

Documenting a Campus Tragedy: An Ongoing Case Study

Katie Howell, Tina Wright, Casey Moore, Tyler Cline
UNC Charlotte Atkins Library Special Collections &
University Archives



UNC CHARLOTTE
J. Murrey Atkins Library

Katie will discuss the events and special circumstances surrounding the shooting, as well as her work on managing the temporary memorial sites and the campus remembrance commission on which she served. Tina and Casey will discuss their oral history work and background research. Tyler will discuss efforts to preserve digital materials related to the shooting.

Katie Howell

(she/her/hers) is the University Archivist at UNC Charlotte. Prior to this position she was the first archivist at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, NC and the Reference Archivist for the Austin History Center. She received her MSIS from the University of Texas at Austin and a BA in Art History from DePaul University.



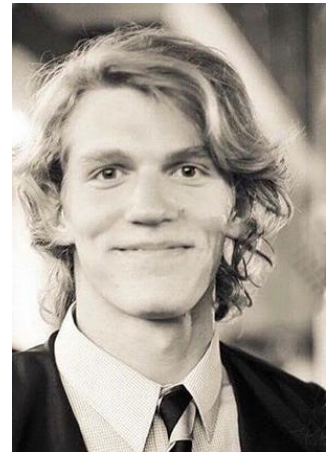
Photo by Chelsea Bren

Purpose & Objectives

- Case study of documentation efforts at UNC Charlotte in the wake of a campus shooting
- Explore how radical empathy and inclusivity shaped our work
- Discuss technical and ethical challenges
- Be open and honest while reflecting on this work
- Engage in dialogue about best practices for documenting challenging current events

Acknowledgements

- Ellis “Reed” Parlier (L) and Riley Howell (R), remember them by name
- Society of American Archivists Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force
- Fellow archivists, oral historians, and public historians



From UNC Charlotte Remembrance Commission final report: “The Howells and Parliers shared with the Commission poignant insight into the lives and characters of these two young men and expressed what was important to them in remembering their sons. The families want their children remembered by name and remembered for what they were and could have become, not just for their tragic deaths.”

Photos: Parlier and Howell families

Background

- On the evening of April 30, 2019 a UNC Charlotte student entered a classroom on campus and opened fired, killing two students and injuring four others
- The gunman was apprehended by the authorities and the entire campus was placed on lockdown for several hours
- In documenting this event, our team wanted to ensure that we practiced ethics of care, inspired by the practices outlined in [*From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives* \(Caswell & Cifor, 2016\)](#)

Special Circumstances

- Chancellor's personal experiences and viewpoints
 - Previous tragedies and in the midst of writing memoir
- University not held legally liable for deaths or injuries suffered
- Final day of classes
- Benefiting from the experiences of those before us
 - Archivists documentation efforts
 - Campus security reforms

- Chancellor Phil Dubois had previously experienced two campus tragedies in his career: he was president of the University of Wyoming at the time of Matthew Shepard's murder in 1998 and in 2001 when 8 UW track students were killed and a ninth was injured in a car crash. His experience with a campus in mourning likely played a role in his response at UNC Charlotte, especially in understanding the role the archivist should play. Hence, his early contact with University Archives to preserve the memorials and ask the archivist to serve on the remembrance commission.
- In discussions with archivists at other institutions who had experienced large traumatic events, we heard of limits placed on collecting initiatives due to pending lawsuits against the university. Our legal counsel was able to advise me early on that we were unlikely to be held legally liable for the deaths or injuries suffered by students. This freed our team up to pursue oral histories from a wide range of University officials.
- The shooting took place on the last day of campus, which meant that our student body left campus, with many never to return. This meant we experienced a more subdued student reaction than we might have otherwise. It also meant that many oral history interviews were put on hold until students and faculty returned for the fall semester.
- We benefited from the hard work done by archivists and oral history interviewers at other institutions. I want to especially call out the work of a task-force appointed by the Society of American Archivists to create a toolkit for documenting traumatic events. At the time of the shooting on our campus, the task-force was still working on the recommendations, but generously

- shared the draft copy with us so we could reference it in our work.
- Based on lessons learned at other schools, our campus had recently installed new lockdown systems on our buildings and a system of safety alerts that potentially spared more injury or death at the time.

Vigil and Memorials

- On May 1, a large student-organized vigil was held in Halton arena
- Outpouring of grief, with thousands of students, staff, and faculty gathered together
- We captured official video recording of the vigil, and photographs and videos taken at the event by archives staff
- Throughout this first week there were protests and visits by public figures that we attempted to document as well



Photo by Katie Howell ([CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#))

Vigil and Memorials

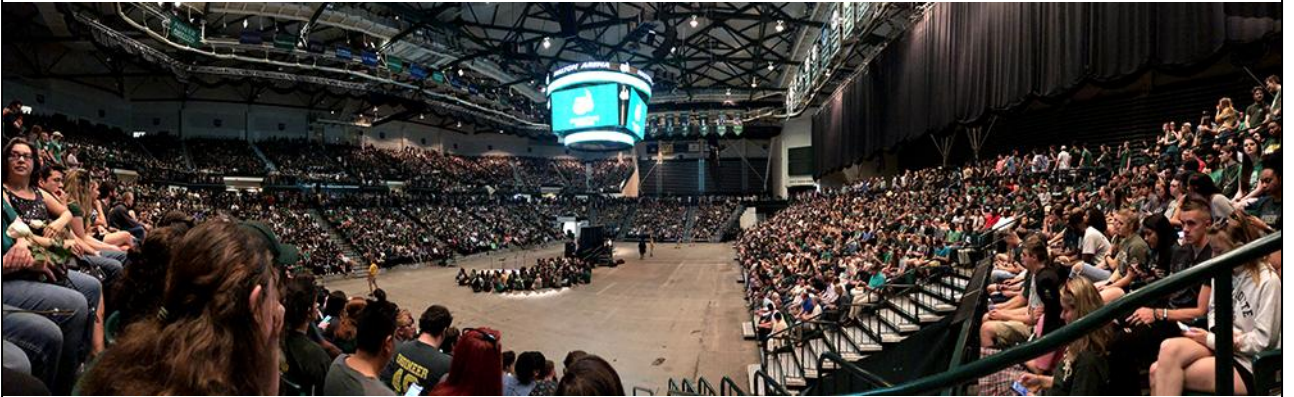


Photo by Katie Howell ([CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#))

Memorial Management

- Two impromptu memorial sites on campus created on May 1 by vigil attendees
- Developed management plan very early on
- Worked with Chancellor's office, facilities, public relations officers, and others across campus



- Two memorial sites were started on campus after the vigil on the evening of May 1 (in front of the Kennedy building, where the shooting took place [pictured above], and in front of a statue of the school mascot [pictured next slide])
- Chancellor's Office called Special Collections staff May 2 to develop a plan to manage and preserve the memorial items
- I worked with facilities to plan the physical removal of items and communications officers to make signage and communicate the plan to the rest of campus
- Photo by Wade Bruton, UNC Charlotte

Memorial Management

- Memorial items removed prior to commencement weekend due to forecasts of inclement weather
- Daily patrols and photo documentation of the sites
- Communication with campus community



- With help from facilities grounds crews, we initiated a daily patrol of the memorials after the initial removal of the memorials
- Signs were placed at each site that indicated the items were being removed to the care of University Archives
- We sent messages out via campus-wide emails regarding the memorial management plans and location of the physical items
- Items were open to viewing by any interested persons
- Photo by Katie Howell ([CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#))

Memorial Management

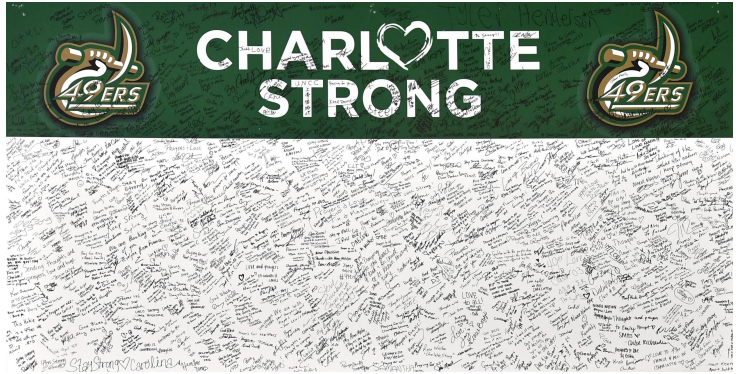
- Commencement was scheduled for May 10-11, just days after the shooting
- At that event, memorial items were shared with victims' families before accessioning into archival holdings
- Families members were encouraged to take items with them; were given all items personally addressed to Reed and Riley



- Families of Reed Parlier and Riley Howell were invited to receive diplomas in memoriam at commencement
- Chancellor's Office requested that memorial items be out on display for the family members to view
- We had a room reserved in the arena where commencement is held; I brought all the physical items and laid them out for viewing
- Family members could take any item that spoke to them and were given all letters or items directly addressed to Reed or Riley
- We did not open sealed letters that were left on the memorials
- Families had two separate times to view, I was on hand to answer any questions that family members might have had about the care of the items.
- Photo by Katie Howell ([CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/))

Memorial Management Challenges

- Large items were the biggest physical challenge
- Eight large signed boards were photographed rather than preserve the originals
- Off campus murals and other signs we were unable to preserve in any way, except via social media and community submitted photos



- The PGA Wells Fargo golf tournament was being held in Charlotte at the time of the shooting. Nine 8-foot boards were put up at the golf club. Eight boards were signed by attendees and one board was signed by the athletes. The athletes' board was auctioned off to support memorial scholarships and the remaining eight were photographed in order to preserve the images. The physical boards were too large to store in the archives.
- Photo by Kat Lawrence, UNC Charlotte

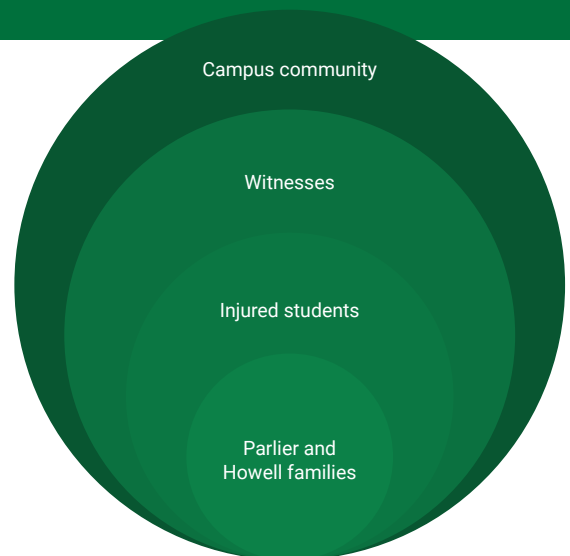
Remembrance Commission

- Formed by chancellor on May 6, 2019
- 14 campus and community members
- Charged with “thoughtfully and compassionately leading a comprehensive process to determine how best to memorialize the victims and remember the tragedy that occurred on April 30” and making a recommendation for the future use of the classroom where the shooting took place



Remembrance Commission

- The work process of the commission informed my way of thinking about our oral history project
- We tried to consult with and think of the needs of circles of communities, starting with the immediate families of the victims, and working out to the greater Charlotte community



In practice, the commission followed this principle by having direct conversations with each of the groups. Members met with the victims' families, the injured students, and the students who were in the classroom at the time of the shooting. We also engaged with the campus and Charlotte community through an online survey and several in-person listening sessions. The thoughts and opinions of those closest to the center of the circle were weighed heaviest in our decisions. We attempted to apply this same thought process when doing oral histories and in planning for a one-year anniversary exhibit (now postponed due to COVID-19 campus closures).

Remembrance Commission

- Four sub-committees: Memorial, Remembrance, Utilization of Kennedy 236, and Engagement
- Committee on Remembrance made recommendations for how to remember the events of April 30
- Results of survey suggested support for exhibit and oral histories (top-level survey results at right)
- Due to this support, Chancellor's Office funded a temporary oral history interviewer, and Casey Moore was hired
- [Commission Final Report](#)


UNC CHARLOTTE

Remembering April 30th

To remember April 30th as a historical event, the campus would like an **annual, on-campus event** (60%).

Support for a **physical exhibit** (50%) & **collection of oral histories, memories, messages** (39%).

It is *moderately to very important* to involve the **broader community**.



I served as chair of the Remembrance Committee on the commission. Our full recommendations can be found in the commission's final report. It has extensive information on the background of the commission members, the work process we used, and our full recommendations. Not all are relevant to this project, but the commission did find that the campus was supportive of exhibits and oral histories of this event. That opened the door for me to get special funding to hire Casey to continue her work on the oral history project and conduct the bulk of the interviews for this project. This was especially important because I was due to go on maternity leave at the beginning of December, and would have been unable to conduct interviews myself. We knew we wanted the interviews done (or close to it) by the first anniversary and my absence would have made that near impossible.

Collecting Voices: Niner Nation Remembers

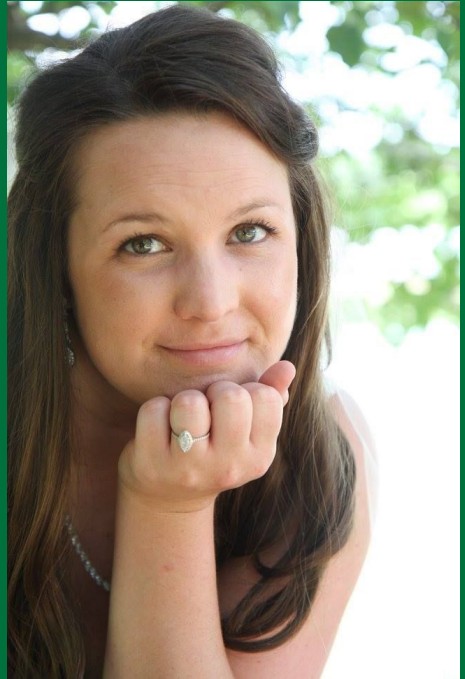
Casey Moore
Oral History Assistant
UNC Charlotte

Tina Wright
Oral History Interviewer
UNC Charlotte



Casey Moore

(she/her/hers) is an oral history consultant and oral history assistant for the Niner Nation Remembers Project at UNCC. She is the Collections Specialist at the Carolinas Aviation Museum and served as an oral history assistant at Johnson C. Smith University. She received an MA in Public History from UNCC and a BS in Secondary Education- Social Studies from Clemson University.



Christina Wright

(she/her/hers) is the Oral History Interviewer at UNC Charlotte. Prior to this position she worked as a consultant for various historical associations, as a consultant interviewer for Special Collections. She received her MA in History from UNC Charlotte and a BA in History and English from Lancaster University in the UK.



Preparation and Research

“It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near one.” – J.R.R. Tolkien

It seems that violent tragedies have almost become a matter of course—something to plan and prepare for—a nightmare that is likely some day to become real. In the fall of 2018 I attended the Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Montreal, where I purchased the book, *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*, edited by oral historians Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan. Although I knew the chapters would reveal important information for oral historians, at the same time I was reluctant to open the book, hoping that I would never be reading it for guidance.

Events at UNC Charlotte on April 30 2019 put us among the 417 mass shooting events of the year. Suddenly our archive was thrust into the role of preparing ourselves to document a tragedy, and the first steps would need to be preparation and research. *Listening on the Edge* had suddenly become directly significant.

Although we did not know how, we did know that oral history would be an important part of documenting the myriad experiences of April 30th and of the days and months following as the campus community mourned, reflected, and responded.

A major hurdle from the outset was working out how to accomplish this oral history documentation, and how to properly prepare to do the project in an

appropriately sensitive way, while meeting our existing commitments. It was a great relief when Katie's request through the Niner Nation Remembers Commission was approved to hire professional consultant, Casey Moore, to lead the research, and help us navigate the path ahead by taking on the main interviewer role.

Preparation for Navigating a Sensitive Project

Research on best practices, existing literature



Consulted various organizations and curators of similar tragedies



Consulted campus counseling services



SAA Tragedy Response Task Force

As a consultant for the Niner Nation Remembers project, I was tasked with doing some preliminary research on how other universities and organizations had handled oral history projects that dealt with traumatic subjects. This included reading existing literature and setting up calls with curators who had dealt with similar tragedies. These conversations were valuable resources that helped us navigate a difficult project.

- Tamara Kennelly, University Archivist
 - Virginia Tech University
- Pamela Schwartz, Chief Curator of the One Orlando Initiative
 - Orange County Regional History Center
- Claytee White, Director of the Oral History Research Center
 - University of Nevada at Las Vegas

On each call, professionals were asked to share their experiences and offer any advice for beginning a repository related to a traumatic event. Some key takeaways were that even though the traumatic event being captured by each institution involved a mass shooting, each of these events were very different and different parameters had to be put in place to begin collecting oral histories. Who should be interviewed, how soon should the interviews take place, how would we guard against PTSD in the interviewee and interviewer, etc. Using the collected interviews brought up other questions; how soon should interviews be made

public and what to do with interviews that had particularly traumatic accounts of the event?

After speaking with these professionals and consulting UNC Charlotte Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), we put together a short list of broad questions that focused on the events of that day. We followed advice to begin interviews as quickly as possible and put together a list of key individuals from administrators to campus police and first responders, to students and community members. We used this spreadsheet to keep track of each person, their title, the context surrounding their interview, and the date of the completed interview.

Adaptations

The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings
Okakura Kakuzō (岡倉 覚三), *The Book of Tea*


Adaptation of Oral History Documentation

Release, Biographical, and Additional Documents



The invaluable research and discussion with other archives made us aware that we should adapt our traditional oral history paperwork to make it less complex, more transparent, and compassionate in tone.

Consent and Release Document

**Oral History Program
Interview Release**

The purpose of the program is to gather and preserve historical documentation by means of the audio and/or visual recorded interview.

This Release is made and entered into by the:
Interviewee(s) _____
and the Interviewer(s) _____
On: _____

Interviewee(s) agree to participate in a series of audio and/or visual recorded interviews with the interviewee(s) named above. This Release relates to any and all materials originating from the interviewee(s), including but not limited to the audio and/or visual recording of the interviewee(s), any transcripts or other written manuscripts prepared from or using the recordings, or any images that might be used during the interview or that were created during the interview.

In consideration of the mutual covenants, conditions, and terms set forth below, the parties hereto hereby agree as follows:

1. Interviewee(s) and Interviewer(s) understand that the material will become the physical property of the J. Murrey Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (hereinafter referred to as the "Library"), and that it will be made available in its entirety to researchers and to the general public.
2. The Library abides by all United States copyright laws. Interviewee(s) and Interviewer(s) may wish to assign to the Library all rights of copyright for interview materials.
3. The Library shall have the right to assign this Release (or any of its rights hereunder) to any person, firm, partnership or corporation for any reason and without notice to Interviewee(s) or Interviewer(s).

Special Collections, J. Murrey Atkins Library
University of North Carolina at Charlotte Page 1 Oral History Program Form 1
(Rev. March 2017)

**Mining Memories at UNC Charlotte**

Charlotte 250 EE video studio student stories about Charlotte and UNC Charlotte

The purpose of the Mining Memories project is to document UNC Charlotte students' reflections about the city of Charlotte and UNC Charlotte. Student participation is entirely voluntary, and they can withdraw from the project at any time.

Informed Consent Agreement:

We the undersigned give our consent to the J. Murrey Atkins Library to use all or any part of our recording and supplementary materials related to the recording, such as photographs or documents in any format, for scholarly, educational, or community awareness purposes.

We agree to freely share our interview under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).¹ This means that we retain the copyright, but that members of the public may freely copy, transform, build on, and share these items for non-commercial purposes under the same license, as long as they include the original source information and indicate whether they made any changes.


We further understand that copies of the recording(s), along with any transcripts that are prepared and any supplemental materials will be deposited in the J. Murrey Atkins Special Collections and University Archives to be preserved and made available for public listening, reading, and viewing, and that all or part of our recording may be made freely available to the public on the internet or through other emerging, future technologies that may be developed.

We release the J. Murrey Atkins Library and UNC Charlotte from all claims arising out of, or in connection with the use of our observations, memories, and experiences. We understand that the J. Murrey Atkins Library and UNC Charlotte cannot be held liable for the use of information by third parties who may extract portions of our words for their own creative work.

Print and sign below:

Printed Name _____
Signature _____
Date _____
Email _____

¹ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>


**Niner Nation Remembers Oral History Project**

Community memories and reflections about the events surrounding April 30, 2019

The purpose of the Niner Nation Remembers project is to document reflections on the tragic campus shooting that occurred at UNC Charlotte on April 30, 2019, and the response of the campus and wider community to that event.

Participation in this oral history project is entirely voluntary. Speaking about traumatic experiences can be emotionally distressing and some questions may evoke difficult memories, thoughts, and feelings. Interviewees are in complete control of the information they choose to share and may choose to skip questions, pause the recording, stop the interview or withdraw at any time. However, interviewees may also find meaning and empowerment in sharing their personal story with others.


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 ¹ <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

We decided to move away from the legalistic language and extensive detail of our default oral history release document, which may have been perceived as clinical and alienating in the circumstances. Instead we customized a release document that we recommend for community oral history projects, and which we had recently piloted on campus.

Niner Nation Remembers Custom Choices

Sensitive Introductory Language



Niner Nation Remembers Oral History Project

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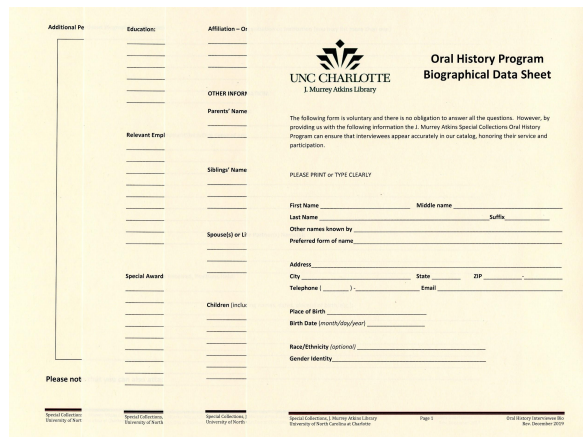
We agree to freely share our interview under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).¹ This means that we retain the copyright, but that members of the public may freely copy, transform, build on, and share these items for non-commercial purposes under the same license, as long as they include the original source information and indicate whether they made any changes.

By creating a custom release we were able to forefront sympathetic language guided by our school's Counseling and Psychological services team to reassure narrators and acknowledge the emotionally sensitive, but also valuable nature of the interview.

Rather than asking narrators to give up their copyright ownership to the library, the new release maintained copyright in the hands of the creators through a Creative Commons Share Alike License. By adopting a CC license we hoped to avoid any feelings of giving up ownership of something that is essentially very personal.

Biographical Document

Library Default Biographical Form



The form is titled "Oral History Program Biographical Data Sheet" and is associated with the UNC Charlotte J. Murrey Atkins Library. It includes sections for "Additional Fe", "Education", "Affiliation - Or", "OTHER INFO", "Parent's Name", "Relevant Dept", "Siblings' Name", "Spouse(s) or LI", "Special Award", "Children (incl)", "Race/Ethnicity (optional)", and "Gender Identity". It also contains a disclaimer: "The following form is voluntary and there is no obligation to answer all the questions. However, by providing us with the following information the J. Murrey Atkins Special Collections Oral History Program can ensure that interviewees appear accurately in our catalog, honoring their service and participation." and a "PLEASE PRINT or TYPE CLEARLY" instruction. The form is divided into sections for "First Name", "Middle name", "Last Name", "Other names known by", "Preferred form of name", "Address", "City", "State", "ZIP", "Telephone", "Email", "Place of Birth", "Birth Date (month/day/year)", "Race/Ethnicity (optional)", and "Gender Identity".

NNR Form adaptations

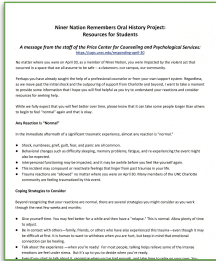
- Shorter
- Created to capture basic information required for archiving metadata
- Two versions
 - Longer form for major players
 - Very short form for wider use

Similarly we made significant adaptations to our standard biographical form, which is extensive and which allows for a wide range of personal contextual data. We knew that we needed a more pared down and less invasive form. Since some biographical information is critical for our processing practices as an archive, we sought advice from our Metadata Librarian about essential elements to include.

We then created two biographical forms for different usages: one longer document for interviews with major players and decision makers, and one simplified document for more abbreviated interviews and personal reflections to use with the general 49er community.

It is interesting to note that since Oral History has been reclassified as being exempt from compulsory Internal Review Board overview, we were able to make these changes serving an empathetic need in a timely manner while maintaining best practices with regard to guidance from our counseling and psychological services.

Additional Resources Handout



UNC Charlotte
Counseling and
Psychological
Services Handout



RESPONDING TO APRIL 30

A message from the staff of the Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services:

No matter where you were on April 30, as a member of Niner Nation, you were impacted by the violent act that occurred in a space that we all assume to be safe -- a classroom, our campus, our community.

Perhaps you have already sought the help of a professional counselor or from your own support system. Regardless, as we move past the initial shock and the outpouring of support from Charlotte and beyond, I want to take a moment to provide some information that I hope you will find helpful as you try to understand your reactions and consider resources for seeking help.

Finally, we drew up a takeaway document to have on hand as a resource at interviews which shared guidance information created by the UNC Charlotte Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). The two page flyer included descriptions of the wide range of reactions people might have to the tragedy, suggested coping strategies, and listed services available for students who needed support.

Collecting Voices for Niner Nation Remembers

“It takes asking many questions from many perspectives to truly understand something.” – John Paul Caponigro

<https://www.johnpaulcaponigro.com/blog/12105/33-quotes-by-photographer-john-paul-caponigro/>

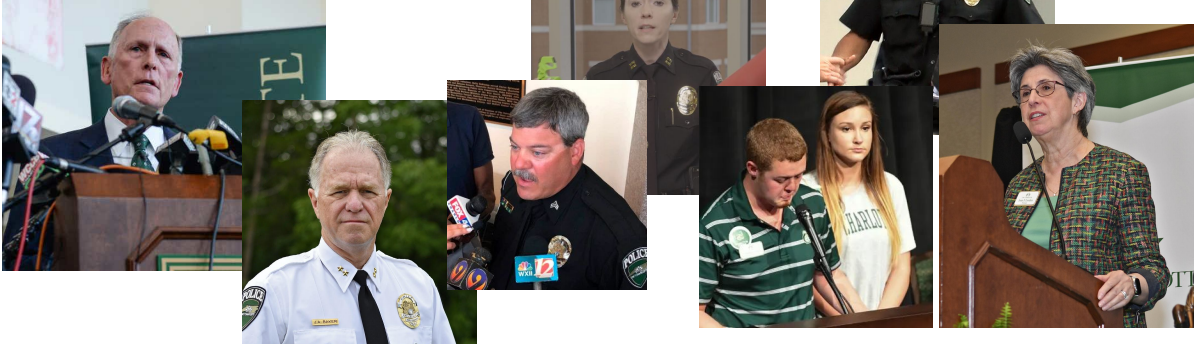
From the very beginning of the campus response there was a central message that was repeated often: “We are all Niners”. The Price Center for Counseling and Psychological Services centered this message in their outreach to students:

“No matter where you were on April 30, as a member of Niner Nation, you were impacted by the violent act that occurred in a space that we all assume to be safe -- a classroom, our campus, our community.”



Same Story: Multiple Aspects

Key Participants & Decision Makers



From an oral history collecting point of view it became clear that there were two broad constituencies to interview:

Key participants and decision makers whose names surfaced through the Niner Nation Remembrance Commission...

Campus Community



We Are All Niners

...and the broader campus community, who came together in the thousands following the shooting.

There was, however, no immediate opportunity to interview people. Since the shooting occurred on the last day of classes the campus community quickly dispersed and the opportunity to capture the immediacy of the campus response was shouldered by physical and digital collecting.

This allowed us to do the planning groundwork to collect narratives in a more measured and, we hoped, less emotionally disturbing way.

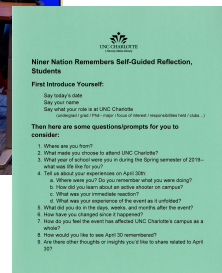
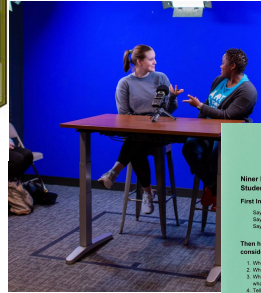
Campus Community : “StoryCorps” Style Interviews

Technology and space in Library at central location with adjacent video studio

Additional break out rooms booked

Additional interviewers recruited from among staff already interested and trained in oral history

Flexible question guide prepared for individual or guided use



In the fall of 2019 we planned and executed ‘StoryCorps’ style opportunities for campus members with the intention of repeating the experience in the spring as memorials and commemorations were underway. Our intention was to have a more casual, conversational style to allow narrators to have ownership in the process.

Again with human resources stretched thin we needed to reach out within the department and the library to create the necessary components for collecting narratives.

- Our library technology area, Area 49, provided an ideal base for the two day event with a central location and separate video recording room.
- Additional break-out rooms were booked to provide for multiple interviews as needed.
- Additional interviewers were recruited from among library staff and student workers who had previously shown interest in oral history and taken in-house training opportunities.
- Casey provided research based guidance in creating a flexible question guide that served for either self reflection or an interviewer-led session.

Recruitment

VISIT & STUDY | CHECK OUT & REQUEST | RESEARCH & WRITE | TECHNOLOGY

Home / Share your experience of April 30

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE



Monday, December 16, 2019

The Niner Nation Remembers Oral history project holding drop-in sessions. By collecting first-hand accounts of Niner Nation to the tragedy of April 30, 2019, members affected by this tragedy can provide historical context they provide, and share their experiences.

If you are ready and willing to share your story, contact us to schedule an interview.

In addition to sharing your oral history, you can submit digital photos, videos, artwork, social media posts, emails, and other materials relating to the events of April 30, 2019 to University Archives using the Niner Nation Remembers website.

The University Archives serves as the collective memory of our campus history. Once archived, these remembrances will help tell the stories of those affected by this tragedy.

UNC CHARLOTTE

INSIDE UNC CHARLOTTE

NEWS | EVENTS | IN THE MEDIA | SWAP-N-SHOP | FOR FACULTY/STAFF | THE DUBOIS LEGACY | FEATURED STORIES

Home / News / News and Features / Oral history project holding drop-in sessions

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT HOLDING DROP-IN SESSIONS

NEWS

- News and Features
- Oral history project holding drop-in sessions
- Faculty Spotlights
- Student Spotlights
- Research
- Newsletter Archives

NINER NATION REMEMBERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT DROP-IN

Thursday, October 24, 2019

Students, faculty, staff and community members are invited to share their experiences of the April 30, 2019 campus shooting and subsequent events.

By collecting first-hand accounts of the tragedy, the University Archives will help tell the stories of those affected by this tragedy.

NINER NATION REMEMBERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT DROP-IN

OCTOBER 29 & 30 12:30 - 3:30PM

AREA 49 - EZ VIDEO STUDIO
ATKINS LIBRARY 2ND FLOOR

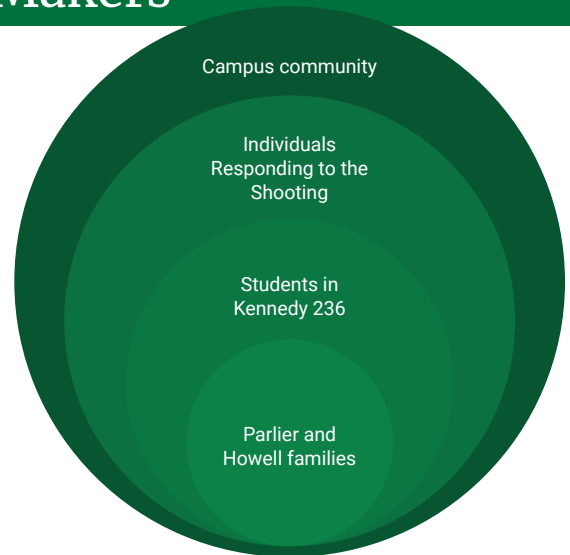
Information about the opportunity to share personal experiences of April 30 were broadcast to the campus community using various channels:

- Library website featured details in advance of recording days
- Project advertised through campus wide Inside UNC Charlotte newsletter
- Poster and information aired on campus-wide large screens
- Posters displayed physically at library entrances

Interviewing Key Participant and Decision-Makers

Grouping key participants:

- UNCC Administration and Grief Counseling
- Police, Emergency Response and Government officials
- Students
- Faculty and Staff
- Remembrance Commission



Based on the conversations we had with other curators and archivists, we began to gather a list of key participants and decision-makers and worked to group those potential interviewees into categories.

The administration category contained the university's top administrators, the Chancellor's Policy Group, the Chancellor's Cabinet, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). The Emergency Response category included campus police, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, UNCC's Emergency Response team, other first responders, hospital and ER staff, and local and state government officials. These two categories include people on the scene in the first 24 hours and are represented in the third tier of the graph.

The student category included students involved in campus organizations as well as students who were close to the incident when it occurred. Some of these include the Student Government Association President and personnel from the Niner Times campus newspaper. Faculty and staff were selected as interviewees based on their proximity to the incident and their role in the remembrance events scheduled for April 30th, 2020. Finally, the Remembrance Commission, comprised of campus and community members, needed to be interviewed to discuss their role in defining how April 30th and the two victims would be remembered for years to come. These groups are represented in the fourth tier of the graph, "campus community."

The first two tiers of the graph are comprised of those who were closest to and most affected by this tragic shooting. The families of the victims and the students and teacher in the class at the time of the shooting, were not included in our list of participants out of respect for what they endured.

Takeaways



What Went Well

'StoryCorps' style interviews

Collected interviews from a range of individuals who were caught up in events of the day including administrative staff, student leadership, and the general student body

Additional interviewers and spaces gave us the capacity to accommodate parallel interviews

Question guide elicited thoughtful narratives, encouraged ownership of the process and proved to be a good starting point for the more in-depth interviews

Adapted paperwork made for a smooth, transparent, non-threatening and efficient transfer of information

Key Participants & Decision Makers

Chancellor Dubois gave a clear directive to interview certain key decision makers and restricted access to victims and their families

Niner Nation Remembrance Commission provided leadership in connecting us to other key players

Challenges & Things To Consider

'StoryCorps' style interviews

Fewer interviews than we had hoped, though the interviews collected gave us experience and drew attention to the project more generally

Timing close to Halloween 2019 was not ideal—but somewhat out of our control due to competing activities. Might have been better to repeat over two week period

Advertising, though well conceived and executed may not have reached many students—large population of almost 30,000 students and 3,000 faculty and staff. Could have considered more large physical posters to draw more attention nearer the time

Our intention to repeat the StoryCorps activity close to the anniversary of April 30 has been disrupted due to the onset of the global pandemic, COVID 19

Key Participants & Decision Makers

By the second week of March 2020, North Carolina had begun experiencing the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We lost eight CMPD interviews because of the role the police would play in a "shelter in place" order from the city. Remote Interviewing had to be adopted to continue the project.

The pandemic has also led to massive changes in the way the first anniversary of the shooting will be remembered. Events and vigils will move to an online platform and this will also limit the opportunity to interview the Senior class of 2019-2020.

On Remote Interviewing:

At the time of this publication, we have conducted several interviews over the phone and one using the Zoom Meeting platform. This platform has its perks. It allows you to see the person you are interviewing so you're not missing the face to face interaction that is often beneficial when recording an oral history. It also records a better quality mp4 than a phone call and saves the audio and video of your interview as separate files. We hope to utilize this platform in moving forward with the interviews.

Archiving the Digital During and After the Tragedy



I've been a digital archivist since 2013, and received my MA in Public History in 2011. So I've been thinking about issues surrounding digital primary sources, and public memory my entire professional career.

Tyler G. Cline

(he/his) is the Digital Archivist at UNC Charlotte, where has worked since 2017. Previously, he was an assistant professor and digital programs manager at the University of Wyoming.

He received his MA in Public History from CSU Sacramento in 2011, and his BA in History from Humboldt State University in 2009.



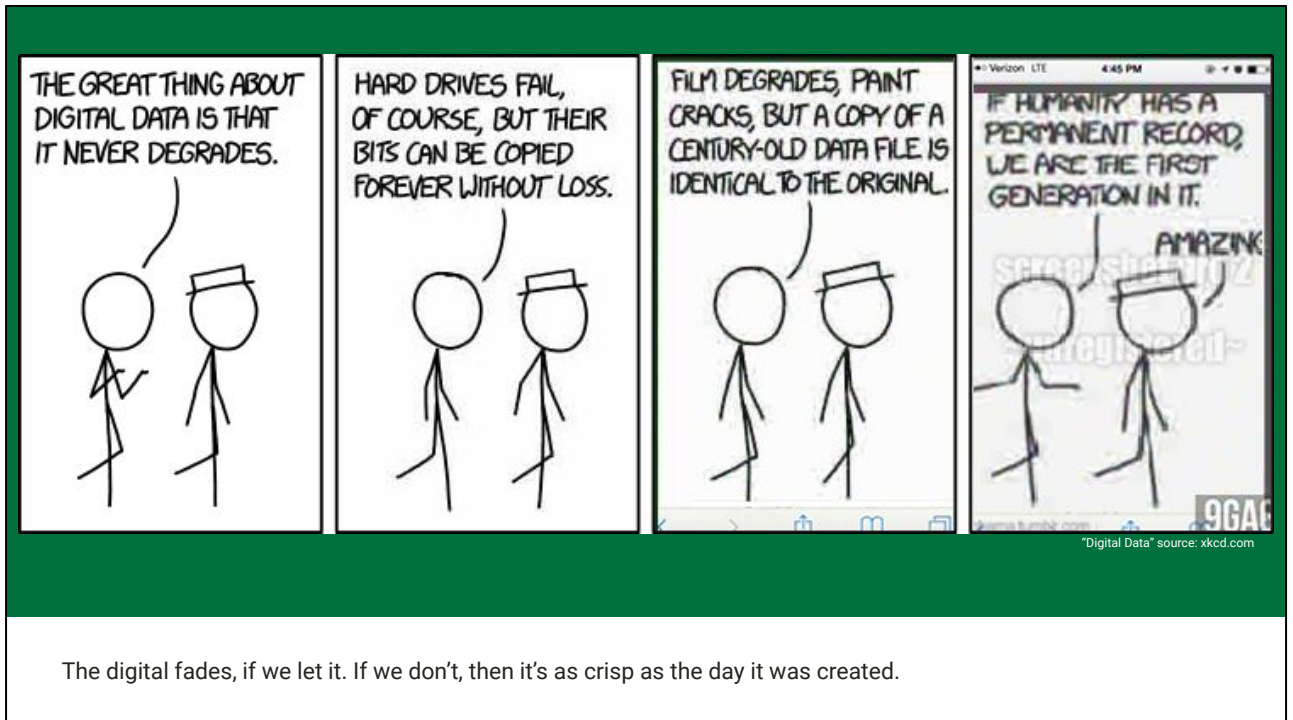
Introduction

The Digital Permanence and
Impermanence of Trauma

Talking about tragedy is hard. Writing about tragedy is hard. Doing the work of preserving memory of a tragedy, one so visceral, is soul-crushing.

You've heard this before, you've heard this from this panel already today. But preserving digital memory has its own set of challenges.

Digital memory doesn't degrade.



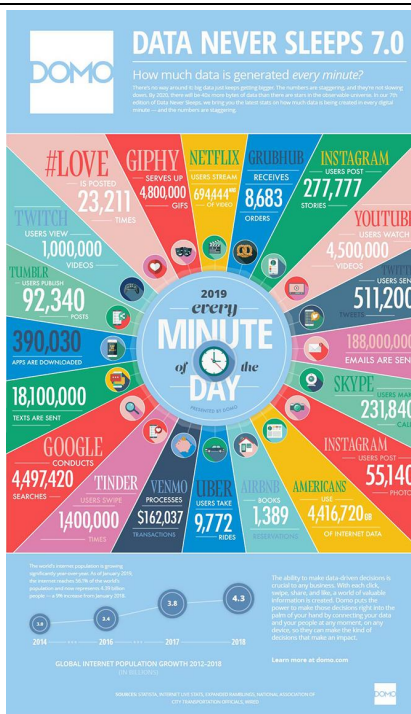
I mean, it does, of course. Lossy files, imperfect copies, reformats, transcodings. But the raison d'être of a digital archivist is to ensure that it does not. That memory in digital form remains visceral, accurate, trustworthy.

The Internet is Permanent*

* It's not, really. The internet is as much a tool for forgetting as it is for memory.

But archivists work constantly to preserve digital memory.

In so doing, the form and substance of that memory can be indistinguishable from the events it recalls.



The work of doing that preservation is my life. To be fair, to do my work, from the relatively safe position of an academic archivist, is a privilege. It's not the same as being a Facebook content moderator. But in the course of this effort, spanning the past year, it has been psychologically challenging.

What Went Well



I'm going to present a few case studies of the work I did in preserving the memory of April 30th at UNC Charlotte - what went well, what went poorly, and how it affected me.

Chancellor's Office Emails

EXPORT SELECTED MESSAGES IN GMAIL
Official Google Support Document: <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/3024190>

1.) Have your messages sorted by label, and know which you want to export.

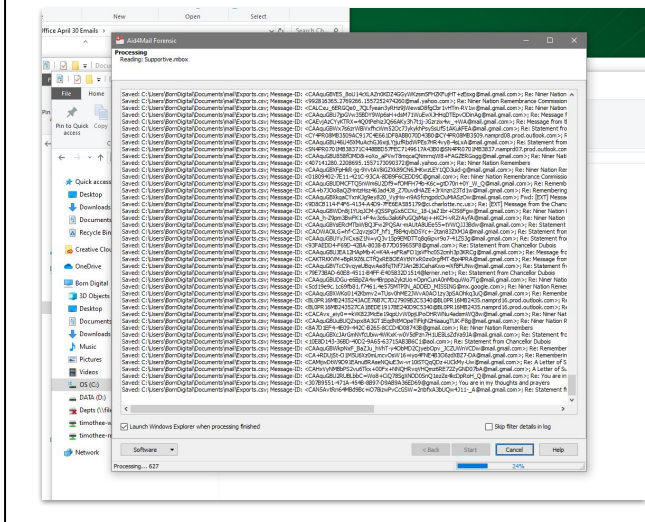
2.) When logged in to Gmail, select the Account icon at the top right, and then click "Google Account"

3.) At the top left of the next screen, select "Data & personalization"

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| Commencement - Hooding EML | 110 KB |
| Commencement - Hooding PDF | 8.4 MB |
| Counseling Services EML | 2.3 MB |
| Counseling Services PDF | 96.3 MB |
| Donation Fund EML | 302 KB |
| Donation Fund PDF | 16.1 MB |
| Exams Schedule EML | 412 KB |
| Exams Schedule PDF | 36.4 MB |
| External Review EML | 837 KB |
| External Review PDF | 25.1 MB |
| General Encls - Inquiries EML | 348 KB |
| General Encls - Inquiries PDF | 16.2 MB |
| Media Requests EML | 3.9 MB |
| Media Requests PDF | 33.4 MB |
| Memorial-Petitions-Tributes EML | 7.9 MB |
| Memorial-Petitions-Tributes PDF | 137.6 MB |
| Messages to the Families EML | 103 KB |
| Messages to the Families PDF | 18.3 MB |
| Negative EML | 700 KB |
| Negative PDF | 33.1 MB |
| Recommendations EML | 803 KB |
| Recommendations PDF | 62.8 MB |
| Recovery of Items EML | 195 KB |
| Recovery of Items PDF | 7.3 MB |
| Responses from Chanoff EML | 25.3 MB |
| Responses from Chanoff PDF | 392.7 MB |
| Security Concerns EML | 12 MB |
| Security Concerns PDF | 64.4 MB |
| Supportive EML | 27.4 MB |
| Supportive PDF | 865.3 MB |
| Unsubscribe Requests EML | 812 KB |
| Unsubscribe Requests PDF | 21.1 MB |
| Commencement - Hooding.mbox | 112 KB |
| Counseling Services.mbox | 2.3 MB |
| Donation Fund.mbox | 814 KB |
| Exams Schedule.mbox | 391 KB |
| External Review.mbox | 352 KB |
| General Encls - Inquiries.mbox | 340 KB |
| Media Requests.mbox | 3.9 MB |
| Memorial-Petitions-Tributes.mbox | 7.9 MB |
| Messages to the Families.mbox | 82 KB |
| Negative.mbox | 683 KB |
| Recommendations.mbox | 800 KB |
| Recovery of Items.mbox | 191 KB |
| Responses from Chanoff.mbox | 25.1 MB |
| Security Concerns.mbox | 11.9 MB |
| Supportive.mbox | 22 MB |
| Unsubscribe Requests.mbox | 803 KB |

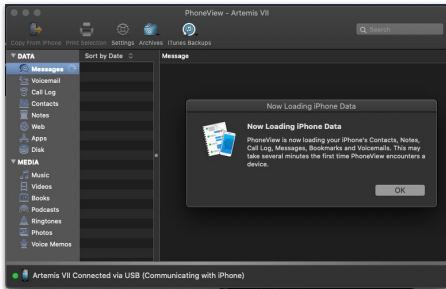
Working with the University Chancellor and his office was one of the smoother parts of archiving in the wake of the shooting. The chancellor's staff immediately began sorting his emails into Gmail folders. A majority of these emails were unsolicited condolences, from students, faculty, family members, and the community. A few were from local officials and statewide politicians. The Chancellor's office had done a remarkable job of sorting and selecting the emails to provide a broad and accurate representation of the Chancellor's correspondence during and after the shooting.

Chancellor's Office Emails

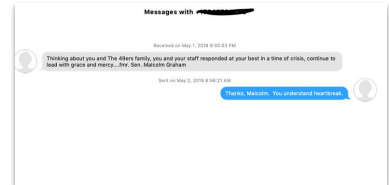


About two months later, they contacted Katie and myself about transferring the emails the Chancellor received and sent to the University Archives. I put together a two-page instruction sheet based on Google's FAQ for exporting Google data, and sent it to his office. They were able to use the Google Takeout tools to export the Gmail mailboxes in MBOX format and send them directly to me, where I converted to PDF as well as retained the MBOX exports.

Chancellor's University Text Messages

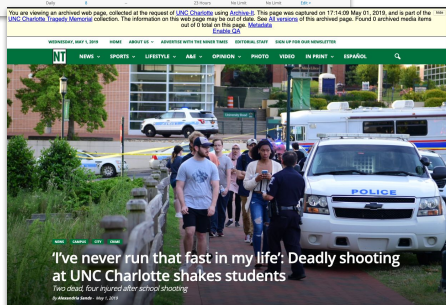
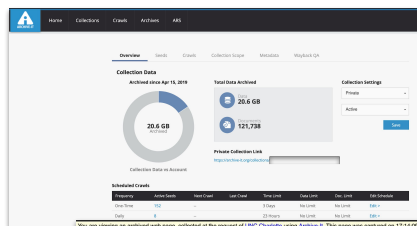


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| Beth Fischer.pdf | 240 KB |
| Beth Hardin, Joan Lorden, Kim Bradley.pdf | 54 KB |
| Betty Doster, Kim Bradley, Mike Hill.pdf | 350 KB |
| Bob Morgan.pdf | 38 KB |
| Brad Robinette, Niles Sorensen.pdf | 40 KB |
| Clayton Wilcox.pdf | 27 KB |
| David Reed.pdf | 102 KB |
| Edith Russell.pdf | 48 KB |
| Elizabeth Doster, Joe Price.pdf | 488 KB |
| Elizabeth Doster, Michael Smith.pdf | 431 KB |
| Ellen & Jim (Emily's parents) Houpt.pdf | 66 KB |
| Eric Davis.pdf | 34 KB |
| Eugene Johnson.pdf | 132 KB |
| Harry Smith.pdf | 47 KB |
| IMG_5063.jpeg | 912 KB |
| Joe Price.pdf | 78 KB |
| John Bogdan.pdf | 376 KB |
| kim.bradley@uncc.edu, Shari Dunn.pdf | 31 KB |
| Krista Newkirk.pdf | 55 KB |
| Lisa Dubois, Philip Dubois.pdf | 35 KB |
| Malcolm Graham.pdf | 34 KB |
| Marcia Kelley.pdf | 35 KB |
| Michael Gordon.pdf | 50 KB |
| Michele Howard.pdf | 44 KB |
| Nancy Cable.pdf | 34 KB |
| Ron Kimble.pdf | 42 KB |
| Sean Dehart (Parents, John & Trisha).pdf | 146 KB |
| Shari Dunn.pdf | 80 KB |
| Taylor Dubois (redact personal pictures).pdf | 718 KB |
| Thomas E. Spicer.pdf | 39 KB |
| Tommy Tomlinson.pdf | 35 KB |
| Tony Vecchio.pdf | 45 KB |
| William Roper.pdf | 28 KB |

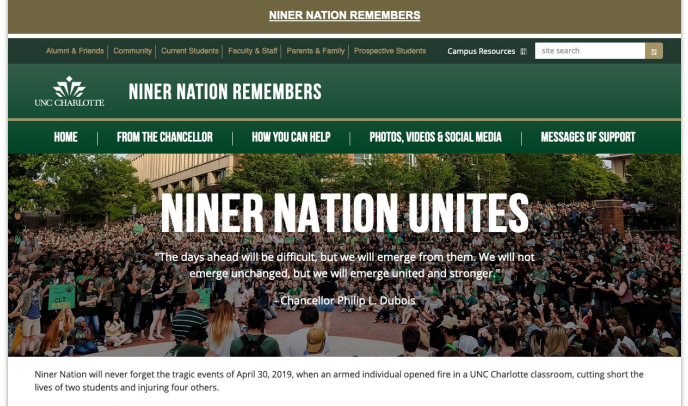


Another month later, the Chancellor mentioned to Katie that he had saved his text messages from 4/30 and the following weeks in iCloud. I was skeptical that they hadn't been deleted, since the Chancellor had removed them from his University iPhone, but Katie and I set up an appointment to visit his office and see what we could preserve. Amazingly, the Chancellor pulled out an iPad, I asked him to sign in to iCloud messages, and the text messages began to download from the cloud to his iPad. Using a modestly priced software tool called PhoneView which I had purchased years earlier for my own use, I connected his iPad to my work MacBook Pro, and the Chancellor and I went through his list of text messages. I saved the majority of them as PDF files to my laptop, and then transferred them to our secure S3 server back in the archives.

Web Archiving – University Web Pages



You are viewing an archived web page, collected at the request of [UNC Charlotte](#) using [Archive-IT](#). This page was captured on 19:55:21 May 06, 2019, and is part of the [UNC Charlotte Tragedy Memorial](#) collection. The information on this web page may be out of date. See [All versions](#) of this archived page. Found 0 archived media items out of 0 total on this page. [Metadata](#) [Cite this page](#)



Starting May 1st, the day after the shooting, I began to capture websites using Archive-IT, the paid service of the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Using robust capture tools, I started with University websites, capturing the student newspaper *Niner Times*, and soon thereafter, NinerNationRemembers, the University's official commemoration webpage.

What Did Not Go Well



Using Archive-It to capture late-breaking news articles was more of a success than capturing University managed websites. Each news organization structured their content differently. The local Fox affiliate proved the hardest to capture, resulting in no news articles from Fox24 being saved in Archive-It.

Web Archiving – News Articles and Sites



UNC Charlotte Tragedy Memorial Web Archive (UNC Charlotte)



Enter Web Address:

All

Not in Archive

The page you requested has not been archived in Archive-It.

This could be for a number of reasons.

Most likely the page you are requesting was outside of the crawler's scope. Try another request or click to see other pages from [https:](#)

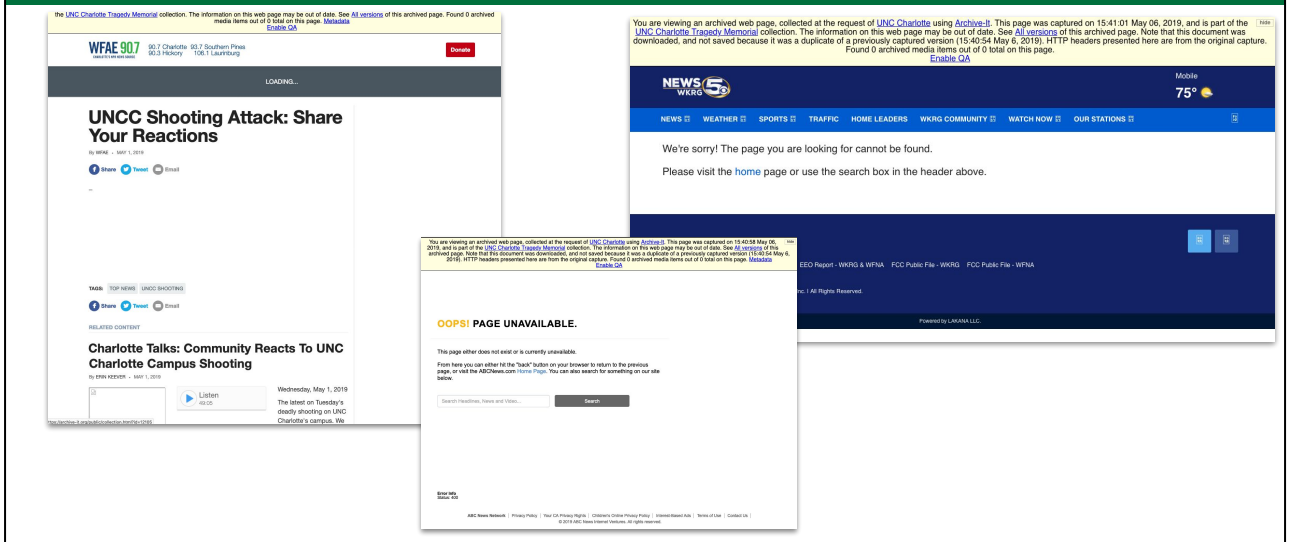
It is also possible that this site is currently being crawled and the archived pages are not yet available in the Wayback Machine. It can take up to 24 hours after a crawl has been completed for the site to appear in the Wayback Machine. Please try again after the allotted time.

You can also try searching for [https://www.omaha.com/momaha/no-no-no-omaha-dad-recalls-trying-to-reach-daughters/article_7baf3a7-db51-5007-ac7a-0259a0a3bee2.html/](https://www.omaha.com/momaha/no-no-no-omaha-dad-recalls-trying-to-reach-daughters/article_7baf3a7-db51-5007-ac7a-0259a0a3bee2.html) on the [live web](#), in the [global Wayback Service](#), or in the General Archive at the Internet Archive at www.archive.org

[Home](#) | [Internet Archive](#)

Another problem was video. Often embedded in webpages of news articles, this dynamic content was problematic in several ways. Since the release of DRM for web-based HTML5 video, and even before, content creators (namely larger companies) sought ways to prevent the easy download of embedded audio and video on their webpages, citing copyright concerns. Due to the largely open nature of the web as it was intended, and has since grown ever more closed, video is the hardest to capture, and Archive-It has not been up to the challenge. So many of our captures featured text and images along with a prominent blank space where the video should have been.

Paywalls, DRM, and PHP, oh my!



Other problems included paywalled sites (looking at you, New York Times; though our local newspaper the Charlotte Observer, a McClatchey owned property, was also harder to capture using Archive-It's crawler). Archive-it also failed to capture some dynamically-generated page URLs that used PHP scripts.

Impact, Takeaways, and the Effects



Web Submission Portal

- Integrated with Niner Nation Remembers page
- Two weeks after the event, Special Collections met with University marketing and communications to integrate self-submissions through the highly promoted Niner Nation Remembers page
- Visitors encouraged to share their stories and media around the event through a Google form

The screenshot displays the 'NINER NATION REMEMBERS' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the UNC Charlotte logo and the title 'NINER NATION REMEMBERS'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: HOME, FROM THE CHANCELLOR, HOW YOU CAN HELP, MESSAGES OF SUPPORT, MEMORIAL JURY & ADVISORY GROUP, PHOTOS, VIDEOS & SOCIAL MEDIA, and REMEMBRANCE COMMISSION. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: Home / Photos, Videos & Social Media / Share Your Digital Media. A large green heading reads 'SHARE YOUR DIGITAL MEDIA'. To the left, a sidebar contains a 'PHOTOS, VIDEOS & SOCIAL MEDIA' section with sub-links for Photo Gallery, Social Media, and Share Your Digital Media. The main text explains that UNC Charlotte's University Archives is collecting digital photos, videos, first-hand accounts, artwork, correspondence, and other materials related to the tragic events of April 30, 2019. It states that the collection will provide historical context for understanding the event and document both the official and unofficial responses to it. A 'VIEW THE FORM' button is located at the bottom of the page.

Not long after the University set up a memorial site and linked to it from every UNCC web page via a top banner, Katie, Tyler, and the head of Special Collections met with members of the University marketing team to discuss how to preserve digital media that were being created and shared on that site. We had designed a Google form for people to submit their own materials of text, photos, screenshots, audio, and video through a Google form, and we integrated it with the Niner Nation Remembers site.

Web Submission Portal

Long answer text

Please add your files here. You may upload up to ten files at a time. Each file may be up to 1 GB.

⬇️ Add file

Check here if you are interested in being contacted to do an oral history interview about your experience.

Please contact me.

If you have a website you would like preserved, please include the URL here:

Short answer text

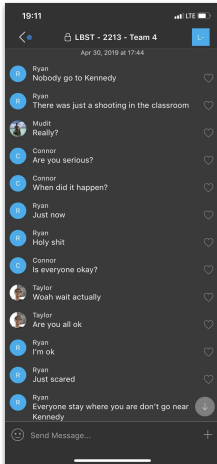
Submission Agreement *

I hereby certify that I created, and own the copyright in, the submitted material. While I will continue to reta...

- Integrated into a Google sheet with file submissions by user in Google Drive
- Included donation language about copyright similar to an archival Deed of Gift
- Included follow-up questions about oral history interviews
- Included ability to include external links to web pages

The form captured email addresses and contact information, included a simple file upload option that could accept large files in case of video, and filed all the submissions into a google sheet and shared the submitted files to our archivists on google drive. It included language akin to an archival donation agreement, including copyright clearance.

Web Portal and In-Person Contributions



The submissions through the web portal and in person proved to be both the “easiest” to preserve, as well as some of the most challenging content. On-campus faculty and staff, as well as library staff submitted photos, videos, and screenshots of text messages. Some included police lights, sirens, and SWAT officers, others included text messages sent between students in the class during and after the shooting.

Experiencing the Aftermath in the Digital



These are no more or less traumatic than any of the other materials we've discussed, but they are, inasmuch as my job is concerned, perfect digital memories. Those moments are being preserved by me, through our software and metadata, and prove the visceral nature of the trauma of this experience.

Archiving Our Own Memories



Questions? Contact Us!

Tyler: Tyler.Cline@uncc.edu

Katie: Katie.Howell@uncc.edu

Casey: cbumgar9@uncc.edu

Tina: cwrigh7@uncc.edu

We know this format does not allow for the same kind of engaging discussion we had hoped to have in person with our audience. Please reach out with any questions or comments you may have.

Thank you for reading!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Differentiating 4/30 and the University City apartments shooting?
- Why aren't we documenting Charlotte's gun violence (129 homicides in 2019)?