

Rochester Aqueduct

Public Facing Report S1

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Progress Statement

The Rochester Aqueduct team has worked diligently to continue curating data about the aqueduct and subway. The team has been meeting continually on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday online this past week to continue coordinating the organization of our Google Drive and meeting with experts who can help with our data curation utilizing Island Ora and Omeka. We hope to have a meeting with them at some point the Friday of this week (as of 1/31).

The data curation at the moment has remained largely the same. It still includes, but is not limited to, photography of the abandoned aqueduct/subway, video and audio collection of the current abandoned aqueduct/subway, articles and information surrounding the subway in its prime along with adjacent events occurring in the Rochester area at the time.

Attached below is information from Fall semester consisting of the project proposal, presentation, and abstract:

Abstract

The Rochester Aqueduct is a companion project to Rochester City's *ROC The Riverway* that aims to preserve the historical space that is Rochester's former aqueduct and abandoned subway. *ROC The Riverway* is an exciting project aiming to bring the greater community together, but it is marred by controversy because it will directly and indirectly destroy major parts of the subway and aqueduct — causing pieces of history to be lost forever. Through The Rochester Aqueduct Project, this information will hopefully be digitally preserved in an open access location. This data will then be used to fuel projects that can enhance the material.

Rochester Aqueduct

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Problem Statement

The City of Rochester's project *ROC The Riverway* has been in development since 2009 and [is a bold plan to create a central gathering place and riverfront connectivity on the downtown waterfront](#). The aqueduct was built to carry the Erie Canal over the Genesee River and was later repurposed to support Rochester's Subway system. After the cessation of subway travel, the aqueduct under Broad Street has been left abandoned by the civilian populus and emerged as a famous and popular site for graffiti artists. *ROC The Riverway* carries ambitious goals and a large scope, but has its fair share of controversy amongst Rochester due to the fact that it will destroy and erase integral pieces of Rochester's history and culture. This is where The Rochester Aqueduct would like to come in.

Project Overview

The Rochester Aqueduct is a companion project to *ROC The Riverway* that will restore and recreate the vital parts of the subway and aqueduct. This data will be preserved in an open and centralized system for anyone to access and use. The data will also fuel a variety of different projects including, but not limited to: videos, images, interactive activities, websites, blogs, teaching modules, etc. The projects serve as outlets for the public to engage with specific material of their choosing in ways that allow for embodied and interactive learning.

Background & Justification

The Rochester aqueduct and subway are both integral pieces of history that influence more than just the city itself. For instance, graffiti artists have made the current space their own by decorating the walls with their specific tags and messages. Before its abandonment, the Rochester subway was pivotal in many crucial events such as World War II and the blizzard of 1944. And, of course, the aqueduct came at a time when trade via rivers and streams was one of the primary ways of importing and exporting.

With this in mind, many people in the Rochester area have expressed legitimate concerns about these pieces being lost due to the nature of such a large scale project. For instance, there were two controversial builds that have already been undertaken: when they filled in one large part of the subway a few years ago and the construction of the Nathaniel Building.

Goals

1. Research the current space and record and update data in a digital space

We will be collecting data of the current abandoned subway. This ranges from recording the sounds within this space, to taking photos of the graffiti along the walls and the layout, along with collecting blueprints, to gathering testimonies from artists and people who have visited the space. This information will all be kept in a database management system (DBMS) that is flexible and accessible so that other researchers can easily expand on the DBMS itself or create and continue projects related to the subway.

2. Research the subway in its prime and record data in a digital space

We will also be collecting data from the subway when it was active and in-use. This data will be collected mostly from other resources such as old photographs, articles from credible historical sources, historians, etc. This data will also be kept in a DBMS due to the type of information we're gathering — which is hotly contested and usually kept out of the public eye or destroyed. For instance, the blueprints to the Rochester subway stations are no longer accessible — which in turn means we have to work with forensics inside the ruins. As a result of all this, the quantity of data we'll need to work with also increases significantly which gives another useful purpose for hosting this in a DBMS.

3. Represent the collected data in an easily consumable project that allows users to learn about this piece of history, or interact with preserved parts of it

We have multiple ideas for how collected research can be utilized in a way that is easily digestible and teachable for all ages and demographics. We've considered a variety of different projects, although we will decide which projects are most effective with the skills we can acquire and the information we know. As the nature of this area is a rather physical experience, we hope to find a way to represent this place of history in a project that reflects its influence. Some projects we have brainstormed have been a teaching module that focuses on many different aspects of the subway to allow teachers in a variety of grade-levels to customize their lessons to incorporate what they want. In addition to the teaching module, we are also planning on using this data to create a documentary and a physical 3D space. We will also be working collaboratively with both faculty and students from other majors that can use their professional skill sets to further enhance and expand our ideas and ambitions.