

Douglas Higbee
University of South Carolina, Aiken

The USC Aiken Student-Veteran Oral History Project: From Campus to YouTube?

Just as military veterans are a special community within a larger society, USC Aiken's student veterans are a growing group within our campus community (approximately 8% of the total student population) with special skills and needs. Because many members of the university community (as well as the general public) still need to learn much more about student-veterans, I founded The USC Aiken Student-Veteran Oral History Project in 2017. Secondly, this project also serves as a means for student-veterans themselves to reflect on their complex, sometimes traumatic pasts in order to live a healthy and successful future.

In consultation with our campus Military Student and Veterans Center, I recruit interviewees for the project. As for interviewers, I train students in my oral history course in a semester-long project to prepare for, conduct, transcribe, and index video interviews with USC Aiken student-veterans.

So far there are approximately 45 video interviews (and supporting materials) available online at the University of South Carolina's online scholarship depository, Scholar Commons. To date, there have been several hundred downloads of the interviews on Scholar Commons.

However, Scholar Commons' digital resources have proven rather inadequate to handle video files—download time is very slow. So I very recently turned to YouTube, creating a USC Aiken Student-Veteran Oral History Project page and uploading the video interview files and summary information. I also hope this move will increase public engagement.

Still, this turn to YouTube may itself turn out to be unsatisfactory. I would be interested in hearing from others about other ways to mediate between digital and public humanities.

Online Repositories

https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/aiken_oralhistory/

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCH7FRhK5fK2hi_1MTt0tSBQ