



BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECEIVES MUSEUM ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK AWARD OF MERIT

Online oral history portal is recognized with a 2017 Innovation in Collection Access Award

January 31, 2018 Brooklyn, NY— Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) has been recognized by the Museum Association of New York (MANY) with a 2017 Innovation in Collection Access Award for its online oral history portal. MANY's Awards of Merit program recognizes outstanding programs and individuals who have enriched the local museum community. The Collection Access Award honors exemplary projects that broaden access, preserve, and catalog museum and heritage organization collections.

In April 2017, Brooklyn Historical Society announced the launch of an online portal that makes its collection of oral histories easily accessible by historians, archivists, researchers and the public. The portal, or website, hosts 300 interviews (and counting) documenting the histories of Brooklyn's diverse ethnic and cultural communities. Some of these interviews date back to 1973, with narrators born as early as 1880. As more oral histories are digitized, and new public history projects such as *Muslims in Brooklyn* yield yet more interviews, the online repository will continue to grow.

The great innovation of the portal is that users need not be specialists to navigate the site. It is built on Wordpress, in combination with custom plugins, and is mobile friendly. As users listen to interviews in the collection, they can follow along on a transcript or utilize indexed descriptions. The design of the site removes cumbersome barriers often found in research libraries, and makes the rich, descriptive material found within the collection easily accessible to both novice users and seasoned researchers alike.

Highlights from the collection include: the Puerto Rican Oral History Project; a social, cultural and political history of Crown Heights; interviews with founders, workers and activists involved with the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation; and the AIDS/Brooklyn Oral History Project.

"We are enormously proud of the work our oral historians do to preserve and tell the stories of Brooklynites," said Deborah Schwartz, President, BHS. "In addition to the importance of housing these collections, it is our duty to make them easily accessible to current researchers, and generations of scholars to come. Recognition from the Museum Association of New York means so much to us, and our dedicated team of archivists. We hope the innovation of this portal will inspire future projects that focused on the accessibility of museum collections."

“The Award of Merit Selection Committee considered the ways nominations demonstrated organizational growth, reached new audiences, applied museum standards and best practices, and how the project enhanced the organization’s mission. Those selected achieved the highest scores in each of these areas. The Brooklyn Historical Society’s oral history portal was unanimously selected for an award in this highly competitive category,” said Erika Sanger, Executive Director, Museum Association of New York.

The oral history portal will be awarded an Innovation in Collection Access Award as part of the Museum Association of New York’s 2018 conference "Visioning Change." The award ceremony will take place at 8:00 AM on Monday, April 9, 2018 at the Hyatt Regency Rochester. For further information on the award ceremony, or to photograph the event, please contact info@nysmuseums.org or 518-273-3400.

Visit Brooklyn Historical Society’s oral history portal: brooklynhistory.org/oralhistory

About Brooklyn Historical Society

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach. In May 2017 BHS opened a second site in DUMBO’s Brooklyn Bridge Park.

About Museum Association of New York

The Museum Association of New York inspires, connects, and strengthens New York’s cultural community statewide by advocating, educating, collaborating, and supporting professional standards and organizational development. We are the only statewide association of professionals speaking with one powerful voice serving New York’s museums, historic sites, wildlife centers, and cultural institutions. MANY’s 500 members represent the full range of museum disciplines, budget sizes, missions, and geographic locations in our state. The twenty-three members of the board of trustees represent the expertise of our field, the strength of diversity, and the power of regional representation.



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