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Preservation Perseverance: Archiving Social Media Content, A University of Kentucky/Latino Student Union Collaboration

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Preservation Perseverance: Archiving Social Media Content

A University of Kentucky Libraries/Latino Student Union Collaboration

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UK Libraries

A collaboration between UK Libraries and the University of Kentucky Latino Student Union to preserve activist student organization social media content.

Overview

Libraries

"Wildcat Histories": A Project STAND Mini-Grant, 2022-23

- Project STAND (**ST**udent **A**ctivism **N**ow **D**ocumented)
- Consortium; began in 2018
- IMLS and Mellon Foundation funding
- $14,000 to UK Libraries, April 2022-Aug 2023, for "Wildcat Histories: Preserving Activist UK Student Organizations' Legacies"
- Overall mini-grant deliverable: Student activism historical documents preserved and available online

PROJECT STAND
Documenting Student Activism

https://standarchives.com/

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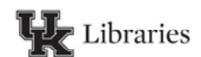
Our social media preservation project is a $14,000 mini-grant called Wildcat Histories. This stage of the project is funded by Project STAND, a consortium of mainly universities and colleges which has been around for 5 years. Specific focus on ethical documentation of student-led social justice movements and highlighting collections relating to student activism in marginalized communities. As University Archivist, I am aware of the lack of underrepresented student voices in the archives, particularly those identifying as BIPOC, LGBTQ+, international, not Christian, or women in male-dominated disciplines. In addition, many of the activities and thoughts of students are conveyed through social media. Without intervention to save this challenging format, we will lose these voices quickly. The overall deliverable for the mini-grant program: historical documents of student activism are preserved and available online.
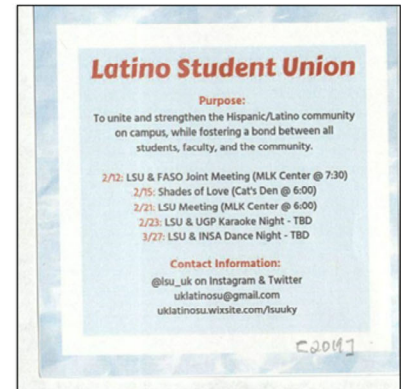
## Grant Details

Partner with the Latino Student Union (LSU) to:

- Preserve their social media and website(s)
- Hire LSU student leaders to work on the grant
- $400 to support LSU archival work

Use the preserved LSU social media as a pilot to:

- Develop procedures and guidelines for preserving student social media (whether donated to the archives or not)

LSU promotional flyer, 2019, from the Latino Student Union records
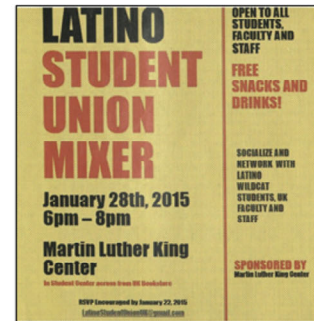
UK Libraries
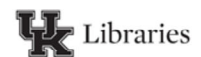
When I heard about the Project STAND mini-grants, I thought immediately of working with the UK LSU, with which we already had an archival relationship. We have a small collection of their records. So, approached them about using their social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Wix) as a pilot for developing local procedures and guidelines. We wanted to support the organization through hiring their student leaders to work on the grant on their own records and $400 to support their archival work, generally.

Grant Details

Communication and outreach initiative:

- To 15 selected activist student organizations
- Using social media preservation procedures and guidelines about archiving (whether donated to the archives or not)
- $100 each to support archival work

LATINO STUDENT UNION MIXER

OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF

FREE SNACKS AND DRINKS!

January 28th, 2015
6pm – 8pm

Martin Luther King Center

SOCIALIZE AND NETWORK WITH LATINO WILDCAT STUDENTS, UK FACULTY AND STAFF

SPONSORED BY
Martin Luther King Center

LSU mixer flyer, 2015, from the Latino Student Union records

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We would use the pilot to conduct outreach to other selected student groups. And included $100 each to 15 other activist student organizations for archival work.

Claudia Benito, Student Organizations Communication Student Assistant

Flor Mucino, Social Media Preservation Student Assistant

Taylor Leigh, Principal Investigator

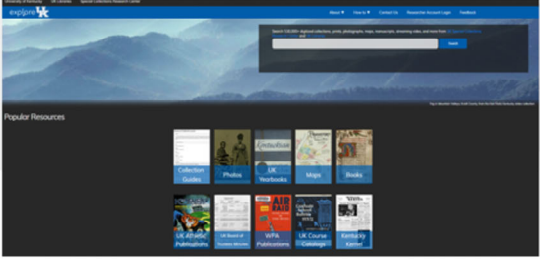Ruth Bryan, University Archivist, Ex-Officio

Sarah Dorpinghaus, Technology Project Manager

Emily Collier, Technology Consultant

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I am working on the Wildcat Histories project, but am not officially on the grant.

April 2022 - March 2023	March 2023	March - August 2023	June - August 2023
Social media and website preservation research and testing Description procedures (meetings with experts)	Documenting the Now Web Archiving Workshop Outreach to student groups	Developing procedural documentation Outreach to student groups	LSU collection guide upload and testing in ExploreUK.uky.edu

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For slightly under a year, we have been researching and testing preservation methods and techniques for social media and websites, including meeting with experts. We've also been writing and testing description procedures. Doc Now workshop in March 2023 for activist student leaders. Right now, we're working on two stages simultaneously: Developing final versions of procedures and outreach tools and conducting some outreach and testing the functionality of the LSU collection guide in our digital library, ExploreUK.uky.edu. The collection guide includes links to preserved social media platforms available on the web preservation service Archive-It.

Wildcat Histories: Latino Student Union Collection Guide

Online Resources

Title/Description	Instances
Wixsite. Latino Student Union (University of Kentucky), 2019	
https://wayback.archive-it.org/11310/*/https://uklatinosu.wixsite.com/lsuuky/	Online resource 2019ua043
Twitter. Latino Student Union (University of Kentucky) @lsu_uky social media account, 2016-2023	
https://wayback.archive-it.org/11310/*/https://twitter.com/lsu_uk/	Online resource 2019ua043
Instagram. Latino Student Union (University of Kentucky) @lsu_uk social media posts, 2016-2023	
https://wayback.archive-it.org/11310/*/https://www.instagram.com/lsu_uk/	Online resource 2019ua043
Facebook. Latino Student Union (University of Kentucky) social media profile, 2017	
https://wayback.archive-it.org/11310/20191115000000*/https://www.facebook.com/ukylsu/	Online resource 2019ua043

ArchivesSpace: (PDF) Collection guide with links

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LSU collection guide screen shot showing the links.

Archive-It screen shot for the Student Organizations and Activism web collection
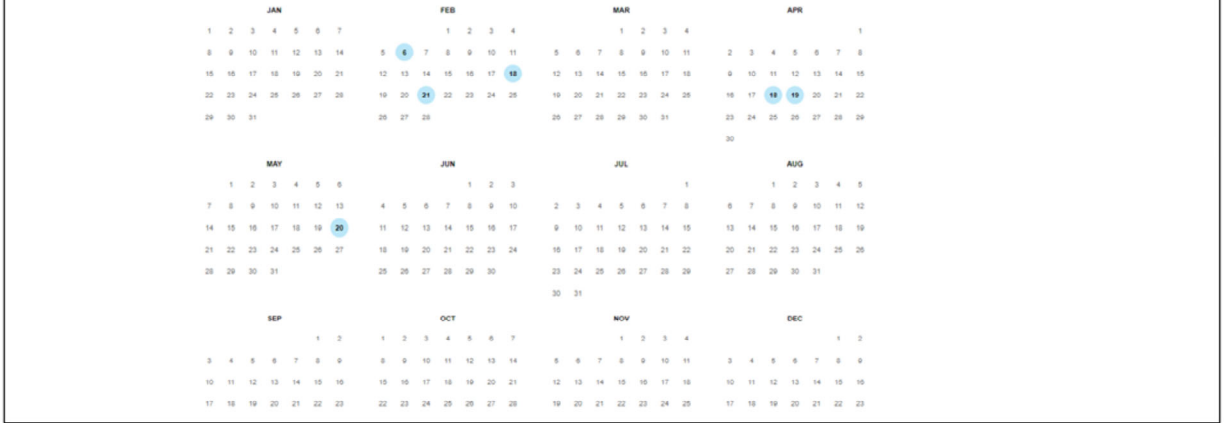
And for the Latino Student Union seeds description in Archive-It

University of Kentucky Student Organizations and Activism, archived by University of Kentucky Libraries

Searched for https://twitter.com/lsu_uk/ RSS COX

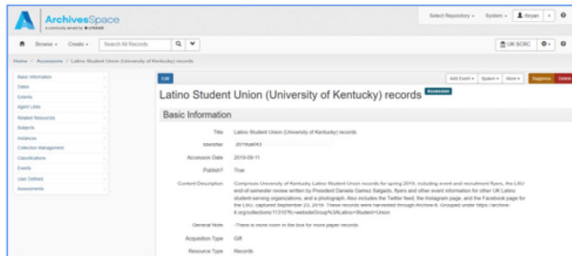Saved **27 times** between September 21, 2019 and May 20, 2023.

And the Archive-It calendar page showing the dates of some of the crawls.

2018-present: Foundations

- Daniela Gámez Salgado (researcher, archival assistant, and LSU President)
- Archive-It subscription
  - Hired Emily Collier
- Hispanic Studies and UK Libraries

LSU records in ArchivesSpace

A VISUAL HISTORY OF LATINO STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY, 1865-2019

Top: Daniela Gámez Salgado

Left: Her exhibit, "A Visual History of Latino Students at UK"

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ʹYmj%Mnxytw~%tk%Qfynst%Xyzijsyx%fy%mj%Zsn{jwxny~%tk%Pjsyzhp~%16=;::2756>ʹ%Tx|fɋ%Wjxjfwhm%fsi%Hwjfy{n~%Htr ujynyts%6>3%myyux?44zpst|qjilj%p~3jiz4tx|fɋ46>.

Even though the grant is a small amount, Wildcat Histories is founded on at least 5 years of relationship building, energy, and engagement.

Daniela Gamez Salgado as a junior created a paper and exhibit on the Latinx presence, 2018-2019. Was also Latino Student Union president/donated start of an archival collection, 2019 spring, to begin to fill in gaps she found in the archives. As a Libraries Undergraduate Diversity Scholar, 2020-2021, began a student organizations outreach project and came up with the title.

Web archiving program started in 2018 with an Archive-It subscription and hired Emily Collier.

Hispanic Studies and UK Libraries: Many of the LSU members and officers also interact with the Hispanic Studies department. 2018-2019: Ruth (interim academic liaison). 2019-present: Taylor. We have relationships with several faculty who also support and connect with students through service learning and translation classes among other activities.

Reflection Question:

What foundations do you already have that can you build on to serve students and/or document their voices?

So, before we move on to Emily to hear about technology, here's a reflection question.

Technical Aspects

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Hello my name is Emily Collier and I'm the web archiving technology consultant for the Wild Histories Project.

Current Tools:

Webrecorder

Archive-It

A significant part of Wildcat Histories was researching the technology needed to archive social media content, and the partnership with the Latino Student Union would act as a flagship for future work with other groups. This was extremely valuable as student organizations share so much on social media platforms such as online flyers, photos, videos, event pages, and schedules. Additionally, the interactive nature of social media allows the chance to record relationships and voices in a new way, which adds to the rich cultural heritage of these groups. I've working with web archiving tools since 2019, but social media sites have proved particularly challenging to capture. Our main web archiving tool is Archive-It, however, it can be unreliable when it comes to successfully crawling and replaying social media content. Therefore, we have also adopted Webrecorder into our workflow which has more consistent success archiving Twitter and Instagram and the produced WARC files can be uploaded to our Archive-It collections. We have also researched other effective tools, including DocNow and Social Feed Manager, but due the upcoming restrictions to Twitter's API, we have postponed actively adding these great tools to our workflow.

Building Forward-Thinking Practice Around Anticipating Failures
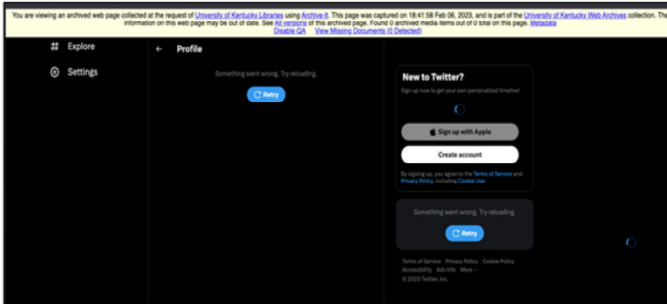
Gaps can be left in collections when social media sites are updated with new, complex scripts or restrictive permissions and rights usage.

Anticipating these gaps and preparing back-up tools or policy can alleviate this burden.

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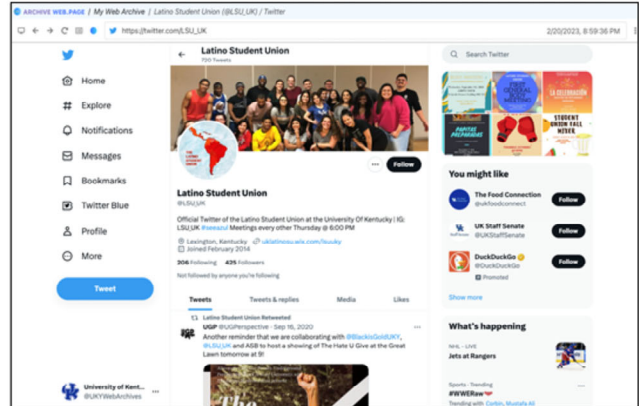
As I mentioned before, Social Media sites are notoriously hard to capture. This is due to a few reasons. For one, social media sites are subject to greater enterprise interference as they go through constant development and updates. Changes to permissions, complex scripts, and other obstacles mean our tools frequently stop working. The developers at the Internet Archive and Webrecorder are always working to keep up with these changes to such sites, but this is difficult and takes a significant amount of time which can result in gaps in our collections. By anticipating gaps and thinking about how our policy and practice can adapt, we can better prepare ourselves for failures. Here, you can see a crawl by Archive-It next to Webrecorder. With Archive-It, the content was either not captured, or isn't rendering during replay with Archive-It's Wayback tool. However, Webrecorder was able to capture and replay this content successfully, so we were still able to capture the Latino Student Union's Twitter for the archives.

The Wildcat Histories project showed us the need for redundancy in research. New technologies are always coming into the field but just because we find a new technology doesn't always mean it fits within our workflows. Many new technologies we've come across have been created through small community start-ups or developed by a department at an institution for their own needs, and so we question the longevity of those types of products. We don't want to adapt a tool that lacks support for long-term use because if the tool loses funding or personel, it may become obsolete. So we have sort of safety questions that we ask when we come across something new. For example, If the developer from a hosting institution retires, will that tool go away? Will someone take over? How can we find that out? But all that being said, even successful tools with great support may run into a major obstacle. As I mentioned the upcoming change in access for Twitter's API may disrupt tools like those produced by DocNow, so even though those products are great, we are foreseeing the obstacle ahead and have put DocNow on hold. But even though we've put a tool on hold, part of our process is to check-back in and research them again later. A tool may be dismissed, but growing support and community may allow tools the chance to be upgraded.
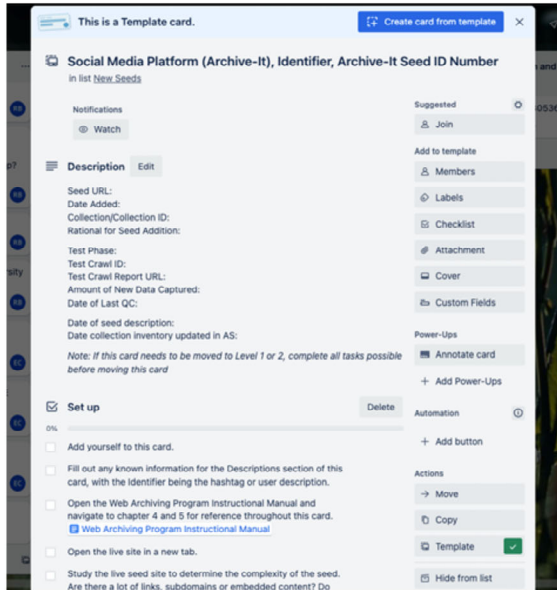
Trello card with steps for crawling social media sites with archive-It

Maintaining Simplicity

- Adopting complex technologies or practices makes long-term management difficult

- If a staff member leaves and takes knowledge with them, how is the work maintained?

- Needs to be simple for students to understand and use readily

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Another aspect of our technology practice is about maintaining simplicity. If we adopt too many tools, it would be too burdensome to maintain workable practices and documentation with our limited resources. And because we do have limited resources, another thing we have to keep in mind is the skill-level of technology we can properly maintain. Will we always have a staff member that can use complex tools? If that staff member leaves and takes all their knowledge with them, how do we maintain the work? The simpler the tool, the better. I have crafted our technology workflows around a set of really thorough procedures and very descriptive instructions in order to enhance longevity of our web archives. Almost any new staff member should be able to read my documentation and complete the very base work satisfactorily, even students. And this has been a major part of Wildcat Histories. We want students to take an active role in archiving their own content. Web archiving can be difficult, particularly with social media, but if we can determine the right tools and the methodology is simple enough, even students can understand it and use it readily. Special Collections will always be here to problem-solve, but we want the students to feel confident about using web archiving technology.

Reflection Question:

What successes can you share regarding social media capture and access? (case examples, access tools, capture tools, data harvesting tools, etc.)

Communication and Outreach

…The UK Libraries-LSU proposed Wildcat Histories project would work with the LSU-donated social media as a pilot for developing procedures and guidelines for preserving student organization social media (whether donated to the archives or not). We would also conduct a communication and outreach initiative to 15 additional BIPOC, LGBTQ+, or non-Christian student organizations that have been on campus for 10 or more years, providing each with $100 for 10 hours of archiving work.
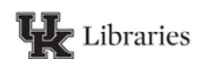
After the initial technological research and testing phase of the project, the authors began conducting outreach to fifteen target student organizations, with the Latino Student Union (LSU) serving as our primary pilot group and project partner. Since the inception of the project, the authors have been intent on including students from the target student organization groups in the project. To that end, we budgeted to hire three student workers either from the LSU or one of the other student organizations, not including an additional 150 hours of web archiving work to be completed by representatives from the 15 student groups. The rationale for including student positions in the project budget was both to create meaningful and transparent partnerships with those individuals whose content we planned to preserve, as well as to create a financial incentive for their participation.

Events
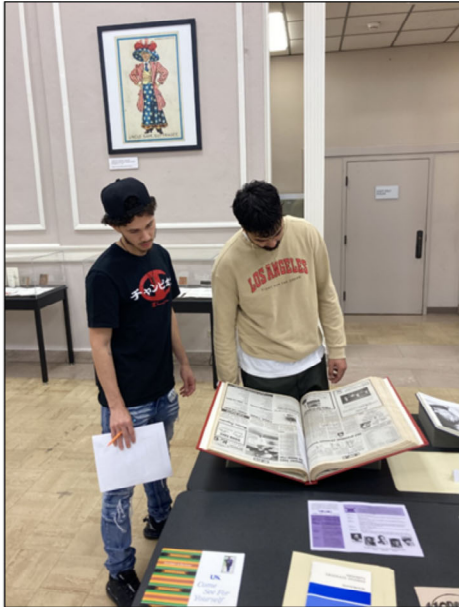
Undergraduates working on a scavenger hunt activity at the exhibit, "Documenting the Presence of Hispanic Students at UK."

UK Libraries Special Collection Research Center, December 2022.

We first hired a Social Media Preservation Assistant from the LSU. This student assisted with the technological testing as well as outreach efforts. They created flyers, videos, and informational documents and liaised with student groups in-person and via email and social media to increase awareness of the project and its objectives. Toward the end of this student's time on the grant, the authors organized an exhibit at the special collections library called, "Documenting the Hispanic/Latinx Presence at UK" (Figures 5 and 6). This event featured print archival materials compiled by former student archives assistant and LSU president, Daniela Gamez Salgado, as well as supplemental materials gathered by the authors. Several Spanish classes attended the exhibit, as well as members of the broader campus community. Though not directly born out of the Wildcat Histories project, the exhibit did provide an opportunity to demonstrate the kinds of events made possible by student-focused content preserved in university archives. As such, it has continued to serve as a proof of concept as we continue to communicate with student groups about the importance of preserving their records.

Events

Workshops

Documenting the Now runs workshops with activist groups around the country, co-learning and providing training to address activists' needs and concerns in documenting their work and controlling their narrative. Past workshops have included partners Pettypropolis in Detroit, MI, Texas After Violence in Austin, TX, Don't Shoot PDX in Portland, OR, and the Southern California Library in Los Angeles, CA. If you are interested in conducting a workshop, contact us at info@docnow.io.

http://www.docnow.io/

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After the Social Media Preservation Assistant had completed their work and graduated, we hired another LSU student officer for the Student Organizations Communication Assistant position. In many ways, this student continued the efforts of their predecessor, though they have solely focused on outreach and not technology. Their first task was to raise awareness and recruit participants for a virtual web archiving workshop hosted by our group and led by representatives from Documenting the Now and WebRecorder. This event allowed us to engage 9 of our 15 student groups in an instructional context, which represented significant progress toward our outreach goals for the project. In the months preceding the workshop, the Student Organizations Communication Assistant identified student officers from our fifteen target groups and contacted them to recruit at least one representative to attend the workshop. After the event, they followed up with those who attended, as well as those who did not, to solicit feedback and encourage engagement between their organizations and university archives. During this same period of time, they created additional outreach materials, such as instructional sheets, flyers, and brochures, and they served as a valuable liaison to the broader LSU community (Figures 3 and 4).

Content Creation

Informational flyer created by Claudia Benito, our Student Organizations Communication Assistant.
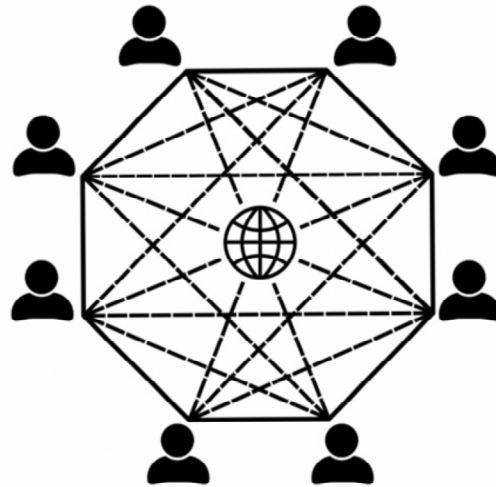

Instructional sheet created by Claudia Benito.

Still from a promotional video recorded by Flor Muciño, our Social Media Preservation Assistant.
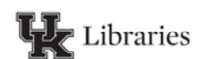
Challenges

- Engagement: Moving from one-way to two-way communication

- Honing the message: Piquing interest while mitigating skepticism

- Communication methods

- Academic calendar

Reflection Question:

In your experience conducting outreach to students, what methods have been most successful in achieving engagement?

The primary challenge we have faced with regard to outreach has been achieving engagement with our target student groups as opposed to one-way communication. We have tried communicating with student groups in-person, as well as via email and social media. Unfortunately, however, we have struggled to garner any lasting interest in our project's aims among our student groups. While it is difficult to definitively determine the reasons for this lack of engagement on the part of students, it has led to some consideration of our messaging. One possibility is that we simply have not appropriately honed our message in ways that pique interest while simultaneously mitigating skepticism or general disinterest. Another consideration is the mode of our communications. It may be somewhat unsurprising that emails have largely gone unanswered, but it was surprising that social media communications were similarly unsuccessful. This unresponsiveness may be explained by student work loads and various competing demands on their time. One thing we feel certain of is that the timing of our communications matter. There are times during the academic calendar when students are particularly busy or not on campus. We have tried to structure our outreach efforts to avoid those times (i.e. start of term, midterm, break periods, and summer). Taken together, this leaves precious little time when students are, at least theoretically, less busy and available to engage with this kind of project. That said, some promising ideas to increase student engagement going forward include providing additional incentives for participation and making more efforts to attend in-person events and meetings.

Next Steps

Technical

- Test and refine LSU collection guide links to Archive-It
- Finalize description
- Continue testing and carrying out social media preservation

Outreach

- Continue to develop promotional materials over the summer
- Recruit another member of the Latino Student Union to do web archiving work, Claudia to act as peer instructor
- Contact student groups in August before classes begin
- Event featuring Daniela Gámez Salgado, September 2023

Related Projects

- Wildcat Histories (part II), Igniting Research Collaborations (IRC), with Dr. Sarah Geegan (Integrated Strategic Communications)
- Kentucky Hispanic Heritage Project (KHHP), will feature and link to final outcomes of this project

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Acknowledgements

UK Team

- **Claudia Benito**, Student Organizations Communication Assistant
- **Sarah Dorpinghaus**, Director of Digital Strategies and Technology
- **Flor Muciño**, Social Media Preservation Assistant
- **Daniela Gámez Salgado**, Project Founder

Professional Network

- **Peter Chan**, Stanford University Libraries
- **Zakiya Collier**, Documenting the Now
- **Lynda Schmitz Fuhrig**, Smithsonian Libraries and Archives
- **Bergis Jules**, Documenting the Now
- **Christie Moffatt**, National Library of Medicine
- **Jasmine Mulliken**, Stanford University Press
- **Dolsy Smith**, Social Feed Manager
- **Ed Sommers**, Documenting the Now, Stanford University Libraries
- **Brian Thomas**, Texas State Archives

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"Wildcat Histories" has been a team effort! Thank you to all of our collaborators and advisors!

Reflection Questions

1. What foundations do you already have that can you build on to serve students and/or document their voices?

1. What successes can you share regarding social media capture and access? (case examples, access tools, capture tools, data harvesting tools, etc.)

1. In your experience conducting outreach to student groups, what methods have been most successful in achieving engagement?

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Thank you for attending!!

We would love to hear from you! Here's our contact information if you'd like to follow up with us:

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