

Project Year

Spring, 2009

Project Title

In Their Own Words

Project Team

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Audience

Students taking the course *The Power of Place: Race and Community in East Baltimore* (AS.100.343); fall, 2009

Pedagogical Issue

There is no more compelling way to experience history than to hear someone who lived through a particular time or event talk about it. Written transcripts alone, no matter how carefully crafted, are insufficient to fully convey the richness of human speech. Yet because oral histories are often lengthy, lasting anywhere between 30 minutes and over two hours in time, recordings do not easily lend themselves to classroom use. Student and professional researchers alike are also far more likely to seek our written transcripts than to listen to oral histories directly. When transcripts are unavailable, these histories remain underutilized altogether, recorded but largely forgotten.

While one of the benefits of teaching twentieth century history is the ability to benefit from voice recordings, too often the challenges of importing these materials into the classroom, locating and editing a spoken quote or passage, and playing it back as part of a lecture or discussion make actually using sound prohibitive.

Solution

Created as a part of a dynamic website, a rich interface will allow digitally recorded interviews to be accessible, bringing richness to nearly forgotten histories. The interface, built using Adobe Flex, will have an annotation and tagging feature that will create a searchable database of auditory research material. Students using the site will be able to review the often lengthy interviews for use in their writing assignments.

Technologies Used

Adobe Flex, PHP, HTML, XML

Project Abstract

While one of the benefits of teaching twentieth century history is the ability to benefit from voice recordings, too often the challenges of importing these materials into the classroom, locating and editing a spoken quote or passage, and playing it back as part of a lecture or discussion make actually using sound prohibitive. To address this challenge a rich web application will be created that would

allow students and teachers to directly search, locate, and play back audio files. Focusing on oral histories collected through the course, "The Power of Place: Race and Community in East Baltimore", this application will be incorporated into our class website but would be made freely available for adoption by faculty in other disciplines like Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, etc. Core components of the application include: (1) creating a web-based interface to access specific portions of audio files using keyword tags; (2) developing a database of keywords that would allow instructors and studies to fully search and playback the audio files; and (3) integrating these tools into a classroom website, created and stored on a server for discussion and writing assignments.