

Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy

Developed by the ACRL RBMS¹-SAA² Joint Task Force on the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy

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Introduction

Primary sources provide compelling, direct evidence of human activity. Users who encounter primary sources gain a unique perspective on the subject they are studying, and an opportunity to learn firsthand how primary sources are used for original research. As users learn to successfully engage with primary sources, they also gain important skills that help them navigate the use of other information sources, and further develop their critical thinking skills. Primary sources can also be challenging to those who use them. The formats of primary sources may be unique and unfamiliar. They require critical analysis due to their creators' intents and biases; the variety of contexts in which they have been created, preserved, and made accessible; and the gaps, absences, and silences that may exist in the materials.

These guidelines articulate the range of knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively use primary sources. While the primary audience for this document is librarians, archivists, teaching faculty, and others working with college and university students, the guidelines have been written to be sufficiently flexible for use in K-12 and in general public settings as well. The guidelines articulate crucial skills for navigating the complexity of primary sources and codify best practices for utilizing these materials.

Primary sources are materials in a variety of formats that serve as original evidence documenting a time period, an event, a work, people, or ideas. Primary source literacy is the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, and ethically use primary sources

¹ Association of College and Research Libraries' Rare Book and Manuscript Section

² Society of American Archivists

within specific disciplinary contexts, in order to create new knowledge or to revise existing understandings.

This definition of primary source literacy, and the vision for this document, are deliberately broad. Defining the terms primary source literacy, primary source, or even source, is inherently problematic. The concept of what makes a source “primary” relies on the research question at hand, varies based on the discipline, depends on the interplay with secondary sources, and is subject to the different interpretive processes researchers bring to their projects. Research questions can develop out of encounters with primary sources, or primary sources can be used to refine or answer questions already developed. Primary source literacy is not a binary state, but rather exists across a spectrum. Furthermore, instructors who are teaching these skills may be simultaneously concerned with conveying the excitement of research with primary sources, or giving students a memorable or transformative experience while using such sources. Although important goals, these are abstract qualities that resist assessment and are not explicitly covered as part of these guidelines.

Primary source literacy intersects with other “literacies,” including information literacy, visual literacy, and digital literacy, and concepts like collective memory, cultural heritage, and individual/cultural perspectives. Thus, users of primary sources, and those who seek to guide them in the process, are not working in isolation from other skills and disciplines. To create order in this complex landscape, these *Primary Source Literacy Guidelines* identify core ideas that undergird successful work with primary sources, as well as more specific learning objectives to guide those who teach the use of primary sources. The *Guidelines* are intended to be flexible rather than prescriptive, and were developed in the spirit of the ACRL *Information Literacy Framework*, which articulates a set of interconnected core ideas, knowledge practices, and learning dispositions key to successfully navigating the information landscape more generally (see Appendix 3).

The following core ideas and learning objectives relate to primary sources in a variety of formats, including original artifacts, both physical and born-digital, and copies, whether digitized or in printed or analog format.³ While some ideas may be more applicable for some formats, the document as a whole is designed with all formats in mind.

The guidelines may be used as a whole or in part depending on particular learning needs and larger programmatic goals, and may be applied differently in different contexts. The core ideas may be used to facilitate discussions between librarians/archivists and faculty/teachers about what students can learn through incorporating primary sources into course curricula. Instructors, including archivists and librarians, may draw upon the learning objectives to develop significant learning experiences and assessment strategies and measures appropriate to their local needs and specific pedagogical aims. In

³ These guidelines are not intended only to be about using archives and special collections, although skills and objectives in the document are relevant to using special collections and archives. Nor are they guidelines for archival literacy.

addition to serving as a catalyst for communication among librarians/archivists and faculty/teachers, these guidelines may also be used to enhance general programming and skill building around primary sources. Students and researchers may also consult these guidelines to aid in their self-development in the use of primary sources.

Core Ideas

Analytical Concepts

The nature of primary sources requires researchers to engage with them analytically. Users activate primary sources through hypothesis, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, critical thinking, and evaluation; they use sources to develop both questions and arguments. Primary source analysis requires the interrogation of materiality, historical context, and narrative. Users need to understand how sources were produced and delivered. Interpretation of sources occurs on a continuum from the creation of the source to its utilization by the current user, and includes mediation by librarians, archivists, and database creators or designers. A self-reflective user considers primary sources in the context of their own project as well as their agency in creating new primary sources.

Ethical Concepts

Users need to understand the ethical concepts related to applicable laws and regulations, privacy rights, cultural context, donor agreements, copyright, and intellectual property when working with primary sources. They must understand how these concepts affect their ability to use primary sources in their work, and they should responsibly consider how their scholarship may potentially affect the creators, donors, owners, and readers of these primary sources.

Theoretical Concepts

Theoretical concepts such as evidence, authority, power, authenticity, context, materiality, historical empathy, agency, value, absences, and privilege underpin the collection, arrangement, and presentation of primary sources. Collections in cultural heritage institutions reflect and reinforce societal power structures. Users must seek to understand resulting silences and absences by critically considering what sources were never created, what sources may no longer exist, and what sources are collected, as well as communities' abilities to engage in these activities. The iterative nature of research and the interplay between primary and secondary sources must also be considered throughout the research and production process as users seek to contextualize and understand their sources. Collections and databases are always mediated in some way, and exhibits, digital collections, and guides or other access

tools reflect the selection, reproduction, and presentation decisions of many individuals⁴ -- decisions that may not be self-evident.

Practical Considerations

There are practical considerations particular to using primary sources that users should be aware of. Practical skills necessary for primary source research include finding, accessing, gathering, and handling primary sources in a variety of formats and locations. In order to reach their goals, users should understand what is and is not accessible in specific institutions or databases, and must be aware of procedures and terminology specific to primary source research that may vary from institution to institution. They will need to be aware of how these sources are described in familiar search tools, and may need to engage with additional tools developed in a repository to provide access to primary sources. They will need strategies for capturing and managing research data, including transcription, photography, and downloads.

Learning Objectives

These learning objectives articulate broadly the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by researchers to successfully conceptualize, find, analyze, and use primary sources. These objectives are intended to be illustrative and are neither comprehensive nor prescriptive, and are *not* presented in any natural order or progression of skill acquisition. They do not specify measurable outcomes or benchmarks for instruction, but can be of assistance in articulating specific learning goals that can be assessed.

The instructor teaching primary source literacy may choose to use any combination of these objectives and to teach the individual objectives at any level of mastery that fits the needs of the users.⁵ Developing primary source literacy is an ongoing process that deepens as users gain experience interacting with these types of sources.

A person knowledgeable in the use of primary sources can:

1. Conceptualize

- A. Distinguish primary from secondary sources for a given research question. Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelatedness of primary and secondary sources for research.
- B. Articulate what might serve as primary sources for a specific research project within the framework of an academic discipline or area of study.
- C. Draw on primary sources to generate and refine research questions.

⁴ (librarians and archivists, curators, publishers, authors, researchers and users of the collections)

⁵ Some examples might include a semester-long course or one-time workshop session, session focused on pedagogical goals of a faculty member or librarian/archivist-developed workshop, medieval manuscripts engagement or working with 20th-century archives.

- D. Understand that research is an iterative process and that as primary sources are found and analyzed the research question(s) may change.

2. Find and Access

- A. Identify the possible locations of primary sources.
- B. Use appropriate, efficient, and effective search strategies in order to locate primary sources. Be familiar with the most common ways primary sources are described, such as catalog records and archival finding aids.
- C. Distinguish between catalogs, databases, and other online resources that contain information *about* sources, versus those that contain digital versions, originals, or copies of the sources themselves.
- D. Understand that historical records may never have existed, may not have survived, or may not be collected and/or publicly accessible. Existing records may have been shaped by the selectivity and mediation of individuals such as collectors, archivists, librarians, donors, and/or publishers, potentially limiting the sources available for research.
- E. Recognize and understand the policies and procedures that affect access to primary sources, and that these differ across repositories, databases, and collections.

3. Read, Understand, and Summarize

- A. Examine a primary source, which may require the ability to read a particular script, font, or language, to understand or operate a particular technology, or to comprehend vocabulary, syntax, and communication norms of the time period and location where the source was created.
- B. Identify and communicate information found in primary sources, including summarizing the content of the source and identifying and reporting key components such as how it was created, by whom, when, and what it is.
- C. Understand that a primary source may exist in a variety of iterations, including excerpts, transcriptions, and translations, due to publication, copying, and other transformations.

4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate

- A. Assess the appropriateness of a primary source for meeting the goals of a specific research or creative project.
- B. Critically evaluate the perspective of the creator(s) of a primary source, including tone, subjectivity, and biases, and consider how these relate to the original purpose(s) and audience(s) of the source.
- C. Situate a primary source in context by applying knowledge about the time and culture in which it was created; the author or creator; its format, genre, publication history; or related materials in a collection.
- D. As part of the analysis of available resources, identify, interrogate, and consider the reasons for silences, gaps, contradictions, or evidence of power relationships in the documentary record

and how they impact the research process.⁶

- E. Factor physical and material elements into the interpretation of primary sources including the relationship between container (binding, media, or overall physical attributes) and informational content, and the relationship of original sources to physical or digital copies of those sources.
- F. Demonstrate historical empathy, curiosity about the past, and appreciation for historical sources and historical actors.

5. Use and Incorporate

- A. Examine and synthesize a variety of sources in order to construct, support, or dispute a research argument.
- B. Use primary sources in a manner that respects privacy rights and cultural contexts.
- C. Cite primary sources in accordance with appropriate citation style guidelines or according to repository practice and preferences (when possible).
- D. Adhere to copyright and privacy laws when incorporating primary source information in a research or creative project.

⁶ For more on the various types of silence that occur in the process of making history, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) and Rodney G.S. Carter "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silences." *Archivaria* 61 (2006) 215-233 who calls these silences "the manifestation of the actions of the powerful."

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms Used in These Guidelines

The following glossary is designed to clarify the meaning of terms and concepts as used throughout these *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy*. Definitions or phrases in quotation marks come directly from: Pearce-Moses, Richard, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Society of American Archivists, 2005. <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary>.

Access

The means of examining, retrieving, or obtaining primary sources for use. While users are able to access some primary sources on the open web, others are challenged by the limitations of the telecommunications infrastructure. Access to original primary sources can be reduced to some degree by concerns of preservation, security, privacy, legal constraints, or geographic location. Understanding the tools and practices used to describe and make these sources accessible is important to becoming an effective user of primary sources. See: *catalog record, database, finding aid*.

Agency

Possessing the ability to act. Agency is deeply enmeshed in power relationships; many people or groups are deprived of the agency to create or preserve records. The agency and actions of librarians and archivists underpin their work in collecting, arranging, and describing materials in their repositories. Users should also be aware of their own agency to access and use primary sources, and the possible limitations surrounding that agency.

Archives: See Special Collections / Archives

Archivist / Librarian

An information professional responsible for collecting/acquiring, organizing, describing, managing, and providing access to research materials, including collections of primary and/or secondary sources. This person usually works in the context of a library, archive, or other cultural heritage institution.

Authority

As relates to primary sources, authority may refer to the relative credibility and expertise of the creator(s) of a source, or it may refer to the authority to preserve, collect, access, and use/reuse.⁷

Authenticity

“Authenticity is closely associated with the creator (or creators) of a source. The authenticity of records

⁷ The ACRL Framework for Information Literacy has a helpful discussion of authority, and how novices vs. experts approach this concept See “Authority is Constructed and Contextual” *Framework for information Literacy for Higher Education*, 2016. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework#authority>.

and documents is usually presumed, but if questioned it can sometimes be verified by testing physical and stylistic characteristics of a record. Authenticity alone does not automatically imply that the content of a record is reliable.” See also: *Evidence, Materiality*

Bias

A prejudice in favor of one thing or person over another. Sources may include the biases of their creator(s) and of the individuals and institutions that collect these sources. Since bias may be implicit rather than obvious, a source may reflect unconscious or unintentional bias.

Catalog Record

Descriptions of materials, whether books or manuscript collections, in a specific common format. Such records generally contain information including author, title, publication information, and topics covered in the resource. These records are often searched using a database, usually a library catalog. See also: *Finding Aid*

Citation

A reference to a *source*. When citing a primary source, the citation helps point readers to the document or item. Citations may also further describe a source, help establish *evidence* for an argument, or give credit for an idea. Citation style refers to the format of citation and rules for its construction (examples: MLA, APA, or Chicago). Different disciplines may prefer one style over another. Archives and special collections may indicate a preferred citation formula or credit line for their collections.

Collection

“A group of materials with some unifying characteristic,” often related either to the topic, the creator, or the assembler. Collections can be assembled by a person, organization, or repository. Collections can be referred to as “papers” or “records” in the context of a *Repository*.

Container

“A package or housing used to hold materials,” such as a record carton or archival box; figuratively, the form in which content appears, such as a book, notebook, three-ring binder, email thread, etc.

Copy / Surrogate

“Something that is nearly identical to something else; a facsimile; a reproduction; a duplicate made from an original.” The more specific term surrogate may be used to indicate a copy that is created to serve as a substitute for an original source, often with the intention of preserving the original by protecting it from overuse. When speaking of primary sources, a surrogate is often a digital version of a physical source that is housed in a specific collection or repository.

Copyright

A legal right granting exclusive rights for use, reproduction, publication, adaptation, performance, and/or distribution of an original work (whether published or unpublished), typically for a limited period

of time. Copyright law is intended to balance the economic and creative interests of the rights holder with the desire of a public to use, adapt, or build upon previous work. Copyright law varies by country. See also *Fair Use* and *Permissions*.

Creator

“The individual, family, group, or organization that is responsible for a source's production, accumulation, or formation.” Creators of primary sources include artists, authors, and manufacturers. An individual who accumulates and compiles a collection of primary sources may also be seen as the creator (of the collection), even when they did not create the sources themselves.

Cultural understanding

The ability to understand the viewpoint of those from other cultures, whether in the present or past, and to understand shared or conflicted history. Understanding the importance of studying and preserving the records of many and created from many points of view.

Database

A structured way to store and retrieve data. In the research and information environment, it often refers to a digital collection of citations, articles, books, and/or finding aids which can be searched for information on a variety of topics. Some research databases can be very general, while others are specific to a subject (United States history), time period (Early English Books Online), or format (newspapers). Databases can be produced by vendors or publishers, which usually require a paid subscription fee, while other databases are developed by and provide access to collections held by consortia or groups of institutions. Databases may provide access to citations, to finding aids, or to digital or digitized articles and primary sources.

Discipline

A subject, field of study, or area of expertise. In the college/university environment, this could align with an academic department or program of study. In a K-12 environment, this could refer to the subject being taught. Disciplines often have specific views on the types of sources that should be used in research and what constitutes a primary source. While many research topics are interdisciplinary, students learning how to appropriately incorporate primary sources into their projects will often do so within the domains of disciplinary areas.

Evidence

Primary sources serve as evidence used in answering a research question, proving or disproving a fact, or developing an argument. The strength of supporting evidence and the approach by which it is gathered and applied to a claim impact the credibility of the claim, and relate to *authority*.⁸

⁸ For a nice discussion of teaching the use of evidence in historical research, including how, “The intellectual ability to collect, process, analyse, and cross-reference evidence is crucial to an informed citizenry,” see: Stéphane Lévesque, “How Do We Make Sense of the Raw Materials of the Past? - Evidence,” chap. 6 in *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

Faculty: *see Instructor*

Fair Use

Permissible use of copyrighted material. In the United States, use that is not considered infringement generally includes criticism, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and parody.

For more information, see <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/> and <http://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html>

Finding Aid

A description of papers, records, or a manuscript collection that provides information about the materials, including arrangement and organization, historical or biographical background, a summary of the contents of a collection, and location of materials. These descriptions are used to locate relevant items within the collection. A finding aid is written through the process of arrangement and description, in which an archivist organizes materials and details their content. See also: *Catalog Record*

Format

The container or method of presentation of a source. Descriptions of source formats might include those which identify the type of source (letter, diary, or photograph) or those which identify its state (physical or digital; handwritten or reprinted).

Historical empathy

The ability to appreciate the beliefs, values, and intentions of historical actors; to understand the differences inherent between the lives of current readers and past users; to show emotional engagement with a source; and to see and appreciate source(s) within their particular historical context.⁹

Instructor

These guidelines recognize that an “instructor” may refer to a faculty member or a teacher responsible for their own classroom, as well as to a librarian, archivist, or other professional who either collaborates with or works independently of a classroom teacher or faculty member.

Iterative process

All research is a repetitive cycle, requiring frequent returns to and revisions of earlier questions and assumptions, thus leading to new readings of texts and sources and new lines of inquiry.

Librarian / Archivist: *see Archivist / Librarian*

⁹ See also Yilmaz, Kaya. "Historical Empathy and Its Implications for Classroom Practices in Schools." *The History Teacher* 40.3 (2007): 331-37.

Literacy

Competency, knowledge, or skills in a specified area. Literacy is not a binary state, but rather a spectrum of competence within the area. Primary source literacy, information literacy, digital literacy, and visual literacy are all relevant to working with primary sources.

Materiality

The physical nature or format of a source. This is often distinguished from the content or the text of the source, although the best readings interrogate and elucidate both text and format. Often associated with material culture, the study of objects (rather than paper- or text-based sources) to learn about the past.

Mediation

The amount of intervention and contextualization between the user and the source. There are many kinds of mediation, whether through added content, translation, or the distance of a copy from the original source. For example, a primary document published in a compilation which includes an introduction about the writer and the event about which they were writing is more mediated than a publication which does not have an introduction. Librarians and archivists also provide mediation for documents through finding aids and catalog records, as well as their organization and arrangement of materials.

Permissions

If a particular use of a copyrighted work is not covered by *fair use*, a researcher may require authorization from the rights holders in order to use the work in certain ways.

Preservation

“The act of keeping objects from harm, injury, decay, or destruction.” In the life cycle of primary sources, creators themselves may or may not undertake the first steps toward preserving sources. The term also refers to specific professional practices¹⁰ undertaken by repositories to stabilize and extend the life of materials in their care, ensuring they are as durable and long-lasting as possible. These include selection, stabilization, appropriate storage environment and handling, security, and conservation treatments. Preservation may also involve the creation of surrogates to serve as use copies, and the reformatting from decaying or outdated formats into those that are retrievable, readable, and usable over time. Users of primary sources contribute to preservation through proper handling and use. The concept of preservation is closely tied to the concept of *access*.

Primary source

Primary sources are materials in a variety of formats, created at the time under study, that serve as original evidence documenting a time period, event, people, idea, or work. Primary sources can be

¹⁰ See the Preservation and Reformatting Section of the American Library Association for more information, <http://www.ala.org/alcts/mgrps/pars>.

printed materials (such as books and ephemera), manuscript/archival materials (such as diaries or ledgers), audio/visual materials (such as recordings or films), artifacts (such as clothes or personal belongings), or born-digital materials (such as emails or digital photographs). Primary sources can be found in analog, digitized, and born-digital forms.

Privacy

Librarians, archivists, and researchers need to be aware of various legal and ethical frameworks regarding privacy. Archivists and librarians in the United States may manage collections covered by privacy laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Professionals may restrict or redact records because of applicable laws, institutional risk management decisions, donor agreements, or professional ethics. Professionals and researchers alike should consider these frameworks when citing, using, or promoting collections.

Public Domain

Works that are in the public domain do not have copyright restrictions. This could be because copyright or other intellectual property rights expired or were forfeited, because the work was created before such laws existed, because the work is not covered by copyright (as is the case with recipes or some government documents), or because the creator released the work under a public domain-like license allowing certain uses. Privacy and other ethical considerations should still be weighed when using materials in the public domain.

Repository

Umbrella term referring to a cultural heritage organization that collects, preserves, and makes collections accessible, generally for research. Could refer to museums, libraries, archives, historical societies, research centers, or other types of institutions. A repository may be independent or part of a larger organization. For those seeking to use primary sources effectively, having knowledge of the types of repositories and their various reasons and methods for collecting, preserving, and providing access, including the limits to each, is important for successfully identifying and using those collections. The term repository should be thought of paired with the concepts of *silences*, *authority*, *agency*, and *mediation*. See also: *Special Collections / Archives*

Research Project

Research projects may be scholarly, creative, or professional in nature. End products or deliverables can include written essays, papers, or articles; datasets or databases; performances; exhibitions; websites; artwork, etc.

Research Question

An idea or inquiry which drives a *research project*. A good research question is answerable, arguable, and is not too broad or too narrow. A research question is more specific to a particular issue or concern than a *research topic*. For example, within the topic of the World War II homefront, a research question

might be how the use of victory gardens affected the food supply in certain areas of the United States. The research question determines what information is needed, and may help the researcher define which sources are considered “primary” for a given project.

Secondary source

A work synthesizing and/or commenting on primary and/or other secondary sources. Secondary sources, which are often works of scholarship, are differentiated from primary sources by the element of critical synthesis, analysis, or commentary.

Silences

Gaps or missing pieces in the historical record, often caused by those who were unable to write their own records, or whose records were not considered valuable or were suppressed by the dominant culture. Should be distinguished from merely lack of holdings in a particular repository. Sometimes also referred to as “archival silences.”

Source

A place where information is found, such as a document, book, or encyclopedia. Sources can be primary, secondary, or tertiary.

Special Collections / Archives

These terms each have multiple meanings, and are often used interchangeably. “Archive” is also a variation, used in a general way to describe things that are being intentionally kept.

1. A general term for a department, unit, library, or other physical place which stores and provides secure access to rare and unique materials, including archives, manuscripts, rare books, or other original materials. A special collections department is an example of a type of *repository*.
2. The materials or collections within a department, unit, or library containing rare and unique materials.

Surrogate: See *Copy*

Appendix 2: Annotated Bibliography

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to identify key resources for learning more about primary source literacy. It is deliberately selective. This bibliography focuses on peer-reviewed sources published between 2014 and 2017 when the work of the SAA/RBMS Primary Source Literacy Task Force concluded.

A more comprehensive bibliography, maintained but not regularly updated by the Reference, Access, and Outreach Section of the Society of American Archivists, is available at

<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reference-access-and-outreach-section/teaching-with-primary-sources-bibliography>.

Bahde, Anne, Heather Smedberg, and Mattie Taormina, eds. *Using Primary Sources: Hands-On Instructional Exercises: Hands-On Instructional Exercises*. ABC-CLIO, 2014.

Using Primary Sources provides 30 examples of active learning exercises with primary sources held in special collections, archives, and museums, focused on the one-shot session. The introductory material discusses pedagogical approaches useful in teaching the skills associated with primary source literacy. The remainder and bulk of the text provides detailed lesson plans for each exercise, with suggestions for adapting to different learning environments. The exercises include introductory sessions on primary source analysis and the research process, as well as more advanced sessions on building analytical skills, contextualizing and synthesizing sources, interpreting finding aids, and interrogating a source's physicality.

Carini, Peter. "Information Literacy for Archives and Special Collections: Defining Outcomes." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 16, no. 1 (2016): 191-206.

This article provides context for the background and value of information literacy as it pertains to primary sources. Carini explains the need for a set of standards and outcomes specifically addressing primary source literacy. The article provides a proposed framework of primary source learning outcomes which are situated within the following areas: know, interpret, evaluate, use, access, and follow ethical principles. Carini closes the article with a section on possible applications of the proposed outcomes. This article provides example learning outcomes and explains the necessity of addressing the void of primary source literacy standards.

Hensley, Merinda Kaye, Benjamin P. Murphy, and Ellen D. Swain. "Analyzing Archival Intelligence: A Collaboration between Library Instruction and Archives." *Communications in Information Literacy* 8, no. 1 (2014): 96-114. Available at:

<http://www.comminfolit.org/index.php?journal=cil&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=v8i1p96..>

This article provides background on the obstacles students face when learning to navigate archival research and offers ideas on how to address those obstacles in instruction, based on a 2012 study conducted at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The study revealed that students struggled to understand the specialized language surrounding archives and to navigate the complexity of the archival research process. Students were further confused about the difference between libraries and archives, the concept of provenance, and the relationship between finding aids and the collections they represent.

Horowitz, Sarah M. "Hands-On Learning in Special Collections: A Pilot Assessment Project." *Journal of Archival Organization* 12, no. 3-4 (2014): 216-229.

This article acknowledges the increased demand that special collections departments face with regard to providing meaningful assessment and standards for evaluating outcomes in classes that provide hands-on learning experiences with primary sources. The author describes a specific assessment project at Augustana College using rubrics to attempt to gauge the impact of hands-on primary source engagement upon student information literacy and critical thinking skills. Although the results were inconclusive, this article addresses the need for better

assessment tools and serves as a trailblazer in creating rubrics for primary source literacy that tie directly to pre-existing assessment tools provided by ACRL.

Mitchell, Eleanor, Peggy Seiden, and Suzy Taraba. *Past or portal?: Enhancing undergraduate learning through special collections and archives*. Association of College & Research Libraries, 2012.

This volume gathers case studies describing effective primary source instructional activities, contributed by 47 U.S. based institutions. The focus is specifically on undergraduate students, and it highlights a wide variety of instructional models that provide important guides for teaching with primary sources, from one-shot sessions to longer programmatic interventions.

Morris, Sammie, Lawrence Mykytiuk, and Sharon Weiner. "Archival Literacy for History Students: Identifying Faculty Expectations of Archival Research Skills." *The American Archivist* 77, no. 2 (2014): 394-424.

Morris, Mykytiuk, and Weiner studied core competencies for using primary sources and archives, specifically for history students. Through a review of the literature and course syllabi as well as interviewing faculty, the authors developed a list of competencies for undergraduate history majors. This article concludes with a suite of recommendations to advance archival literacy within institutional contexts as well as within the archives profession.

Mulroney, Lucy and Patrick Williams, "Doing It Yourself: Special Collections as a Springboard for Personal, Critical Approaches to Information." In T. Swanson and H. Jagman (Eds.) *Not Just Where to Click: Teaching Students How to Think about Information* (Publications in Librarianship #68), ACRL Press, 2015.

This chapter describes a collaborative effort between a special collections curator, a subject specialist librarian, and a writing instructor to plan a series of sessions for an undergraduate writing class studying DIY publishing. The project required students to use a primary source from Syracuse University's special collections as inspiration to construct a zine on the topic of their choice, which they presented and distributed during a public "Zine Fest." The authors discuss how primary source research impacted students' information literacy skills in a variety of areas, including critically evaluating sources, participating in the scholarly conversation, and taking ownership of their original research in a particular subject area.

Prom, Christopher J. and Lisa Janicke Hinchcliffe. *Teaching with Primary Sources*. Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2016.

Teaching with Primary Sources describes the development of primary source literacy, but also offers practical, hands-on ideas to integrate primary source literacy into curricula. Module one contextualizes archival literacy by describing its development in the archival profession and in broader educational frameworks. The second module serves as a guide to the practices of teaching for archivists, librarians, and other educators. It offers many practical ideas, from explaining various roles archivists play as educators to offering lesson plan templates. The third and final module summarizes numerous case studies about connecting students with primary

sources. Secondary educators, faculty in higher education, and archivists were all interviewed to share their strategies and successful projects. The bibliographies of suggested reading lists and additional resources are also quite useful.

Samuelson, Todd, and Cait Coker. "Mind the gap: Integrating special collections teaching." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 14, no. 1 (2014): 51-66.

This article provides advice to archivists interested in building stronger relationships with fellow librarians and teaching faculty. The authors use a case study examining these relationships at their own institution to point out that the most effective way to reach teaching faculty and librarians is to demonstrate how materials in special collections libraries can be used to meet curricular needs.

Swain, Ellen D. "Best Practices for Teaching with Primary Sources," in Patrick Ragains and M. Sandra Wood. *The new information literacy instruction: best practices*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

This book chapter presents a case study describing the relationship between the Student Life and Culture archives and the Rhetoric program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The case study describes a shift in archives instruction from a broad, introductory overview approach to a more in-depth, targeted approach, and is useful reading for others interested in considering a similar shift.

Theimer, Kate, ed. *Educational Programs: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

This book is a collection of case studies on developing educational programming centered on primary sources. It demonstrates the many ways special collections and archives can be integrated into curricula at the K-12, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Many of the ideas are transferrable to a variety of institutions and are appropriate for either long-term programmatic development or immediate implementation on a relatively small scale. This resource is an effective introduction to hands-on learning with primary sources, and the format allows for selecting chapters based on audience or type of program.

Weiner, Sharon A., Sammie Morris, and Lawrence J. Mykytiuk. "Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors." *The American Archivist* 78, no. 1 (2015): 154-180.

This article is the second in a series of articles documenting efforts to establish archival literacy competencies for undergraduate history majors based on input from faculty, archivists, and librarians. The resulting list includes both basic and advanced skills recommended for undergraduate history majors across a variety of skillsets, including identifying and locating sources, incorporating sources into research, obtaining guidance from archivists, demonstrating acculturation to archives, and ethically using information obtained from sources. These skills could be adapted or expanded to be used in a variety of instructional settings.

Appendix 3: Related Resources

ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Association of College and Research Libraries (Adopted January 11, 2016). <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

The *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy* provides a background for these guidelines and is a useful companion to the *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy*, particularly for librarians and instructors at the college or university level. The two documents can be used in unison to encourage informed collaboration between archivists and librarians who work with primary source materials and information literacy librarians at the college or university level. Both documents are intended to be flexible, and applied not as a prescriptive standards, but as suits the needs of instructors and students within a particular learning environment. Both documents can be used to create assessment strategies at a local level based on the particular needs of a given audience.

ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, October 2011: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/visualliteracy>

These Competency Standards are useful to consult alongside the *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy*, particularly when confronting primary sources with visual elements.

Society of American Archivists, Reference, Access, and Outreach Section, Teaching with/about Primary Sources committee: <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reference-access-and-outreach-section/teaching-withabout-primary-sources-committee>

The SAA RAO Section committee on Teaching with/about Primary Sources compiles useful resources and hosts professional development opportunities related to teaching with primary sources and is a useful resource for professionals looking to expand their skills in that area.

Appendix 4: Background on the Development of These Guidelines

The SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on Developing Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy was charged as an outgrowth the RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment's 2013 recommendations, and in response to the SAA Reference, Access, and Outreach (RAO) Section's 2013 Survey results¹¹ and other findings in the professional literature that noted the profession would benefit from a framework to undergird the work of teaching with primary sources. RAO Chair at the time Lisa Sjoberg and RBMS Executive Board Liaisons Anne Bahde and Heather Smedberg submitted a proposal to both organizations in 2014 and the task force creation and charge were formally approved by SAA Council in November 2014¹² and by the RBMS Executive Board in February 2015¹³. The task force was charged for a two-year term to begin in the summer of 2015. While comprised of special collections librarians and archivists, the task force was charged to consider broader perspectives on primary source literacy outside the direct environment of special collections and archives, and to draft guidelines that would be applicable in multiple primary source learning situations with diverse instructor roles, audiences, and purposes.

Members:

ACRL/RBMS-appointed members

- Anne Bahde (Oregon State University)
- Julie Grob (University of Houston)
- Sarah Horowitz (Haverford College)
- Leah Richardson (George Washington University)
- Heather Smedberg, co-chair (University of California, San Diego)
- Morgan Swan (Dartmouth College)

SAA-appointed members

- Samantha Crisp (Augustana College)
- Gordon Daines (Brigham Young University)
- Robin Katz (University of California, Riverside)
- Bill Landis, co-chair (Yale University)
- Sammie Morris (Purdue University)
- Lisa Sjoberg (Concordia College)

¹¹ <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reference-access-and-outreach-section/teaching-without-primary-sources-committee>

¹² November 2014 SAA Council minutes that reflect approval:

https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/1114_Minutes_Adopted.pdf. See consent agenda (item II, page 2 of 33) item II.D on page 4 of 33.

¹³ February 2, 2015 RBMS Executive Board minutes that reflect approval:

<http://rbms.info/files/committees/minutes/2015/execminutes15m.pdf>