring technology kits, digital archives, and multimodal outputs to the specific needs and assets of four community partner sites across the Puerto Rican archipelago. Moving centers of knowledge production from the academy to the community, this project develops post-custodial community archives that remain onsite for direct access by community members, while making stories of surviving stratified disasters (and the experiential knowledges they hold) widely available through mirror collections housed at the Lab.

Principal Project Team:



Jaquelina Alvarez

Year: 2022

University of Puerto Rico at
Mayaguez

Librarian



Ricia Chansky

Year: 2022

University of Puerto Rico at
Mayaguez

Professor



Jose J. Morales Benitez

Year: 2022

University of Puerto Rico at
Mayaguez

Librarian

The project “Listening to Puerto Rico: The Promise of Oral History On-Campus and Beyond”

Sponsored by:



**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES**

Grant Award# ZDH-284106-22

Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this presentation, do not necessarily represent those of NEH.

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The creation of the OHL is an example of how academic libraries faced with precarious circumstances can forge strategic multidisciplinary alliances with campus partners to design creative projects that directly address local historical events while also producing unique primary source collections for the benefit of researchers and communities on and beyond campus.



NEW METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

We will incorporate decolonial and antiracist methodologies and trauma-informed approaches as we record, archive, and disseminate life stories related to surviving stratified disasters in the Puerto Rican archipelago.

Thanks!

ANY QUESTIONS?

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Library

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