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The Memory Project: Final Report

Luo Zhou
Duke University Libraries

Project summary

The Memory Project is an extensive collection of video oral histories documenting the Great Famine in rural China. The collection was donated to Duke University Libraries by Chinese documentary filmmaker Wu Wenguang's Work Station. It consists of more than 1,100 interviews, a project blog, transcription and spreadsheets with preliminary descriptions. From July 2015 to April 2018, with the support of the Mellon Foundation-Council on East Asian Libraries Innovation Grants for East Asian Librarians, we have finished the arrangement and description of all donated materials (including additional videos), created descriptive metadata in English and Chinese, and translated some blogs and transcripts into English. The various video formats have been normalized for access and preservation, and all the original digital materials will be preserved as part of the Duke Digital Repository. Subsequent to the grant, the library will develop these primary resources into a digital collection to provide robust and enhanced discovery and display of the Memory Project collection. We have also successfully promoted the project to a wider audience locally, nationally, and internationally.

Project background

The interviewers and interviewees in the project

Documentary filmmaker Wu Wenguang is widely considered the godfather of modern Chinese independent film. In 2010 he launched the Memory Project to collect oral histories from survivors of the Great Famine that devastated rural China between 1958 and 1961. Officially known in China as the "Three Years of Natural Disasters" or "The Difficult Three-Year Period," the Great Famine caused the death of between 20 and 43 million people. More recently the project has also covered the Great Leap Forward of 1958-60, the Land Reform and the Collectivization of 1949-53, the Four Cleanups Movement in 1964, and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76.

Wu's studio in suburban Beijing, known as the Work Station, is the home for this project. More than 150 young filmmakers have joined the project, and since 2010 they have visited 246 villages in 20 provinces and interviewed more than 1,100 elderly villagers. These filmmakers, many of whom returned to their families' rural hometowns, developed new intergenerational relationships with elderly relatives they had previously hardly known. During the process of interviewing the villagers, they reconciled the official history taught in schools with each family's experiences. The notes and diaries in the blog written by the filmmakers and the interview footage preserve the fading memories of people who lived through the Great Famine, ensuring that their stories are not forgotten.

The project comes to Duke University Libraries

Professor Guo-Juin Hong invited Wu and four young filmmakers to Duke to show their works from the Memory Project in fall 2012. The significance of this project, which documents memories of the people that have been suppressed and even erased by the Chinese State historiography, won immediate attention on campus. During their visits, the filmmakers decided to place copies of the project's original interview footage at Duke University Libraries (DUL). Later the Work Station signed a Deed of Gift with DUL, granting Duke a non-exclusive perpetual license to publish and provide access to the videos, the blog, and metadata using a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. The agreement also specifies that Duke will receive additional materials associated with the Memory Project as they are created.

Video oral history collections on China are rare in North America. This project provides us an opportunity to explore fields like bilingual metadata creation, material arrangement and description, and long-term preservation of born-digital materials. Through work on the Memory Project, we have gained valuable experience in developing models and procedures for processing similar materials in the future.

The project team at DUL

The Memory Project archive is part of the Archive of Documentary Arts at Duke's David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Library staff from several departments work closely to ensure the project's success, providing technical infrastructure, creating metadata schemas and working on data normalization. Luo Zhou, Chinese studies librarian, is the project lead. She works with departments within the library to coordinate this project, supervises student assistants to create the enriched metadata, and collaborates with the filmmakers to get the video contents indexed properly and with faculty to plan the dissemination and outreach programs for the project.

The audiovisual and digital records archivists at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library are responsible for the arrangement of materials, data normalization, and the creation of the finding aid (collection guide). Materials are arranged to make it easy for researchers to find content based on interviewee, filmmaker, location, and topics discussed. Data normalization includes the implementation of a file naming convention, extraction of technical metadata, generation and monitoring of fixity information, verification of the video content, and normalizing and cross-walking metadata into an archival management system. Along with preserving the original video files, archivists create normalized MP4 files for access and ongoing preservation.

The Digital Collections and Curation Services (DCCS) department will enable the videos to be accessible through the collection guide. DCCS will also create access to these materials through Duke University's digital repository portal.

Faculty played an instrumental role in bringing the collection to Duke University and will continue to be involved in framing the collection and presenting it to the public and to the scholarly community. Librarians engage with the filmmakers to facilitate the arrangement and description of the collection as well as to develop a methodology for best

receiving future additions for easy incorporation into the archive. The five student assistants who have worked on processing these materials in the past three years are from the East Asian Studies program on campus. They went through the transcripts as well as used the Work Station’s blog and research notes to create enriched metadata and short bilingual summaries.

Project progress and accomplishments

The project’s goal is to prepare this collection for research use and for the eventual creation of a freely available digital collection.

Project details

Materials processed from 2015 to 2018:

- About 7 TB of 1117 digital video recordings of 1,100 interviews; some interviewees have more than one video, and some interviewees share one video; file formats include MPG, AVI, MTS, M2T, MP4, VOB, MOV, WMV, FLV, M2V, MKV and MPA.
- Basic factual metadata in spreadsheets supplied by filmmakers in Chinese.
- Blog in Chinese: This weekly blog from the filmmakers includes their notes, diaries and summaries, providing rich content to harvest.
- 20 Word documents covering the 590 blog posts from 2011-16 (totaling 20.5MB); majority of interviewees have only one blog post, a few have more than one that cover different topics and time periods. 92 blogs have been translated into English.
- Transcripts: 244 transcripts, some were supplied by the filmmakers, some were transcribed by student assistants; 123 transcripts have been translated into English.
- Emails: 181 emails were selected from five Word documents (totaling 237MB) covering email exchanges among filmmakers in the Memory Project. These emails focus on the interviewees in the memory project.
- Filmmakers: 159 filmmakers, many of them participated in the project for one year only, a small number of filmmakers visited the same villages two or more times.

Metadata Schema

Duke’s audiovisual archivist created a metadata schema, which includes descriptive and administrative metadata for videos, as well as preservation metadata. The work of student assistants focuses on descriptive metadata.

Table 1. Descriptive Metadata for videos.

Field	D/PB Core Element	Value Repeatable?	Example	Notes

Item Unique ID	identifier	no	RL10171avi0098_贾夫奎.avi	The unique identifier associated with the file. The UID is made up of the collection number (RL10171), a format abbreviation (avi) and a four-digit sequential number for each format starting with 0001, prepended to the original file name. This functions as the primary key for all metadata associated with the file.
Program Title_English	title	yes	Jia Fukui unedited oral history	This is the English title as it appears in the file name or in the video itself.
Program Title_Chinese	title	yes	贾夫奎	This is the Chinese title as it appears in the file name or in the video itself.
Program Date	date	yes	2010-08-06	This is the date the resource was originally created. For this project we format the dates in reference to ISO 8601, YYYY-MM-DD. In the title field the date, if given, will be retained as originally written.
Province_English	description	yes	Guangdong	Province name in English.
Province_Chinese	description	yes	广东	Province name in Chinese.
Village_English	description	yes	Zhaixia Village, Heping County, Heyuan City	Village name in English.
Village_Chinese	description	yes	河源市和平县彭寨镇寨下村	Village name in Chinese.

Interviewee name_Roman	description	yes	Jia Fukui	Interviewee name in Roman characters.
Interviewee name_Chinese	description	yes	贾夫奎	Interviewee name in Chinese characters.
Gender_English	description	yes	Male	Gender in English.
Gender_Chinese	description	yes	男	Gender in Chinese.
Languages	Language	Yes	Mandarin	Description of language.
Program description_English	description	yes	Jia Fukui discusses....	A short description in English of the program or programs on the tape.
Program description_Chinese	description	yes	贾夫奎回忆...	A short description in Chinese of the program or programs on the tape.

Project pilot

The first batch of videos arrived at Duke in 2013. The library did some preliminary work to explore ways to process the archive and involved the Chinese filmmakers in the consulting conversations. Our initial plan was to arrange materials by filmmakers. In fall 2014, however, Wu Wenguang and the three young filmmakers who were invited to Duke for a two-week residency insisted that the materials be arranged by interviewees in a village. They argued that since famine survivors are the focus of the project, the arrangement of the materials should reflect the true protagonists and their stories. Based on these conversations, Duke's librarians and archivists created the metadata schema described above.

The filmmakers and DUL also decided to create interview excerpts—edited segments of longer interviews with subtitles in English and Chinese—to highlight some of the most touching and shocking narratives from the interviews. Fifty interview excerpts were created by the filmmakers and DUL used them to publish a pilot online in spring 2015 at the following URL: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/>. This pilot served as a proof of concept for the larger project and allowed staff to complete time studies to shape the full project.



The Memory Project pilot video oral histories

Series: Interviews [All Series »](#)

Hebei Province (河北)

Yangjiazhuang Village (深州市深州镇杨家庄村), 2010-2011

Oral history interviews in this subseries were conducted by Jia Nannan. Yangjiazhuang Village is located in Hebei Province.

Jia Fukui (贾夫奎), 2010

Jia Fukui (b. 1932) was born in Yangjiazhuang Village, Shenzhou Town, Shenzhou City, Hebei Province. He is the interviewer's grandfather. In this interview, Jia remembers that his big family lacked manpower to earn work credits during the Great Famine.

贾夫奎1932年出生于河北省深州市深州镇杨家庄村。他是采访者的爷爷。在这段口述中，贾老人回忆了大饥荒时期他的一家人因为缺少劳动力无法拿工分的经历。

Jia Fukui edited oral history

[Play](#)



Interviewee: Jia Fukui
was born in 1932
Yangjiazhuang Village,
Shenzhou City, Hebei Province

Interviewer: Jia Nannan
Interview date: 06 August, 2010
Interview site: Yangjiazhuang Village
Translator: Zhuang Jiayun



00:02

05:42



Figure 1. Jia Fukui's interview excerpt by Jian Nannan. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).

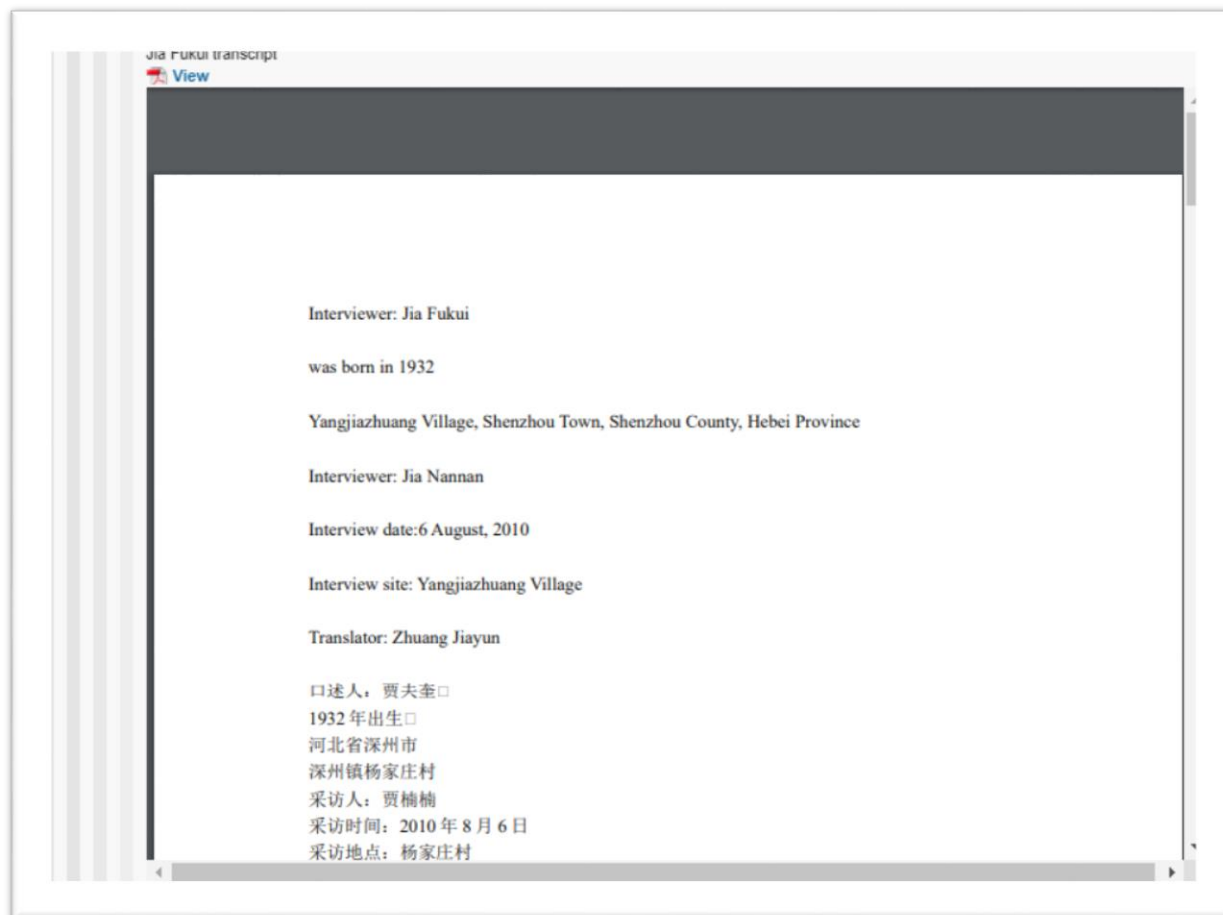


Figure 2. Bilingual interview transcript of Jia Fukui. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).

Project timeline

The following timeline gives an overview of our work during the initial four-year period of the Memory Project (2015-18):

- **Blogs:** We indexed more than 590 blog posts from the Word documents received from the filmmakers, compared them with the online posts, and linked them with the video files.
- **Metadata:** We created bilingual metadata for each interviewee according to the previously established metadata schema. Short summaries in Chinese and English for each interviewee were also created after all blog posts were indexed.
- **Transcription:** The initial batch of materials did not include transcripts. The archive now has 244 transcripts, more than half of which were supplied by the filmmakers in the past three years; the remaining video transcriptions were created by DUL's student assistants.
- **Emails:** In May 2015, we received five Word documents (totaling 237MB) that contained email exchanges among filmmakers in the Memory Project. We explored these emails in 2016 and found that a significant number of them was indirectly linked with the oral history project. Because of the large size of the materials we

needed to process, we indexed only the 181 emails that were most relevant to the oral history project and then linked them with the interviewees.

- Translation: The interview excerpts in the pilot have bilingual transcripts supplied by the filmmakers. Our translation of the blog posts and transcripts started in early 2017. As of April 2018, 124 transcripts and 92 blogs have been translated. We have also been collaborating with a faculty instructor of a translation class on campus. Each fall since 2016, the class chooses six to eight transcripts to translate from Chinese into English as part of their final project. Twenty pieces have been translated this way in the past three semesters.
- Data normalization: This work has been done by the digital records archivist and the audiovisual archivist with assistance from Luo Zhou. As of spring 2018, we have verified the video content, implemented a file naming convention, extracted technical metadata, generated cryptographic hash values (checksums) for the digital objects and used them to monitor the fixity of the digital objects, as well as normalized and cross-walked the metadata into an archival management system.
- Videos: We selected videos from 13 filmmakers and have normalized their formats for access into the MP4 format and will make them accessible through the collection's finding aid via the HTML5 video specification, an alternative to streaming. Videos of other filmmakers will be normalized in several batches for access into the MP4 format later.
- New materials: we have received new materials every year. There is now footage for 236 new interviews, 180 transcripts, basic information of new interviewees, and updated information of existing interviewees. These have been processed as part of the grant. Future additions will be processed as part of ongoing work of the Rubenstein Library with support from Luo Zhou.
- Pilot update: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/>. There have been two updates. During the first, in May 2016, we added 9 new videos, which are new interview excerpts supplied by the filmmakers with bilingual subtitles and transcripts. During the second, in December 2017, we added 32 new videos. These are complete original videos in the archive. The example below is an interview done by Wu Wenguang in 2010 in Gaojia Village in Yunnan Province. The interview is 51 minutes long. It does not have subtitles. Wu has a blog post about this interview. Wu later provided a transcript and we had it translated in 2017. The four parts of this interview are now available online. The video can be viewed online and embedded in other online formats, and the text parts can be downloaded as PDF.



The Memory Project pilot video oral histories

Series: Interviews [All Series »](#)

Gaojia Village (昆明市富民县款庄乡高家村), 2010

Oral history interviews in this sub-series were conducted by Wu Wenguang. Gaojia Village is located in Yunnan Province.

Ni Meilan (倪美兰), 2010

Ni Meilan (b. 1942) lives in Gaojia Village, Fumin County, Kunmin City, Yunnan Province. In this interview, Ni narrates her experiences from 1958 to 1961 (during the Great Famine). She joined the Great Leap Forward and Great Collaboration at 16 years old. Without enough cattle for plowing, people did it themselves, and someone died because of that. Once Ni got caught stealing food; not only were her work points deducted, she was forbidden to eat for three days. In May 1959, her parents were poisoned to death because they were too old to work.

倪美兰1942年出生，1959年嫁到了云南省昆明市富民县款庄乡落谷高家村。在这段口述中，倪老人讲述了她从1958年到1961年（大饥荒）的经历。她16岁参加大跃进，去搞大协作。当时犁地牛不够，让人去，有人活活拉犁拉死了。有一次她偷吃东西被发现，不仅工分被扣，还被罚三天不许吃饭。1959年5月，她的父母因为不是劳动力被人毒死了。

Figure 3. Interviewee Ni Meilan’s short bilingual summary. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).

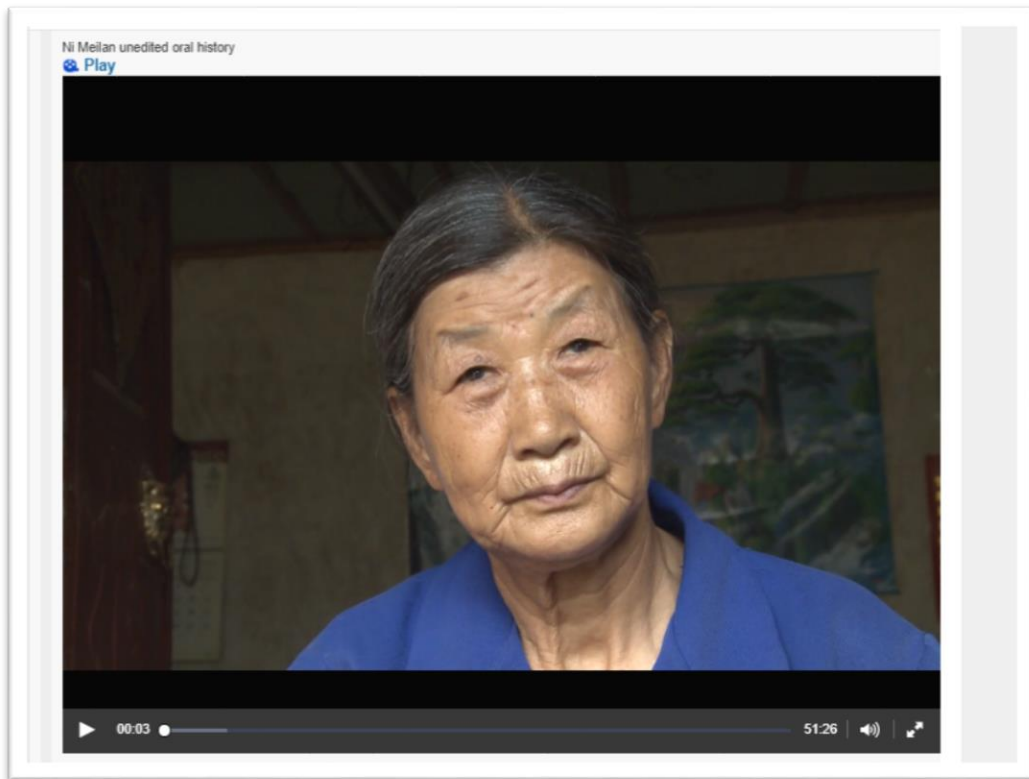


Figure 4. Original unedited interview. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).



Figure 5. Transcript in Chinese. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).



Figure 6. Transcript in English. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).



Figure 7. Blog post in Chinese. From The Memory Project pilot video oral histories: Duke University Libraries. <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/memoryprojectpilot/> (accessed on December 15, 2018).

Next steps and long-term plans

The archivists in the Rubenstein Library will continue to make available video recordings (normalizing their format into MP4), transcripts, filmmaker descriptions, and related material from the Memory Project. Given the volume of material and the idiosyncrasies in practice between filmmakers, description through archival finding aid will be published incrementally as each filmmaker's material is arranged and described. The library will develop these materials into a digital collection to provide robust and enhanced discovery and display of the Memory Project collection.

Regarding the preservation of digital assets, original videos and related materials will be ingested into the Duke Digital Repository, a preservation framework engineered to support the library's preservation policies for digital materials. Duke University Libraries was an early leader in the area of digitization of special collections and has maintained continuous access to digital collections since 1995. The files will be retained in their current formats and monitored for risk of obsolescence. In the event original files require transcoding, they will be transcoded to 10-bit open-source files to retain the greatest amount of information possible and be readable without proprietary software.

Project challenges and appraisal

Transcription

The filmmakers provided no transcripts at the beginning of the project. Their initial goal of visiting their native villages were to collect materials for documentary films. The stories they discovered were so significant and shocking that they decided to do more interviews and recruit more filmmakers into this project. During the first four years, filmmakers were encouraged to do more interviews, to write blog posts about the most shocking and impressive stories, and to make documentary films based on these interviews. They had no plan or even thought about creating an archive out of this project.

The majority of the interviews we received in 2014 is original footage without subtitles or any text explaining the content. The conversations are in various Chinese dialects quite different from Mandarin and are, therefore, difficult to understand. Most of the

filmmakers who participated in the project only visited their village once and left the project after depositing the footage with the Work Station. After communications with Wu Wenguang and other filmmakers, we started to receive transcripts from filmmakers who have continued to be involved in the project, as well as from new participants who are informed of the importance of creating transcripts.

In 2017, we selected interviews with conversations that can be understood by DUL's Chinese-speaking student assistants and started to transcribe the videos. A very small number of videos came with subtitles, and their transcripts were also created at the time. The creation of transcripts is both time-consuming and expensive, but the value and importance of transcription is as obvious for the Memory Project as it is for the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive (VHA).

The Shoah Foundation started in 1993 to collect testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. It now has more than 55,000 videos, averaging a little over two hours each in length and conducted in 65 countries and 43 languages. The focus on conducting and collecting interviews has made the foundation's Visual History Archive one of the largest of its kind. The VHA provides online access to more than 3000 interviews. Transcripts of these interviews, however, are a much more recent addition. The Shoah Foundation worked with Freie Universität in Berlin to release 898 German-language transcripts in July 2016. It partnered with Proquest to release 984 English-language transcripts in September 2017. This activity suggests that the foundation recognizes the importance of transcription, which offers "a new avenue for scholars and other VHA users to search efficiently within testimonies."¹ The same can be said of DUL's Memory Project.

Data normalization and preservation

The interviews collected as part of the Memory Project are born-digital files. File formats include MPG, AVI, MTS, M2T, MP4, VOB, MOV, WMV, FLV, M2V, MKV and MPA. While none of the video formats are currently a preservation risk, insofar as they are playable and renderable by open-source software, in order to ensure enduring access to the Memory Project materials, DUL will need to prepare for their long-term preservation.

Duke follows accepted best practices published by the Federal Agencies Digitization Initiative (FADGI), which documents research and methodologies developed by the Library of Congress, the National Archive and Records Administration, and other federal agencies, for digitizing and transcoding analogue and born-digital materials. Original video files will be retained in their current formats and monitored for risk of obsolescence. In the event original files require transcoding, they will be decompressed to 10-bit open-source files, to retain the greatest amount of information possible and be readable without proprietary software. To facilitate access to the original files, MP4 files will be produced from the originals, using local standards, to normalize user experience across the files in the collection.

¹ The Shoah Foundation, "Nearly 1,000 English transcripts added to Visual History Archive", <https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2017/09/17961-nearly-1000-english-transcripts-added-visual-history-archive> (accessed on December 10, 2018)

DUL started to establish its digital collections program in the early 1990s, and over the past twenty plus years this program has grown into a thriving digitization and preservation program. While DUL continues to digitize and/or provide access to existing digital objects, it has maintained a practice of aggregating its early, original projects with newer work; standardizing platforms and technologies across projects; and migrating digital collections to new platforms as they are adopted.

Preservation copies of materials in the Memory Project will be stored in the Duke Digital Repository (DDR). DUL has a robust preservation platform based on Hydra and Fedora which complies with the Minimum Requirements outlined in ISO 16363: “Space data and information transfer systems—Audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories” (see http://www.crl.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/pages/trac_0.pdf). File format characterization and fixity are generated upon ingest. Files are protected by granular access controls, audit trails, and nightly incremental offsite backup. The DDR is directly referenced in both the DUL and Duke University strategic plans and is part of the annual budget at both levels.

The blog posts

The filmmakers started a blog (<http://blog.sina.com.cn/ccdworkstation>) when they launched the Memory Project in 2010. The blog posts are summaries of the interviews and reflections from the filmmakers. They are a major source for understanding the interviews. These posts are especially valuable to researchers dealing with videos that do not have subtitles or transcripts, or that have difficult-to-understand dialogue. Our original plan was that the digital records archivist would capture the Memory Project blog using the Archive-It web archiving service for use in metadata enhancement and future access by researchers.

However, as is the case with some other works dealing with this sensitive historical topic, the Chinese government has made this a much more difficult proposition. For example, in 2008, Chinese journalist Yang Jisheng published a comprehensive account of the Great Famine and the Great Leap Forward.² The English translation of the book, called *Tombstone*,³ was published in New York in 2013. Yang was awarded the Stieg Larsson prize in 2015 for his “stubborn and courageous work in mapping and describing the consequences”⁴ of the Great Leap Forward. The following year, he was awarded the Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism, selected by the Nieman Fellows at Harvard University. But because of the Chinese government’s stance on the topic, Yang was not allowed to attend the ceremony in Harvard in March 2016. Possibly as a result of this act of censorship, in May 2016, the Memory Project blog was also blocked and made inaccessible.

² Yang, Jisheng 杨继绳. 2008. *Mu Bei 墓碑*. Hongkong: Cosmos Books.

³ Yang, Jisheng, Edward Friedman, Jian Guo, and Stacy Mosher. 2012. *Tombstone: the great Chinese famine, 1958-1962*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

⁴ The Stieg Larsson Foundation, “The Annual Stieg Larsson Prize” [stieglarssonfoundation.se](http://www.stieglarssonfoundation.se). <http://www.stieglarssonfoundation.se/the-annual-stieg-larsson-prize/> (accessed on December 15, 2018)

Luckily, the content of all posts of the filmmakers were handed over to DUL as Word documents in 2015 and 2016. We finished indexing all the posts and linked them with each video in 2016. The original blog site also had comments that are interesting and equally as valuable. We had planned to start archiving the blog (along with the comments section) in fall 2016 but realized in the summer that we would not be able to do as we stated in our original plan proposal. However, the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive crawled the blog site on March 17, 2016, giving a glimpse of the format and content (see <https://web.archive.org/web/20150317044045/http://blog.sina.com.cn/ccdworkstation>).



Figure 8. The Work Station Blog captured by the Wayback Machine on March 17, 2015: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150317044045/http://blog.sina.com.cn/ccdworkstation> (accessed on December 15, 2018)

Project impacts

Outreach

DUL worked with various departments and programs on campus—the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Department, the Arts of Moving Images program, MFA in Experimental and Documentary Arts, the Franklin Humanities Institute Story Lab, and Center for Documentary Studies—and has brought filmmakers in the project to Duke twice. We hosted a total of six filmmakers in the Memory Project for a two-week residency in 2014 and 2016. Professor Guo-Juin Hong and Luo Zhou worked closely together to plan and organize their visits and activities on campus that involved film showings, live performances, class visits, public presentations and individual meetings with students in the MFA program.

Luo Zhou was invited to present on the Memory Project at Conversations in the Digital Humanities at Duke in fall 2015, the opening event in the Digital Humanities Initiative at the Franklin Humanities Institute that featured a wide range of DH projects from around the Duke campus and introduced the idea of DH+ as Duke's signature plan of interdisciplinary, multimodal DH. Materials from the Memory Project are often included in classes about Chinese history, documentary films and visual cultures. Interview videos, transcripts and/or blog posts from the pilot can easily be embedded into a course management site.

Nationally and internationally we have done presentations on the Memory Project at an Ivy Plus meeting at Cornell University, CEAL annual meetings, AAS-in-Asia in Taiwan, and Conference on Digital Humanities and East Asia in Guangzhou. Guo-Juin Hong has been visiting the Work Station in Beijing and participated in their programs. The filmmakers have been invited to many universities in North America and Europe. They always cite Duke University Libraries as an important partner and promote the archival work we are doing at DUL.

The Rubenstein Library's magazine featured the Memory Project in the winter issue of 2015 <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/about/magazine>. The magazine *Art Critique of Taiwan* published Luo Zhou's article on the project in April 2016.⁵

Impacts

The Memory Project is a primary source collection on the recent Chinese past (1949 to 1976). It documents the unofficial history of China that could otherwise be forgotten. The interviews show the human experience of rural life, and because the published digital collection will include typed transcripts of each interview as well as English translations, the Memory Project films bring rural China to the attention of scholars and students in a way that no other material is able to do.

The Great Famine caused by the Great Leap Forward is difficult to research, not least because of the Chinese leadership's attempts to ignore the main cause of the misguided

⁵ Luo Zhou 周璐, "Ji yi de dian cang: Duke da xue tu shu guan dui min jian ji yi ji hua de tan suo xing shou cang" 記憶的典藏: 杜克大學圖書館對民間記憶計劃的探索性收藏、整理和發表, *Art Critique of Taiwan* 藝術觀點, no.66 (2016): 147-52.

central government policy. However, recent years have seen publications of primary source materials about this period, most notably the *Database of Chinese Great Leap Forward & Great Famine, 1958-1962*, published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The database has government documents at various levels and press publications, providing a rich source of materials for researchers.

Unlike the *Database of Chinese Great Leap Forward & Great Famine*, the Memory Project collects stories of the famine survivors themselves. The human subjects of these interviews, the impoverished residents of rural China, are those who have been rendered invisible by China's rapid economic development since the 1980s. Wu Wenguang has directed the young filmmakers associated with his Work Station to return to their own or their parents' home villages to interview the village elders about the famine. The interviews naturally show regional variations in famine experiences and rural culture. They add intimate detail and humanity to the story of the deaths and starvation of millions of Chinese. The project thus provides a unique perspective on the unofficial history of the Great Famine.

This video oral history collection will support the research and teaching of scholars and students in many disciplines, such as history, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, film studies, and documentary arts. The finding aid and future digital collection will provide free and open access to the interviews, making it possible for interested researchers and students throughout the world to study and use these materials. The archive has already attracted wide attention beyond Duke. Following Wu Wenguang's visit to Duke, the filmmakers have received more invitations from other universities in the US and abroad. And the project has become an ongoing collaboration between the Work Station and DUL.

This project has provided us an opportunity of gaining experience in developing and managing an East Asian oral history collection. Oral history is a new area for collection development in East Asian collections at Duke. We have collected published print oral history materials from China in recent years. A video oral history, however, not only documents the story, but the facial expressions, hand gestures, and the physical setting, providing information not conveyed by the print or audio archive and lending itself to uses not possible with print format.

The Memory Project has explored and addressed issues in the curation and preservation of an entirely digital collection, including one rich in audiovisual materials and one that continues to grow. The project team has addressed issues of indexing video materials with Chinese and English scripts, enhancing their discoverability in local and national systems, and providing perpetual access to born-digital content. The project mandates processing and publication procedures that are extensible and fluid enough to support the addition of content and enhancement of description over time. Our experience and lessons from this project have helped us to develop models and procedures for processing similar materials in the future. And the Mellon Foundation-CEAL Innovative Grant has provided crucial funding to help us in making these significant steps forward.