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COVID-19 digital memory banks: challenges and opportunities for historians of education

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ABSTRACT

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, historians – along with archivists and other stakeholders - began to initiate digital memory banks, inviting members of the public to upload personal stories, pictures, videos, or other material connected to the pandemic and its impact on everyday life. This article describes how platforms from Western and Central Europe differ with regard to contributions by children and adolescents, taking the German coronarchiv.de and covidmemory.lu from Luxembourg as the main case studies. Submissions come in various forms, but photographs are the most frequent, echoing the visual bias of social media. By means of selected contributions, the article illustrates the range of topics that can be of interest to future historians of education. The platforms show how COVID-19 influenced not only practices of education, with the introduction of homeschooling, but also the content of teaching, as seen in the many pandemic-related assignments uploaded. In this respect, it is crucial to acknowledge that there are significant gaps in the collections. Most notably, the first wave of infections in Europe is overrepresented, and people that were most existentially affected by the pandemic are underrepresented. Performing a thorough source critique on a selection of contributions, we argue that, despite these gaps, digital memory banks on the pandemic are of significant value for a future historiography of education, as long as the available metadata of the individual submissions are as complete and transparent as possible.

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Introduction

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, historians - along with archivists and other stakeholders - began to initiate digital memory banks, inviting members of the public to upload personal stories, pictures, videos, or other material connected to the pandemic and its impact on everyday life. Since the late 1990s, digital memory banks have used electronic media to collect, preserve, and present the stories and digital records of historic

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article. ¹For an overview of the many COVID-19 collecting initiatives see the online map developed by Made By Us and the International Federation for Public History (IFPH): IFPH, "Mapping Public History Projects about COVID 19," https://ifph. hypotheses.org/3225 (accessed August 17, 2021).

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events. Well-known examples are the "September 11 Digital Archive" and the "Hurricane Digital Memory Bank". 2 By archiving and publishing the experiences and perceptions of "ordinary" people during the COVID-19 pandemic, such platforms are influencing how the virus and its impact on our lives is remembered and how future historians will write about it. One major difference between the COVID-19 collections and other digital memory banks is that the historic "event" is still evolving during the collection process. This makes it more difficult for participants to understand and evaluate the impact of this event on their personal lives.

During the first lockdowns in March 2020 many countries suspended in-person classes, and since then many children and students have been taught online or remotely for varying periods of time. "The most vulnerable people have been the most affected by this situation, which widened the preexisting gaps". This executive summary from a UNESCO report on the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean holds also true for the situation in Western countries.⁴ Future historians of education will be interested in how children experienced the new educational circumstances, or in some cases the absence of institutionalised education. As we will show, COVID-19 digital memory banks contain first-person accounts and reactions from children and adolescents that can provide interesting insights into their personal situation and their experience of education in times of pandemic.

In the following, we will first provide a brief overview of various COVID-19 memory platforms and how they differ with regard to contributions by children and adolescents. There are countless initiatives with varying approaches all over the globe.⁵ We will focus on COVID-19 collections from Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, and Switzerland to examine the different legal terms and technological requirements for minors to contribute to digital archives and how these conditions affected the number and content of their submissions. The Luxembourgish platform "covidmemory" and the German platform "coronarchiv" will then serve as our main case studies. The authors were involved in the creation of covidmemory.lu in March 2020 and have continued to be involved in its maintenance since. The coronarchiv platform is of particular interest as it has incorporated contributions from "Contribute!" campaign, a competition run by the Körber Foundation, with

²"September 11 Digital Archive," https://911digitalarchive.org (accessed August 17, 2021); "Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, "http://hurricanearchive.org (accessed August 17, 2021). For a history of online collections see Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Collecting History Online," https://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/collecting (accessed August 17, 2021).

³UNESCO and the Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, eds, *Reopening Schools in Latin* America and the Caribbean (2021) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375059_eng (accessed August 17,

⁴See e.g. Claudine Kirsch et al., Subjective Well-being and Stay-at-home Experiences of Children Aaged 6–16 during the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Luxembourg: A Report of the Project COVID-Kids (Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg, 2020). For an overview of studies from the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland see Werner Klein, "Im Fernunterricht nichts dazugelernt?" 31 May 2021, https://deutsches-schulportal.de/expertenstimmen/imfernunterricht-nichts-dazugelernt/; for Germany see Klaus Hurrelmann und Dieter Dohmen, "Corona-Krise verstärkt Bildungsungleichheit," 13 January 2021, https://deutsches-schulportal.de/expertenstimmen/das-deutscheschulbarometer-hurrelmann-dohmen-corona-krise-verstaerkt-bildungsungleichheit/ (both accessed August 25, 2021).

⁵For a detailed discussion of some projects see Tizian Zumthurm, "Crowdsourced COVID-19 Collections: A Brief Overview," International Public History 4, no. 1 (2021): 77-83. Further examples of platforms comparable to those presented in this paper can be found in Brazil (Unicamp, https://memoriascovid19.unicamp.br (accessed January 7, 2022) and Japan (Kansai, www.annexe.ku-orcas.kansai-u.ac.jp/s/covid19archive/page/covidmemory (accessed January 7, 2022).

⁶In German: "Mitmach-Aktion."

over 1,100 submissions from children and adolescents between the ages of 3 and 21.7 To contextualise our findings we will also look at the largest crowdsourced collection, the US-based "A Journal of the Plague Year".8

In the second part of the article we will present some selected submissions, identifying common themes that can be found across the different memory banks. In the third part we will take a closer look at some contributions to the Körber campaign to discuss both the opportunities and the limitations of digital memory banks for future research into how pupils, students, teachers, and parents experienced the schooling and homeschooling situation during the pandemic. We will emphasise some blind spots in terms of representativeness and themes, while also making suggestions on how to interpret the sources in ways that are meaningful for future historians.

This article does not set out to write a history of the present (or the future). We believe that it is too early to write a history of the COVID-19 pandemic. We do not yet have the social and scientific criteria to assess historical relevance. What the article does is to propose a way to imagine a future history or, more precisely, the work of future historians. To this end, we reflect on the relevance of digital memory banks and on the challenges and opportunities they pose to historians. In so doing, we are inevitably influenced and inspired by the way history in general and histories of past epidemics and education in particular have been written over time.

COVID-19 digital memory banks

Digital memory banks are public crowdsourced archives that contain individual items and testimonies about specific themes. Often they are about tragic events, such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks.⁹ More rarely, they are about longer ongoing events, such as immigration. 10 The idea is for people who were affected by the event or issue or who experienced it in some way to contribute to how it will be remembered. They do so by sharing their individual insights on a public digital platform. Usually people can upload personal texts, pictures, videos, or any other born-digital or digitised material that is connected to the event and that they wish to preserve for future generations. Often, these memories are collected immediately after or (as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic) during the event. Digital memory banks are thus related to the museum practice of Rapid Response Collecting. 11 This practice has also inspired the creation of most digital memory banks on the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷Coronarchiv, "Mitmach-Aktion 2020 (Körber-Stiftung)," https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/archiv/?item_set_id% 5B0%5D=6065&per_page=12&sort_by=created&sort_order=desc¤tPage=1 (accessed August 17, 2021). More information on the campaign can be found on the former coronarchiv website: coronarchiv, "Mitmach-Aktion: Geschichte für morgen. Unser Alltag in der Corona-Krise," https://coronarchiv.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/projector/s/ coronarchiv/page/mitmach-aktion (accessed August 17, 2021).

⁸"A Journal of the Plague Year," https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/Share (accessed August 17, 2021).

⁹The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa has a collection on the earthquakes around Christchurch in 2010/11: see https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/3565 (accessed August 25, 2021); the Manchester Art Gallery and other institutions have compiled one on the Manchester Arena attack in 2017: see https://mcrtogetherarchive.org/ (accessed August 25, 2021).

¹⁰On the Bracero programme, an initiative for Mexican agricultural guest workers to the USA in 1942–1965: see http:// braceroarchive.org/ (accessed August 25, 2021); on 200 years of migration in England, see www.nationalarchives.gov. uk/closed-apps/movinghere-closed.htm (accessed August 25, 2021).

¹¹The term was introduced by the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), London, in 2014, but the practice is much older. For a definition see www.vam.ac.uk/blog/tag/rapid-response-collecting (accessed August 25, 2021).

Various scholars of archival theory have commented on the challenges that such crowdsourced archives pose to the field. The basic peculiarity is that "history is remembered rather than documented", to use the words of Jane Zhang. 12 History thus becomes something that is actively constructed. In a similar vein, Wolfgang Ernst says that "the so-called cyberspace is not primarily about memory as cultural record but rather about a performative form of memory as communication". ¹³ In this regard, digital memory banks have similarities with social media. Both sorts of platforms are essentially based on ego-documents and can be seen as performative spaces of positive self-representation. This trend can partly be explained by the asynchronicity of online communication: because exchanges do not necessarily occur in real time, people have time to reflect and edit what they say and thus tend to present themselves in a positive light. Another factor is that the audience on both platforms is much broader than the close group of friends to whom people are normally willing to disclose personal weaknesses, embarrassments, or controversial views. 14

Digital memory banks on the pandemic share various features that complicate the task of current and future researchers to provide a balanced picture of the situation. ¹⁵ First of all, there is a social bias towards the upper and middle classes. This can be deducted from the themes and moods of the contributions. On covidmemory.lu, for example, only a quarter of all submissions have a negative outlook on the pandemic. The majority of contributions thus underline the positive aspects of the situation or provide a relatively neutral opinion. People (re-)discover old hobbies and engage in creative activities, the results of which are shared on the platforms. The fact that almost 50% of the visitors to covidmemory.lu used an Apple device further points to their favourable socio-economic position. ¹⁶

Another important bias of most digital memory banks is that the first wave of the pandemic and the following easing of restrictions from March to July 2020 are overrepresented. Of the 329 published contributions on covidmemory.lu, only 64 are from after August 2020. On coronarchiv.de, roughly 1,800 out of the total 4,392 published submissions were created since August 2020. A detailed analysis is further complicated by the fact that a considerable percentage of those contributions actually deal with events from the first wave. Entries to the Körber campaign, from which many of our examples are drawn, had to be submitted by 15 May 2020. This temporal bias is problematic because recent studies suggest that the second wave had a much bigger impact on individual

¹²Jane Zhang, "Remembered History, Archival Discourse, and the September 11 Digital Archive," (paper presented at the second annual Society of American Archivists Research Forum, San Francisco, USA, August 26, 2008). Published online: http://files.archivists.org/conference/2008/researchforum/Jane%20Zhang-SAA-ResearchPaper-2008.pdf (accessed January 18, 2021) .

¹³Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 99.

¹⁴Ann E. Schlosser, "Self-Disclosure Versus Self-Presentation on Social Media," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 31, no. 1 (2020), 1-6; Anlan Zheng et al., "Self-Presentation on Social Media: When Self-Enhancement Confronts Self-Verification, " Journal of Interactive Advertising, 29 October 2020, 289–302. See also the following text for information on how to analyse online platforms with regard to audiences and how the latter influence self-presentation: Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Virtually Me: A Toolbox about Online Self-Presentation," in Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, eds, Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 70–95.

¹⁵For a general discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of digital memory banks as historical sources, see Ekaterina Haskins, "Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age," Rhetoric Society Quarterly 37, no. 4 (2007): 401-22; Pedro Telles da Silveira, "From Instant History to the Infinite Archive: Digital Archiving, Memory and the Practical Past at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media," Historein 17, no. 2 (2018), https://doi.org/10. 12681/historein.10964.

¹⁶For a detailed presentation of the content of covidmemory.lu, see Tizian Zumthurm, "Das Archivieren der Pandemie: Rapid Response Collecting in Luxemburg," Les cahiers luxembourgeois 6, no. 1 (2021), 113-19. Our Google Analytics shows that 27.6% of all visitors use iOS and 20.6% use Macintosh.

wellbeing. 17 The overrepresentation of the first wave in COVID-19 collections cannot only be explained by widespread pandemic fatigue; it is also important to note that these platforms are based on ego-documents and appear to elicit contributions that replicate a positive self-image, as explained above. When digital memory banks are about a single event or experience which is felt to be shared collectively, such contributions are more easily produced. In this respect, memory banks resemble the public spaces of social media.

Researchers on education have various ways to find relevant contributions in the different digital memory banks on COVID-19, as the following presentation of the platforms from Luxembourg, Germany, Austria and Switzerland demonstrates. Scholars need to be aware not only of the different collecting strategies, but also of the main features and mechanics of each platform.

Covidmemory.lu is a platform "from/with ordinary people living or working in Luxembourg". 18 Visitors can browse the submissions chronologically and geographically via a map of the region. So far, no search engine has been provided, but local researchers can use the backend of the software to search through and sort contributions. People upload their memories via a simple form, where they can attach texts, audio or video footage, or photographs. They need to provide a date and optionally a place and nickname to appear with their submission. They also have to provide their name, email address, and place of residence; this information is not made public. Finally, they have to tick a box to agree with the terms and conditions and go through a CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) that helps prevent machine access to the platform. Before being published, each contribution is reviewed by a team of curators to ensure that it is lawful and thematically accurate. Minors need their parents' consent to contribute. As of August 2021, 342 items had been received and 329 published. We have identified 17 contributions that are about schooling or education in a broad sense.

The German coronarchiv.de, 19 like covidmemory.lu, uses Omeka S software to manage and collect contributions. In addition to chronological browsing, the website offers the option of sorting the contributions by media type and provides a simple search engine. Submissions are also reviewed and minors need their parents' consent to upload. Compared to the Luxembourg platform, the coronarchiv.de team is more active on social media and they continue to receive submissions on an almost daily basis. By August 2021, they had published roughly 4,400 contributions. A keyword search with the German word for school and the English term "homeschooling" gives 218 results, with general submissions and those from the Körber initiative combined.²⁰

The "Corona-Archiv der Universität Graz" in Austria and corona-memory.ch in Switzerland are also national in scope and run on Omeka S.²¹ The former platform again asks minors for their parents' consent before they make any submissions, while the latter has no specifications on age restrictions. The Swiss platform is the only one

¹⁷Alexandra Mankarios, "Wie die Corona-Pandemie Kinder und Jugendliche belastet," 3 May 2021, https://deutschesschulportal.de/bildungswesen/wie-die-corona-pandemie-kinder-und-jugendliche-belastet/ (accessed August 25, 2021). ¹⁸C² DH, "COVID-19 memories," https://covidmemory.lu, no date (accessed August 25, 2021).

¹⁹https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/ (accessed August 27, 2021).

²⁰On their new website, this number is 346.

²¹https://corona-archiv.uni-graz.at/s/ComeBack/page/archiv (accessed August27, 2021) https://www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/page/welcome (accessed August 27, 2021).

presented here that publishes the contributions immediately and reviews them later.²² Both collections offer a search engine and the option of browsing through the contributions by date and map. On both platforms, contributors can assign predefined tags when uploading. Austria has 39 entries in "Education (school, apprenticeship, university, etc.)" from a total of 401. Switzerland has 68 contributions in the category "Education (schools, apprenticeships and further education, universities)" from a total of 636.

"A Journal of the Plague Year" (JOTPY) is the largest Omeka S platform on the pandemic. While global in scope, most of the content comes from the United States. The platform has an open submission form, like the other platforms presented so far. In addition, it collaborates with local partners, many of them schools, which collect testimonies from their communities. The platform does not specify if contributors need to be of a certain age. JOTPY has published some 14,200 contributions (as of August 2021); 5,300 are placed on a map. Users can also browse through various sub-collections of specific exhibitions or calls, such as #lostgraduations. Many items have tags; the search engine provides over 3,500 entries with the term "school"; the term "elementary" gives 88 results.

In their focus on ego-documents, digital memory banks are similar to social media. Both tend to generate contributions that present a positive self-image. However, there are important differences in how they function. It seems that people are quicker to respond to posts on Facebook, for example. In late November 2020, when the government of Luxembourg announced the closure of restaurants, we posted an announcement on Facebook inviting people to share thoughts and experiences on the closure of the sector on covidmemory.lu. While we received no contributions in this regard on the platform, there were 29 comments on Facebook, mainly documenting people's immediate frustration with the decision.²³ Users appear to be put off by the additional time required to upload something to a digital memory bank where they always have to fill in a form, give personal information, and accept the terms and conditions for each new contribution they make. This rather tedious and time-consuming procedure probably fosters an additional degree of reflection and prevents spontaneous emotional reactions. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse how discussions in closed private groups on Facebook and other social media differed from the rather reflective and positive contributions to public digital memory banks, but there is some evidence that children and adolescents were more open to verbalising their frustrations and problems in closed protected online spaces.²⁴

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok also diverge from most digital memory banks in that the minimal legal age for contributing is 13.²⁵ The main problem for current and future researchers is that the content of social media is technically and legally difficult or impossible to retrieve, especially that of closed private groups. The same is true for internal school platforms such as Moodle. In this sense, COVID-19 collections fill a considerable gap by ensuring the archiving of ego-documents and similar material.

²²For the role of reviewing see Sheila A. Brennan and T. Mills Kelly, "Why Collecting History Online is Web 1.5," March 2009, *Essays on History and New Media* (Roy Rosenzweig Center), https://rrchnm.org/essay/why-collecting-history-online-is-web-1-5/ (accessed August 30, 2021).

²³"D'Restaurante sinn zoue!" entry on the C²DH Facebook page, 26 November 2020, www.facebook.com/c2dh.lu/photos/a.1072637326191846/3241880789267478 (accessed August 25, 2021).

²⁴Susanne Vieth-Entus, "Berliner Schüler verzweifeln im Lockdown," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2 March 2021.

²⁵For WhatsApp the legal age is 16 in Europe but 13 in other parts of the world.

Selected memories of education in times of COVID-19

In this section, we will explore selected submissions to COVID-19 memory banks to investigate the insights but also the challenges these sources raise for a future history of education in times of pandemic. We will identify broader patterns and topics that emerge when browsing through education-related contributions. In the smaller covidmemory.lu collection, we browsed the full collection to identify meaningful contributions. In the other archives, we relied on keyword searches and tags, categories, or sub-collections as described above. Overall, we focused on contributions from children and adolescents but also included some posts from parents and teachers.

Given the similarities between digital memory banks and social media platforms, known for their visual bias, it is not surprising that many contributions contain photographs. Often these contributions contain only very short descriptions about the context of the photos. Detailed information on when, where, and why they were taken and submitted is usually incomplete. In some cases, it is possible to investigate the metadata of the image files to learn more about the date of creation or the camera and software used. Typical motifs include signs that indicated the closure of schools during the first lockdown or the availability of "emergency care" in justified cases, ²⁶ and reminders that parents were no longer allowed to enter school premises after the reopening in May 2020.²⁷ Other photos, probably taken by teachers or other school staff, show the situation inside schools after the reopening in May 2020, with images of hand sanitiser and corresponding instructions, and efforts to keep social distance in classrooms by removing half of the furniture or by establishing a one-way system for moving around buildings.²⁸ Figure 1 is a screenshot from another photo series showing the preparation of compulsory COVID-19 tests for pupils that were introduced later in the pandemic in an effort to keep schools open.²⁹ These and similar contributions, which can be found across all the COVID-19 archives we examined, provide historians with an object-centred visual inventory of schools during the pandemic. The photos attest to an initial high level of improvisation and a gradual more organised adaptation of school buildings and classrooms to the new health measures. Related contributions also offer glimpses into homeschooling settings, showing different arrangements that families made to simultaneously accommodate working from home and homeschooling during the different phases of the pandemic. Some of these photos testify to the relatively high socio-economic status of the participants, as can be seen on Figure 2.30 However, historians will have to carefully analyse these somewhat staged pictures as they offer only a filtered view into private homes.

²⁶Nini, "Corona und Schule," 23 April 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=4242 (accessed August 23, 2021).

²⁷Anonymous, "Ab hier Elternfreie Zone!!" 18 May 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1626 (accessed August 23, 2021).

²⁸Wewan, "Schoul a Coronazaiten," 11 May 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/941 (accessed August 23, 2021).

²⁹CKH, "Testvorbereitung in der Schule," no date, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=14674 (accessed August 23, 2021). The meta-data from the JPG files reveal that they were taken on 22 April 2021 with a Samsung smartphone.

³⁰Navubla, "Télétravail an Homeschooling," 31 March 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/320 (accessed August 23, 2021).

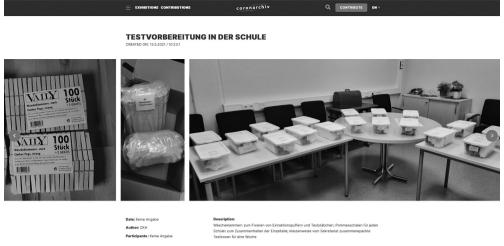


Figure 1. Capture: "Preparing tests at school", uploaded by CKH. (CKH, "Testvorbereitung in der Schule," no date, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=14674 (accessed 23 August 2021)).

Textual descriptions, ranging from a paragraph to multi-page documents, are helpful to contextualise visual contributions. They provide first-person accounts from children and adolescents that give insights into the homeschooling and schooling situation during the pandemic. More general remarks, like the contribution by a certain MAK, reflect on the pros and cons of school closures. This short text states that the lockdown disrupted everyday life, and that while time was saved by not travelling to school, on the downside pupils were forced to stay inside, got less physical exercise, and were prevented from seeing their friends.³¹ In another post, an anonymous 12-year-old looks back at the start of the pandemic: while homeschooling sounded fun at first, "[a]fter a day of online schooling the first thing I noticed was that I missed being with my friends . . . After a day in front of the computer, my eyes were extremely sore." A few weeks into the lockdown a new "normality" emerged:

Now I have got used to sitting in front of the computer all day, and my eyes don't hurt as much. But I think I am not the only one to think that real school is much more satisfactory than online school. I think that going back to school will be a relief for me (maybe also for others), even with the exams.³²

Boredom, uncertainty, and fear of the virus are the predominant themes in many accounts from the first lockdown. This post from April 2020 puts it clearly: "We wait, we sit in our homes, and the only thing we can do is to do nothing." ³³

Homeschooling parents also submitted their experiences. Some uploaded photos showing the physical arrangements at home.³⁴ Others emphasised that organisation was key for the successful co-existence of homeschooling and home office.³⁵ Daily or weekly plans

³¹MAK, "Leben in Quarantäne," 4 May 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/423 (accessed August 23, 2021).

³²Anonymous, "The last days of school," 10 May 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/555 (accessed August 23, 2021).

³³Anonymous, "Warten," 3 April 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1853 (accessed August 23, 2021).

³⁴Anonymous, "Schule daheim," 24 March 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1543 (accessed August 26, 2021).

³⁵Dani, "e-learning," 11 May 2020, https://corona-archiv.uni-graz.at/s/ComeBack/item/325 (accessed August 26, 2021).



Figure 2. "Working from home and homeschooling", uploaded by Navubla. (Navubla, "Télétravail an Homeschooling," 31 March 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/320 (accessed 23 August 2021)).

often feature among the photos submitted. One example is a handwritten daily plan on a whiteboard showing different activities for all family members: from "home office for all" to watching television for the kids or some physical exercise for everyone in the evening.³⁶ Alongside these rather serene descriptions, there are also are more critical accounts. A desperate single mother of two children wrote in April 2020:

³⁶I.T., "Familienplan," 18 March 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=530 (accessed August 26, 2021).

The weeks until Easter have been chaotic. Every teacher used a different medium of communication and different teaching platforms. Work was set without any system, and it was almost impossible to complete it all in time. The kids had to cope with a higher workload than at school. Since then the situation has got a bit better, all communication now comes through two channels and the children are given weekly schedules to help them plan their work.³⁷

During the second lockdown in Germany, parents organised political protests against school closures and used the coronarchiv.de platform to express their views. For example, they published an open letter to the Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia³⁸ and argued against the mandatory wearing of masks in school.³⁹ In addition, teachers also shared their disapproval at some of the political measures; in one post they complained about the lifting of the mask mandate in August 2021.⁴⁰ These contributions not only show the diverging interests and experiences of different groups; they also show how users appropriated the COVID-19 archives as public platforms to express their views.

Another group of submissions describes the actual content of remote learning. They show the unsurprising lack of preparedness of many schools for online remote learning, in both technical and didactic terms. At the beginning, teachers lacked clear information about how to handle the unexpected situation, ⁴¹ and retreated to offline assignments. ⁴² Other submissions attest to the inventiveness and creativity of schools and teaching staff. They stopped grading to ease the psychological distress of children and parents, as a letter from an Austrian Latin teacher shows. ⁴³ A sports teacher invented home sport exercises with equipment that everybody would have at hand, ⁴⁴ and children received handmade certificates for mastering the "first compulsory homeschooling period in history". ⁴⁵ Some teachers, like Luke, a teacher at a Luxembourgish secondary school (Lycée classique), even hoped that the forced use of digital technologies during the homeschooling period would lead to general improvements and didactic innovations in the school system. ⁴⁶ Another teacher, Wewan, also praised the great flexibility and creativity of children, teachers, parents and school management staff, but voiced the relief he felt when the return to school was announced. ⁴⁷

³⁷ Alleinerzieherin, "Schulalltag als Alleinerzieherin," 19 April 2020, https://corona-archiv.uni-graz.at/s/ComeBack/item/24 (accessed August 26, 2021).

³⁸Oma im Einsatz, "Offener Brief pro Öffnung der Schulen und Kitas," April 2021, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg. de/item/?id=14153 (accessed August 26, 2021).

³⁹Oma im Einsatz, "Weiterhin KEINE LOCKERUNGEN der MASKENPFLICHT für Schüler:innen in der Schule und Ferienbetreuung," 24 June 2021, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=15157 (accessed August 25, 2021). This user, describing herself as a "Grandmother in action," submitted many similar posts (see above for an example).

⁴⁰User xyz, "Spontane Lehrerkonferenz am 28.08.2020 zur Abschaffung der Maskenpflicht im Schulunterricht," 28 August 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=8037 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴¹Andrea, "Wann kommt Information für Kindergartenpädagog*innen und Betreuer*innen?" 25 April 2020, https://corona-archiv.uni-graz.at/s/ComeBack/item/76 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴²Thara, "Wochenplan Grundschule 3. Klasse erste Shutdown-Woche," 13–15 March 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=5701 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴³Anonymous, "Schule ohne Noten . . . Brief eines Lateinlehrers an Eltern," 9 June 2020, https://corona-archiv.uni-graz.at/s/ComeBack/item/922 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴⁴Anonymous, "Sportunterricht zu Hause," 3 April 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/838 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴⁵Anonymous, "Corona Orden," 1 July 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1966 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴⁶Luke, "Les cours à distance," 4 May 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/436 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁴⁷Wewan, "Homeschooling," 18 March 2020 [but submitted 7 July 2020], https://covidmemory.lu/memory/948 (accessed August 25, 2021).

Various contributions show that COVID-19 as a topic was also included in many school assignments, for instance in English, 48 art, 49 and fashion design classes. 50 Some pupils played with the iconic visual depiction of the virus, while others made it a subject of discussion. Immediately after the start of the first lockdown, two classes in German literature (for pupils aged 13 and 14) went from studying short stories as a literary genre to writing short stories about COVID-19. Their teacher published the stories with permission of the parents on the coronarchiv.de platform.⁵¹ The short stories are very interesting, and some have a somewhat apocalyptic outlook regarding the pandemic, but for historians it will be difficult to identify the line between literary fiction and the pupils' own experiences and feelings. The COVID-19 archives contain similar assignments from small children⁵² and adult learners at language schools.⁵³ JOTPY also collected many class assignments. Some are easily identifiable as such, while others are not.⁵⁴ The latter case is problematic because archive users do not always know if the contributions were originally produced for a teacher and if the pupils were trying to meet this person's expectations rather than describe their own experiences.

Overall, few contributions contain information about underprivileged children, and those submissions that talk about this group often come from other people. In one typical post a photo is accompanied by a short text that reads:

In front of this school printed teaching material is offered during the school closure. In this way, children who do not have the technical means for online teaching can work at home. Between the printouts, you can also find envelopes with the pupils' names - this is how their corrected work is returned to them.55

Another indirect testimony is the posting of a brief article a teacher had previously published in a union newsletter. He accompanied his post on coronarchiv.de with the apologetic statement that in his article he deliberately only discussed the "good" sides of

⁴⁸Anonymous, "In a crisis?" April 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1614 (accessed August 25,

⁴⁹Anonymous, "Corona Hut," 9 May 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1624; Anonymous, "la corona mia," 20 April 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1855; Flora Blumhagen, "Lockdown," 16 January 2021, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=12124 (all accessed August 25, 2021).

⁵⁰Berenice Bischoff, "Mode aus Masken ohne Nadel und Faden," 15 June 2021, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/ item/?id=15147 (accessed August 25, 2021).

⁵¹Ober-Ingelheimerin, "Corona-Kurzgeschichten-Sammelsurium der 8 c," 24–28 March 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs. uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=2415; "Corona-Kurzgeschichten-Sammelsurium der 8e," 24-28 March 2020, https://coro narchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=2417 (both accessed August 25, 2021).

⁵² Anonymous, "Perception du confinement au travers des yeux d'un enfant," 3 March 2021, www.corona-memory.ch/s/ corona-memory/item/3448; Anonymous, "Corona," 30 June 2020, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/ 1861 (both accessed August 26, 2021).

⁵³ Anonymous, "'bleefdoheem' Zäit an en neie Projet bis zum Enn maachen," 5 May 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/ memory/1165; Jackie Messerich, "Lëtzebuergeschklass Atelier A2 am INL," 14 January 2021, https://covidmemory.lu/ memory/1171; idem, "Letzebuergeschklass B1.1. am INL," 16 December 2020, https://covidmemory.lu/memory/1119; idem, "Letzebuergeschklass B1.2. am INL," 16 December 2020 https://covidmemory.lu/memory/1115 (all accessed August 26, 2021).

⁵⁴Many submissions that come from school assignments have a disclaimer that makes visitors aware of the origin. See e.g. Marukh Khalique, "Student Paper on Federalism and Coronavirus," 15 May 2020, https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/ item/16449 (accessed August 27, 2021).

⁵⁵Lila, "Online-Unterricht ohne Computer," 3 May 2020, https://corona-archiv.uni-graz.at/s/ComeBack/item/192 (accessed August 26, 2021).

homeschooling, like the fact that it encourages innovation and also the rediscovery of old techniques (e.g. writing letters), and that he did not mention the familiar situation of underprivileged pupils or a lack of technical equipment.⁵⁶

To conclude this section identifying some common topics that can be found across the different memory banks, it is worth presenting one more contribution, a short post containing a link to the blog of a Swiss teacher. The blog contains insightful stories about communication between the teacher and her pupils, with several screen captures of WhatsApp and Facebook messages. Although these screenshots have been edited to anonymise the participants, it seems that the messages were - quite naturally - much shorter and more spontaneous than the more reflected contributions of children to the COVID-19 archives.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, there are no guarantees that historians will be able to rediscover this blog in the future. It was archived once in the Internet Archive on 28 March 2021, but the images do not load, meaning that the insightful screenshots are missing.

The Körber campaign: a source critique

The German coronarchiv.de has a sub-collection that will be of particular interest to historians of education, the 2020 "Contribute!" campaign run by the Körber Foundation. On the old coronarchiv.de website, the campaign is described as follows:

In April 2020, the coronarchiv and the Körber Foundation jointly called on children and adolescents to document the coronavirus crisis with their own artefacts, testimonials and experiences. The deadline for entries was 15 May. By then, more than 1,500 children and adolescents between the ages of 3 and 21 had participated nationwide and submitted a total of 1,120 contributions.⁵⁸

In this section, we will investigate the value of these contributions for future historians by performing a thorough source critique. This will enable us not only to propose patterns and themes, but also to point out gaps and obstacles.

In their analysis of the submissions, future historians will first have to reconstruct the social and political context in which the campaign took place. This task is facilitated by the fact that there is already a Wikipedia page on "Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the education system in Germany" and that the German radio station Deutschlandfunk has compiled a timeline on the topic.⁵⁹ All schools in Germany closed on 13 March 2020 in order to reduce the spread of the virus. Homeschooling was introduced immediately, as was "emergency care" for children of people working in essential sectors. Media reports suggested that the former posed considerable problems, while scant attention was paid to the latter. Journalists and educationalists identified

⁵⁶M.V., "Schule und Corona," April 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=4741 (accessed August 26,

⁵⁷Anonymous, "Blog d'une enseignante à distance," no date, www.corona-memory.ch/s/corona-memory/item/1201; http://choupinettesr.simplesite.com/ (accessed August 19, 2021).

⁵⁸ Coronarchiv, "Mitmach-Aktion 2020 (Körber Stiftung)," no date, https://coronarchiv.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/projec tor/s/coronarchiv/item-set/6065 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁵⁹https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folgen_der_COVID-19-Pandemie_f%C3%BCr_das_Bildungs-_und_Erziehungssystem_ in_Deutschland (accessed August 26, 2021); Matthis Jungblut, "Chronologie eines Schuljahrs in der Coronakrise," Deutschlandfunk, 28 December 2020, www.deutschlandfunk.de/rueckblick-2020-chronologie-eines-schuljahrs-in-der. 680.de.html?dram:article_id=489919 (accessed August 26, 2021).

problems in the digitalisation of education: "These are long-standing problems that are now being revealed: a lack of digital infrastructure at schools, digitally overburdened teachers, no end devices among students."60 After roughly two weeks of school holidays around Easter (12 April), students gradually returned to school. The exact dates and the age groups were determined by the states, which resulted in a confusing situation. Usually, students in their final year returned to school first, in Saxony on 20 April. By 4 May, most children in Germany were able to go back to school, often in alternating classes to minimise the risk of infection and facilitate contact tracing. Regular inclassroom teaching was further complicated by the fact that many teachers belonged to a risk group and had to stay at home. It is important to bear in mind that participants worked on their contributions to the Körber campaign towards the end of the first lockdown and thus they dealt with developments and experiences of the first wave of COVID-19 infections in Germany, when it was still a somewhat exciting novelty.

Second, future historians need more information on the Körber Foundation, which they will hopefully still be able to find on its website. 61 Since 1973, it has organised the biennial "History Competition of the Federal President". This is the leading research competition for young people in Germany, with prizes of between €200 and €2,500 for individuals and up to €40,000 for schools. Anyone under the age of 21 can participate "alone, in groups or with the whole class". Submissions can be texts, audio recordings, multimedia presentations, exhibitions, games, and so on: "there are no limits to creativity." The aim is to encourage children and adolescents to ask historical questions about their immediate environment: "One's own place of residence, neighbours, parents and grandparents become part of history – even if they are not mentioned in textbooks." The jury is composed of historians, educational specialists, archivists, museum educators, and teachers, among others. They use different assessment forms for participants from different school levels.⁶²

The subject of the 2018/19 competition was "Crisis, transition, awakening". 63 The title of the 2020/21 edition was "Moving times. Sports makes society." The cooperation with coronarchiv.de was a one-off initiative that was not run under the patronage of the History Competition of the Federal President, and this had an impact on the prize: instead of the usual monetary reward, the best-judged submissions received book vouchers. The flyer of the "Contribute!" campaign nevertheless used similar wording to the history competition:

How does the crisis affect you, your family or your immediate surroundings? Think about an example from your family or your home town and document it in a format of your choice: a photo, short video or audio recording, a creative or factual text, an interview, poster or collage - there are no limits to your creativity!⁶⁵

⁶⁰Jungblut, "Chronologie eines Schuljahrs in der Coronakrise."

⁶¹Körber Stiftung, "Der Geschichtswettbewerb," no date, www.koerber-stiftung.de/geschichtswettbewerb/portraet (accessed August 26, 2021). 62 lbid.

⁶³The German original is "Krise, Umbruch, Aufbruch": www.koerber-stiftung.de/geschichtswettbewerb/portraet/201819 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁶⁴The German original is "Bewegte Zeiten. Sport macht Gesellschaft": www.koerber-stiftung.de/geschichtswettbewerb/ wettbewerb-202021 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁶⁵www.koerber-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/koerber-stiftung/redaktion/geschichtswettbewerb/pdf/2020/Plakat_ Mitmach-Aktion.pdf (accessed August 26, 2021).

The institutionalised framework and reputation of the Körber Foundation nevertheless had an impact on the submissions. Since they were aiming at the prize jury, the young participants had a different target audience in mind from "normal" contributors to digital memory banks; children and adolescents were not addressing their own peers or the public. Furthermore, parents saw the contributions by their minor children, as they had to sign a consent form. 66 Just like any historical source, the Körber submissions have a particular audience, and since they were being assessed by a prize committee it is not surprising that many of the contributions tend towards social desirability. They send messages of solidarity and do not, for instance, criticise the political measures. They can therefore also be seen as performances, as described by Wolfgang Ernst. The jury, on the other hand, tended to favour artistic and creative submissions.⁶⁷ We suspect that the winners are not representative of the overall contributions. However, a more detailed statistical analysis of the over 1,100 items would be necessary in order to make more substantial claims about this relationship.

Since August 2020, visitors have been able to browse through the Körber entries on the old and new websites of coronarchiv.de.⁶⁸ There are currently 548 contributions in this sub-collection, as the rest are in the process of being anonymised.⁶⁹ For this article, we looked at all published contributions with the keywords "school" and "homeschooling", a total of 71 submissions. Many of these have a large descriptive part. In their texts, videos, and audio recordings alike, children and adolescents describe how the virus spread over the globe, numbers of cases and hospitalisations, and what measures were taken. They often reflect and comment on these developments, but rarely in an oppositional manner. Bearing in mind the framing and the target audience, future historians might learn something about social desirability, but also about how (the teaching of) "history" was understood around 2020.⁷⁰

On a personal level, students regularly report about hobbies that they cannot pursue, mostly sports and music, and what they do instead. Besides books and computers (for gaming and communicating), they give considerable attention to purchasing and preparing food. In addition, we gain some insights into the situation of the parents. These submissions are similar to the ordinary contributions in the different COVID-19 archives as shown in the previous section: they give insights into everyday life in times of pandemic. Since most of the Körber submissions are longer than the often short submissions presented earlier, a close reading reveals

⁶⁶https://coronarchiv.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/projector/s/coronarchiv/page/mitmach-aktion (accessed August 26,

⁶⁷It seems that the jury of the "Mitmach Aktion" followed the guidelines and procedures of the "History Competition of the Federal President," as we find various contributions from different school levels.

⁶⁸When browsing through the general collections of the new coronarchiv website, the Körber submissions are not distinguishable from the rest. On the old site, there was a note indicating their origin. On the new site, the Körber collection is listed among "collaborations": https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/archiv/?item_set_id%5B0%5D= 6065&per_page=36&sort_by=created&sort_order=desc¤tPage=9 (accessed September 1, 2021); on the old site, it is among "collections": https://coronarchiv.geschichte.uni-hamburg.de/projector/s/coronarchiv/item-set (accessed September 1, 2021).

⁶⁹The contributors did not agree or respond to a request to extend the copyright: Luca-Sebastian Jacobs, email message to author, 20 July 2021.

⁷⁰The latter would require a more detailed study of history teaching in the different countries.

a wealth of material on specific themes. In the remainder of the article we will explore some contributions to the "Contribute!" campaign as historical sources for a future history of education.

Taking the notion of source criticism one step further, future historians will be interested to learn more about the published metadata of individual entries. After having recognised the general framework of the campaign, researchers have to identify the exact creation date of each submission, where and when it was produced and the age of the contributors. Directly below the title of each contribution, we find the information "created on" followed by a date between July 2020 and January 2021. When we open the item, we find another field entitled "date". Here, most submissions come with the indication "c. 15 May 2020" or a day nearby. This latter was added by the coronarchiv team when they uploaded the contribution to refer to when it "occurred", while the former indicates the day on which it was uploaded. For future historians, it might be more useful to search in the properties of the files attached. Here, one can regularly find original creation dates and even the name of the creator, which sometimes compromises their wish to remain anonymous when they only provide a pseudonym. All entries come with a location, but as these are often small towns further work needs to be done to gain a geographical overview. 71 There is no field that specifies the age of the contributor; at the moment this information has to be found within the contribution. There is, however, a statistics report on the website of the Körber Foundation. ⁷² So more detailed information on the age of the contributors, just like the number of submissions per state, is available on an aggregated level.

For this article, we opted to categorise the Körber submissions along different narrative forms, rather than by media type. It is difficult to compile a coherent typology from our limited samples, because within the same forms and types commonalities in content are not obvious. This can be demonstrated with submissions that have been compiled as part of a school assignment, which are relatively numerous. There is no metadata field that indicates this, but it is generally indicated in the description provided by the contributors. There are many films, collages and texts in this category.⁷³ Some of the assignments are rather intimate. Alina Petersen (age unknown) from Viöl (Schleswig-Holstein), for example, unlike most others refrains from presenting case numbers and measures but instead focuses on the difficult health situation of her own father and grandfather. Figure 3 shows her collage "What's going through my head?", in which she expresses her fears and wishes, such as "can kids get sick too?" or "when can we go back to school?" The latter is a complaint that most children and adolescents express in all types and forms of contributions, as we have seen above. Usually, it comes with the explanation that they miss their friends.

⁷¹This is important because the German states pursued different COVID-19 policies regarding the closing and reopening

 $[\]frac{72}{2} www.koerber-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/koerber-stiftung/redaktion/geschichtswettbewerb/pdf/2020/mit$ mach-aktion/2020_Mitmach-Aktion_Statistik.pdf (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁷³Linus, "Homeschooling-Tagesschau," c. 15 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=11906; Klasse 6 c des Friedrich-von-Alberti-Gymnasiums, "Corona-Alphabet," c. 15 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg. de/item/?id=10153 (both accessed August 26, 2021).

⁷⁴Alina, "Die Corona Zeit – Was geht durch meinen Kopf," no date, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id= 9701 (accessed August 26, 2021).

Die Corona Zeit - Was geht durch meinen Kopf?

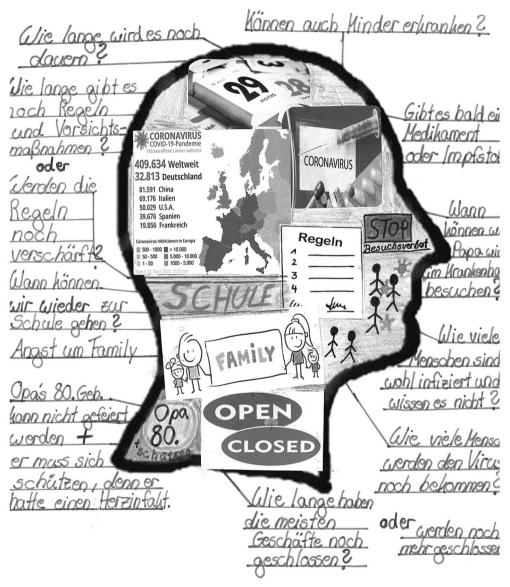


Figure 3. Capture: "What's going through my head?" by Alina. (Alina, "Die Corona Zeit – Was geht durch meinen Kopf," no date, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=9701 (accessed 26 August 2021)).

A large percentage of the Körber submissions come in the narrative form of diaries or similar personal accounts. In addition to individual experiences, they often still include a detailed description of measures, numbers, epidemiological developments, and a general assessment of the situation. Annika Kurtz (age unknown) from Jena (Thüringen) submitted an exemplary contribution of four pages, with entries on three consecutive weekends in April 2020.⁷⁵ Like many others, she illustrates her contribution with photos of objects representing the period - toilet paper, handsewn masks, pot plants - and of an empty landscape as seen during one of her walks. As mentioned, we find these themes frequently in other digital memory banks on the pandemic too. Also like many others, Annika presents her handwritten weekly schedule, which demonstrates how new school structures emerged at home. She then goes on to consider some positive and negative aspects of the situation. Annika is happy to spend more time with her family and is curious to discover new hobbies. She also appreciates the slower pace of life and the fact that weekends and holidays are less stressful. On the negative side, she emphasises that she misses her friends and explains the difficulties of homeschooling. One problem was that some teachers sent new work each day, others each week, and still others gave everything at the beginning. This was organisationally challenging and emotionally difficult, as Annika writes

Some days I accomplished more than I set out to do, which made me very proud. Other days, my plan didn't work at all and I became desperate as I sat in front of a task for hours. These days even caused tears and drove me crazy. 76

While only a few submissions focus on schooling, many of the diary-like contributions have single lines or paragraphs that illustrate not only how distant learning took place but also how pupils and students coped with the psychological and cognitive challenges of learning alone.

In another exemplary contribution of five pages, Matthias Moll (16) from Reutlingen (Baden-Württemberg) describes how the virus had spread since December 2020 and what measures were taken in Germany.⁷⁷ He relates this to how it affected him in pursuing his hobby, handball. He then tells the reader about his homeschooling experiences. Most teachers made a "clueless impression and gave us provisional long-term assignments without any obvious context". Matthias thinks that many of them were "literally caught off guard by the situation and no one was prepared for it". He has not heard from two of his teachers at all in the seven weeks since the school was closed. He is "very disappointed and also angry that many teachers do not make any effort to minimise the harm the current crisis is causing for pupils". When he received the exercises from the Federal Agency for Civic Education to prepare him for the final classes (Oberstufe), he even felt "cheated of my education", because the questions were - in his eyes - ridiculously easy. Future historians will have to analyse carefully whether such statements merely echoed

⁷⁵Annika, "Mein Leben zwischen Schule, Ferien und Corona," no date, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/? id=9780 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁷⁷Matthias, "Corona und Schule," c. 15 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=7385 (accessed August 26, 2021).

media discourses from the period rather than being a genuine voice of a teenager. In any case, Matthias also has a positive example of teaching during the pandemic. His mathematics teacher held online classes:

This way, he can explain new material, call on students and write in real time on a virtual whiteboard. This teaching method offers an almost equivalent substitute to normal lessons and it is a mystery to me why it is not used in all subjects. Unfortunately, even seven weeks after the closure of the school, in almost all subjects we are given assignments that we have to complete during the week.⁷⁸

Such diaries and essays are very helpful for finding about the various educational tools and measures that were used during the pandemic and also how students reacted to them.

With a close reading of the sources, we can often find information on how the pandemic in general and homeschooling in particular affected the wellbeing of children and adolescents, as we have just seen. In addition, there are a number of artistic contributions that illustrate this very poignantly. A collage by Timon (11) from Höhenkirchen-Siegertsbrunn (Bavaria), for example - selected as one of the prize-winning entries by the jury - shows a vomiting head exploding with not only numbers and letters but also a smartphone, two laptops, a keyboard, a mouse, a printer and an alarm clock. The description reads "The collage shows that I am sick of homeschooling and my head is already overflowing and bursting from learning alone!"79 Figure 4 depicts a sketch by Tessa (age unknown) from Dessau-Roßlau (Sachsen-Anhalt), entitled "The breakdown of usual everyday life". It shows a road that leads to a café, a shop, a club, and a fitness studio, as well as to a school and people playing football and hanging out together. The protagonist girl on the left stands on the same road, but it has collapsed and now there is an abyss separating her from all these things. "The girl on the poster on the left feels like she is on a lonely island and she doesn't know if or when the abyss will close again", comments Tessa on her work.80

As we have shown with these examples, the Körber contributions are a promising source for future historians to write about education during the pandemic. They provide many details about teaching practices and, equally valuable, what pupils and students thought about them. They also offer insights into their everyday lives and emotions. However, the Körber contributions may only be representative of those who contributed. Like in the broader COVID-19 archives, there is a notable gap in the collection. There are almost no voices of people who disagree with the measures, who are affected disproportionally by them or who have existential problems because of the pandemic. We only find a few traces of such social groups when contributors show an awareness that such individuals exist. Jan-Philipp Rohloff from Aachen, for example, illustrates how homeschooling can overburden single parents and change the roles within a family. He had to take over home-teaching duties from his mother. After a few days of remote work and

⁷⁸lbid.

⁷⁹Timon, "Homeschooling," c. 13 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=9947 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁸⁰Tessa, "Der Zusammenbruch des gewohnten Alltags," c. 27 April 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/ ?id=8773 (accessed August 26, 2021).

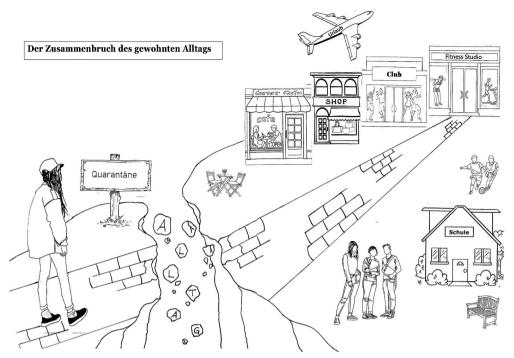


Figure 4. Capture: "The breakdown of usual everyday life" by Tessa. (Tessa, "Der Zusammenbruch des gewohnten Alltags," c. 27 April 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=8773 (accessed 26 August 2021)).

teaching his two younger teenage sisters, her "nerves reached breaking point". It is clear, however, that the family was economically not too badly situated, as he had various devices at his disposal:

We met at the dining table for a second breakfast and discussed the questions. If there were any further problems, the tablet was on the table and we checked if there was a YouTube video about it. To learn English and French vocabulary, we used the smartphone.⁸¹

Lotta from Hamburg describes how the living situation impacts homeschooling. She lives with her parents and three siblings in a small apartment. She reports that "most of the time, the six of us here at home can't manage to concentrate for even an hour to work. Someone is always getting up to mischief or making noise or commotion." However, both of her parents are teachers, "so unlike other people at the moment, we are not going through a financial or existential crisis". Sylvia Meyer zu Uptrup from Berlin is one of the few to mention not possessing a laptop. After discussing the issue with her parents, she orders one. Until the device arrives, she can borrow an iPad, a PC, a scanner, a printer, and a digital camera from her parents. Another problem was that their internet was too slow. Sylvia is aware that her situation was still good and poses those questions that future historians will not

⁸¹Jan-Philipp, "Mein Leben in den Zeiten von Corona," c. 10 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/? id=11345 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁸²Lotta, "Welche Probleme entstehen durch den Virus in der Familie und wie werden sie gelöst," c. 15 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=11239 (accessed August 26, 2021).



be able to answer using digital memory banks alone: "But what about kids whose parents aren't very familiar with computer technology and can't help their child? Or those who don't have the money to buy all the devices?"83

COVID-19 memory banks: sources for a future history of education?

To sum up, the main strengths of digital memory banks for future historiography are that everybody can contribute and that there is no hierarchisation of memories. However, this does not mean that all possible voices can be found in such digital archives. Like in traditional archives, there are gaps and silences. When it comes to COVID-19, the most existentially affected groups are underrepresented, and this is also true for their children. At the same time, the contributions are a reminder that many inhabitants of Western and Central European countries experienced positive sides of the health measures and their impact on individuals and society, especially during the first lockdown. In a Luxembourgish study from spring 2020, for example, two thirds of children between 6 and 16 indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their lives. 84 While this figure had been 96% before the pandemic – revealing a significant drop in wellbeing – it shows that from a statistical point of view a majority of positive submissions to memory banks could be expected. It will be important for future historians to compare the memory banks presented in this paper, which all come from a relatively homogeneous socio-cultural space, with those from other parts of the world and with other kinds of sources.

Digital memory banks are very valuable for future historical research on issues related to everyday life in general and for the history of education in particular. The COVID-19 archives presented in this paper bring together a wealth of perspectives, themes, media types, and narrative forms. However, a rigid source criticism that pays close attention to authorship, locations, dates, intended audience, and so forth will be essential. Careful contextualisation within contemporary online discourses will show how they influenced submissions to digital memory banks and how they differed. It is important to keep in mind that memory banks like coronarchiv.de and covidmemory.lu are no "push-button media"; the technical, and in the case of minors legal, barriers for submissions are much higher than for simple Facebook or Twitter posts. This process adds an additional layer of reflection to the ego-documents in these digital archives, as participants have to make an extra effort to publish their memories compared to other online outlets. At the same time, many memory bank contributions are more detailed than a typical social media post; this is particularly true for the very elaborate contributions to the Körber campaign. When it comes to contributions from minors, yet another layer is added to their ego-documents, as they are often written for a particular target audience (teachers, parents, prize jury, etc.), a point which is not always immediately obvious from the content.

⁸³ Sylvia, "Für jeden ist es anders," c. 15 May 2020, https://coronarchiv.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/item/?id=10089 (accessed August 26, 2021).

⁸⁴Claudine Kirsch et al., Subjective Well-being and Stay-at-home Experiences.

To facilitate their task and illuminate these issues, future historians will need good metadata in order to perform thorough source criticism that is adequate for the questions they are asking. As well as securing long-term archiving, operators of digital memory banks thus have to make sure that their digital archives offer researchers all the necessary metadata for a future history of education in times of pandemic.

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