

First digital resource explores 1918 flu epidemic

October 11 2012



Motor Corps and Canteen volunteers from the Detroit chapter of the American Red Cross, taking a break from delivering supplies to influenza victims. Credit: National Archives and Records Administration and the Influenza Archives

(Medical Xpress)—The University of Michigan has established the largest digital collection of materials relating to the 1918 influenza epidemic in the United States.

"The American [Influenza Epidemic](#) of 1918: A Digital Encyclopedia," created by the Center for the History of Medicine in partnership with the U-M Library's MPublishing, documents 50 [diverse communities](#) in the United States during fall 1918 and winter 1919—a period when the effects of influenza caused the deaths of an estimated 650,000 Americans (and 50 million people worldwide).

The encyclopedia contains more than 50,000 digitized pages, including correspondence, minutes of organization and group meetings, reports from agencies and charities, newspaper accounts, military records, diaries, photographs and more. In addition, the reference guide provides interpretive materials contributed by scholars of history and public health.

"This collection permits scholars to explore how the 1918-1919 [influenza](#) epidemic influenced many communities and sub-communities and how individuals and society responded to a health crisis of extraordinary magnitude," said Dr. Howard Markel, director of the Center for the History of Medicine and the George E. Wantz Distinguished Professor of the History of Medicine.

MPublishing collaborated with the Center for the History of Medicine in the underlying architecture of the digital encyclopedia, functionality and user interface.

"We are very proud that this digital resource has broad appeal to those interested in local history, public health, the history of medicine and many other fields, and will be freely available to everyone—from researchers to elementary school students to the general public," said John Wilkin, U-M associate university librarian for publishing.

The U-M Library has been leading library digitization and [digital publishing](#) since the 1995 "Making of America" project. In 2004, the U-

M Library entered a partnership with [Google](#) to digitize its collection, which laid the groundwork for HathiTrust, an inter-institutional digital library of more than 10 million volumes, approximately 30 percent of which are freely available online.

"The digital encyclopedia fits with M Publishing's mission to bring together scholars, publishers and librarians to create innovative and accessible platforms for the dissemination of information," said Wilkin, who is also executive director of HathiTrust.

The digital encyclopedia is the culmination of more than five years of the Center for the [History](#) of Medicine's ongoing research in collaboration with the Global Migration and Quarantine Division of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More information: www.influenzaarchive.org/
Follow the project on Twitter at @1918FluArchive

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: First digital resource explores 1918 flu epidemic (2012, October 11) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-10-digital-resource-explores-flu-epidemic.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.