

Volunteer Opportunity: Research and Analysis – ALPHA Education’s Digital Archive Project

What is the project?

The Digital Archive Project is one of ALPHA Education’s exciting areas of focus in the coming 5 years. We have a very large collection of primary sources related to various aspects of World War II in Asia, and these sources need to be sorted, transcribed, analyzed and annotated. Volunteers will review primary source materials (images, videos, interviews, official documents, etc.), research their origins and context, and develop short annotations (1-2 paragraphs) for each item. These annotations will provide a general summary, an indication of the source’s context and broader historical significance, and will illustrate how the source can be understood through ALPHA Education’s mission and vision.

Why are we doing this project?

The primary sources in our collection range from documentary images to official and unofficial correspondence to personal testimony and interviews, all from people or groups directly connected to World War II in Asia. These documents provide a unique and intimate window into the lives of civilians, soldiers, and leaders during this time of unrest, and help us understand the extent of the atrocities of war that took place. * Not only do these offer us a portrait of the everyday lives of such people, they also work to shed light on the political policies and tensions that developed at this time, and further our understanding of contemporary politics in the region. ALPHA Education’s mission is to foster awareness of an often overlooked aspect of World War II history, in the interest of furthering the values of justice, peace, and reconciliation, both for survivors of the past and for those who shape the historical narratives of the present and future. Far from being relegated solely to “the past,” the legacy of World War II in Asia remains palpable in today’s world. These primary documents help foster an understanding of why this is the case.

As the Digital Archive Project advances, we will use this information and analysis to construct a permanent, digital collection that can serve as a resource for researchers, students, scholars, and peace advocates investigating World War II in Asia. This project will extend into broader teaching and learning communities, and it will ultimately be accessible world-wide. By participating in this project, through rigorous research and analysis, students will be contributing to a global conversation and archival resource, the legacy of which will extend through generations, contexts, disciplines, and geographical boundaries. In sum, this is an opportunity to be a part of something very special and unique in scope. We will, of course, ensure proper attribution is provided for students who complete the analytic annotation for each primary source document, so that future researchers can acknowledge your contribution to this effort.

* Please note, the nature of these sources can often be rather graphic and disturbing, as they frequently document the atrocities of war. They include graphic images and descriptions of extreme violence, death, and sexual violation of women. However, by helping with this project, you help ensure that the victims of these atrocities are not left voiceless, forgotten to history. You keep their memory alive, you keep their voice present, and you help work toward justice on their behalf.

What will ALPHA Education provide for you?

We will have all the resources you need to begin your research and analysis. We can provide you with a variety of primary materials for you to assemble according to your interests. As well, we have a wide selection of scholarly resources related to various aspects of World War II in Asia, which you can use as secondary resources for understanding and contextualizing the primary sources. You will have full access to our library, physical and electronic, which contains a wealth of academic books and contemporary articles from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. As well, you will have the opportunity to confer with ALPHA Education's staff, which includes specialists in various aspects of World War II in Asia, as well as our Director of Education, who specializes in critical scholarship and academic writing.

At ALPHA Education, you will become part of a community devoted to historical reclamation and social justice. We believe that a warm, open, and supportive atmosphere is most conducive to intellectual success, and we highly value the energy and passion brought in by volunteers. While our work forces us to confront some of the worst atrocities in human history, we allow such encounters to foster a desire for understanding, reconciliation, and empathy, rather than division and animosity. The staff at ALPHA Education lives such a commitment in our everyday lives, as it extends into our inter-personal relationships and our dedication to mentoring and nurturing young researchers.

Who should apply for this project?

Volunteers should have an interest in, and passion for, the following issues: global justice, peace studies, historical analysis, archival research, media analysis, and/or international relations.

What skills are required for this project?

Research and data analysis, written communication, reasoning and discernment of sources, strong organizational skills, ability to work with others in a collaborative/community setting.

Do you have questions that haven't been answered here? Please feel free to contact ALPHA Education's Director of Education, Sarah Lynn Kleeb, at sarah.kleeb@alphaeducation.org!