Students as Knowledge Producers: Understanding Arab-Americans in Central Ohio through Oral History Narratives

Hanada Al-Masri, Cheryl Johnson, Olivia Reynolds & Alexis Grimm
Title: The Arab American Community in Central Ohio: Negotiating Cultural Identities and Adapting Traditions.
Project Summary

- Objectives
- Outcomes
- Narrators
- Interviews
- Research Question
- Skill Set/Values
Contributors

Faculty & Staff

• Hanada Al-Masri (Associate Professor of Arabic, Modern Languages - PI)
• Cheryl Johnson (Educational Technology/Modern Languages)
• Debra Andreadis (Director of Denison Libraries)

Students

• Hannah Bennett
• Mohamed El Sayid
• Jimmy Fennessey
• Alexis Grimm
• Olivia Reynold
• Victoria Alrabaa
• Tanner (Adam) Venrick
• Josh Lahoud
• Fatima Ghazawi

The Arab American Community

• Wafa & Mohamed
• Gehan and Mohamed
• Lubna
• Suzan
• Amal
• Rana

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Project Phases

- **Phase 1**: Setting up/preparation
- **Phase 2**: Training
- **Phases 3 & 4** (were parallel): setting up platform & conducting interviews in the field
- **Phase 5**: (TTD Force): Transcribing, Translating, Digitizing
- **Phase 6**: The public website
Project Demonstration
Cheryl

- Google Drive
- Omeka
- OHMS
Students: Roles & Experiences

Olivia Reynolds
What did other team members say?

“Going into this project, I wasn’t sure what to expect, I’d never done anything like this before. Each interview I go on, I’m continually surprised and delighted by the stories, the homes, the families; their similarities and their differences. The hospitality is overwhelming and editing has been a blast, getting to re-live each experience, as has the ability to work with everyone else involved on the project.”

(Adam)
“Going into the project, I expected the interviews to be very politically focused. Instead, the interviewees focused more on their cultural and familial experiences in America. I loved hearing about how our interviewees came to America and adjusted to life here. Hearing about their experiences was very enlightening for me. It was deeply saddening to hear about their struggles as well. Alienation and harassment were both common themes throughout the interviews. Hearing about these negative experiences really reaffirmed my belief in the importance of this project so that others can learn about the experiences fellow Americans and feel the need for change as I did.”

(Jimmy)
“When I first heard about this project I was extremely excited to get started! Being an Arab-American myself I have personally experienced the way that people treat you differently just for being an Arab. I was especially looking forward to meeting new people who have experienced some of the things that I’ve experienced too.”

(Victoria)
The interviewing experience has been different with the oral history project ... This is less about my manipulation of the material and more about conveying their stories in the most compelling way possible. These stories are often humorous, saddening, heartening, and inspiring. To simply be a piece in forming the stories to be shared to a larger audience has been humbling and an honor.

To others considering doing a project like this - Absolutely do it. This kind of thing is absolutely scary, but extraordinary things come from stepping outside of your comfort zone. (Hannah)
In Summary, the Project is:

- Student-driven
- Pedagogical
- Communal
- Scholarly
- Open-access
- Grant-funded
Questions?

Contact information

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