

Foiled Again: Adapting Focus Groups Thwarted by Coronavirus

EDWARD BENOIT, III and GILLIAN BROWNLEE

Abstract: The Virtual Footlocker Project (VFP) planned a series of focus groups with military members across the United States as part of an IMLS grant. The focus groups were to explore how 21st century military personnel document their time in service, communicate with friends and family while deployed and how they preserve these memories. The spread of the coronavirus in March caused a significant roadblock in these plans. This presentation will discuss how the VFP adapted its methodology to virtual focus groups and the lessons learned along the way. Additionally, the presenters will discuss initial themes emerging from the completed focus groups.

About the authors:

Edward Benoit, III is Associate Director and Associate Professor in the School of Library & Information Science at Louisiana State University. He is the coordinator of the archival studies and cultural heritage resource management programs. He received an MA in History, MLIS and PhD in Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His research focuses on participatory and community archives, non-traditional archival materials and archival education. He is the founder and director of the Virtual Footlocker Project, which examines the personal archiving habits of the 21st century soldier in an effort to develop new digital capture and preservation technologies to support their needs.

Gillian Brownlee is a doctoral student in Cultural Preservation with a focus in Archival Studies at Louisiana State University and the Project Manager for the Virtual Footlocker Project. She holds a Masters degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with concentrations in museum science, biology, and geoscience from Texas Tech University. Presently, her research interests include the potential for collaboration between archives, museums, and libraries.