Sonoma Responds: A Community Memory Archive is a project to collect stories about how Sonoma County has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The library created an online portal where community members can submit and preserve their stories through a variety of formats and material, from the written word in poetry, journals, fiction and memoir to photos, artwork, recipes, memes, and audio and video recordings. Participants can nominate websites (their own or others) for inclusion. The project supports anonymous contributions. While the project was designed to facilitate distanced participation, the library accepted mailed submissions to include experiences that could not be captured digitally and to allow non-internet users to participate.

The portal is in English & Spanish, and welcomes other languages. Participants can apply a Creative Commons license to their works while retaining attribution. The project encouraged participation by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The COVID pandemic has disproportionately affected these communities.

The library graphics team designed visuals that focused on inclusivity. The library identified eight images, including LGBTQ families, blended families, older individuals, children, outdoor activities, journaling, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Marketing language focused on participation (tell your story, preserve your voice, in your own words) in this project as a way to both process the pandemic and preserve their experiences.

Success was measured by engagement. The library received over 200 submissions from the public, including a series of poetry, a full album of songs about life in quarantine, drawings, video recordings, and two novels set locally covering the first few days of the pandemic. Participants range in age and include non-library users. Through a partnership with Sonoma State University, more than 55 classes submitted materials, including oral history interviews with COVID survivors, educators transitioning to remote classes, artwork and more. The collected submissions have been described, preserved and made accessible online through the library's Digital Collections, driving interest among community members to view their own content and explore the work of others.

The outreach for this program included:
- English portal: https://sonomalibrary.org/sonoma-responds-community-archive
- Spanish portal: https://sonomalibrary.org/sonoma-responde-comunidad-archivo
- Press Releases in Spanish and English
- Targeted emails to library users
- Featured coverage on the library's landing page
- Printed bookmarks for curbside / outreach (including food bank bags)
- Bilingual posts on social media
- Inclusion in multiple email newsletters
- Targeted emails to historical societies, museums, and archives and their members

Particular care was taken to reach out to BIPOC and LGBTQ community organizations. Cross-promotion with other library events

Partnership with Sonoma State University's Center for Community Engagement:
https://cce.sonoma.edu/initiatives-and-programs/community-diary-project-sonoma-responds

News coverage prior to the event:

KSRO Radio interview with Joanna Kolosov: https://www.ksro.com/2020/10/12/interview-joanna-kolosov-on-the-sonoma-responds-project/