

Web Archiving: Preserving the Present

[INTRODUCTION TEXT]

The K12 Web Archiving Program is a partnership between the Internet Archive and the Library of Congress.

Students select and preserve websites that represent their lives and interests. Their selections will become primary sources of information.

The program teaches the essential life skills of critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving.

[TITLE]

“Web Archiving: Preserving the Present”

My name is Paul Bogush and I’m an 8th grade social studies teacher at Moran Middle School in Wallingford, Connecticut.

My classes have been involved in the archiving project for the last two years.

This wasn’t just about saving websites; this was about preserving a piece of America’s history. And I know this might not be up there with preserving the Declaration of Independence, but to those students that are involved in the project it is just as important.

Its one thing to hear it from your teacher but from a person representing the Library of Congress that really makes it real.

For the first two meetings, I was always getting the question, “Should I save this website? Should I save this website?” And I’d tell them that I can’t decide. If it’s a website that you go to daily and it represents a little part of you, then that is what you save.

“Who picks?” is a great question. And if I can convert it to, “who has the power?” “Who makes the decisions?” “Who has the responsibility for what goes on in the classroom?”

“I think the kids really rise to the occasion when they have responsibility, when they have power, when they have choice and they’re the ones making decisions.”

I think what they kind of found through this archive project, they found that in a sense they became the historians, they were the ones who were deciding what sort of history from their age will be preserved. It kind of gave them a unique outlook. It made them consider, “what does this site represent?” How does this represent me? The time that I live in? What’s the bigger picture about the town I live in, the state...the bigger picture?

Once they got involved, they really tried to approach the primary sources we use in class a little bit differently. They realize that someday in the future, whoever looks at these

sources, were picked by them. And each one of them brings a bias to what is going to be picked.

And I think one of the things that they benefit from, in looking at primary sources in class, is that they now they realize that with every source that they use there's a bias with that source. And there's a perspective that that somebody had either in the preserving of it or in the writing of it.

It's no longer can they just take a primary source and just take it at face value. They have to think more critically about: who was the person that preserved this? What was their bias? What was their passion? What was their love? What did they hate? And how did those things come together to create this primary source?

One of the things that the students found challenging is believing that what they did on the internet was actually important to someone in the future. Initially it was, "why would anyone want to know I was interested in this site or topic?" it took a few conversations to make them realize that it is important to know about what this generation represents.

They start looking at what they're doing in their life, and what kind of record they're leaving behind. I don't think they've ever really thought before about what this generation is going to leave behind, hardly any hard objects behind. Being a part of this archive project gave them a sense of they have to do something to ... "them" as a generation.