

## MediaNOLA preserves and connects cultural heritage

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Before Hurricane Katrina, few people were worried about the way New Orleans' cultural heritage was being preserved. It didn't occur to people that it was in any kind of danger. Katrina snapped that issue into focus for many, including one Tulane professor, who decided to do something about it.



Through MediaNOLA, Vicki Mayer intends to preserve “some of this wonderful culture that New Orleans has.” She is an associate professor in the communication department. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“Tulane lost its media library in the basement of the Howard-Tilton Library,” says Vicki Mayer, associate professor of communication. “Being a media professor, I was concerned about the way in which our libraries were preserving some of this wonderful culture that New Orleans has.”

That concern was the impetus for Mayer to create [MediaNOLA](#), a project through which students would not only work to preserve, but also make accessible, histories of cultural production in New Orleans. What started out as a process to digitize local archives and make a wiki site has evolved into an interactive repository for art and cultural resources.

“The idea of MediaNOLA is to show the interconnectedness of different forms of production from the 1880s to the present,” Mayer says. “I think it's the only site in the city where you can see the connections between literary culture, print culture, visual arts, dance, music?spheres of cultural production that usually are studied very separately.”

Using an interactive map on the site, it's possible to search by category and time period and see the rarely celebrated interactions between “cultural producers.”

“Everyone knows the stories about the most famous artists in our city ? Degas or Tennessee Williams, or the famous musicians ? but I wanted to show people that the great artists all stood on the shoulders of hundreds of others,” Mayer says.

“On MediaNOLA, you can find the correlations between the printer who also worked in sheet-music production who was also friends with the guy who owned the advertising agency who was connected to the person who promoted the band.”