

# Visual Literacy Instruction at the Center for the History of Psychology

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## Photographs as Primary Source Information

At the Center for the History of Psychology (CHP), the Librarians and Archivists encourage researchers to use the still image collections to discover primary source evidence that supports their research. The photograph collections at CHP consist of more than 12,000 still images from the manuscripts and papers of celebrated American and international psychologists, like Dr. John Paul Scott, Dr. Walter Miles, Dr. Abraham Maslow, and Drs. Gardner & Lois B. Murphy.

## Patrons of CHP

CHP houses archives at an academic institution, The University of Akron. As such, most of our researchers are professors and professional historians. Our next largest subgroup of researchers is graduate students of history and psychology. Our smallest group is undergraduate students using our primary sources under encounters prescribed by professors.

## Identifying Visual Information Literacy Needs

We assessed the visual information literacy needs of our researchers by asking outcomes-based open-ended questions to invoke their *thinking in, with, and about* primary source image documents. Respondents were all volunteers and not necessarily currently doing active research in our collections. The assessment was administered via web survey software and designed to address Learning Outcomes in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Standards of the ACRL/IRIG Visual Literacy Standards<sup>2</sup>. The demography of the assessment matches the subgroup populations.

Volunteer respondents were shown a series of six photographs from collections at CHP and provided unconstrained space to respond to tasks. The tasks were designed

1. to invoke critical thinking in, with, and about photographs
2. to test identification of errors in accompanying textual content
3. to demonstrate willingness to consult additional sources to verify information
4. to write proper and complete citations
5. to identify terms of use of these images in school assignments, professional publications, and presentations.

Responses indicate that professional historians and researchers are fluent and confident when critically analyzing visual information in our collections; graduate students are fluent, with lower confidence in their capabilities than the former group; and undergraduate students seem willing try the tasks, but require our direction and instruction.

## Instructional Materials

From responses, we identified needs that address Standards 4 & 7 to target for building learning materials that would benefit each of the subgroups of our patronage.

Addressing Standard 4; Performance Indicator 4; Outcome c (S4.PI4.Oc.), we have prepared a self-guided tutorial that instructs and encourages patrons to recognize levels of studiousness<sup>3</sup> necessary to make the distinction between using primary source images as *illustrations* in their research versus using primary source images as *evidence* in their research. This tutorial is entitled: *Evidence or Illustration: Using Primary Source Images to Support Your Research*.

Addressing S7.PI3.Oa., we have prepared a single-page task aid (abridged below) entitled: *Citing CHP Images as Primary Source Materials Using APA Style Guidelines*. [CHP instruction focuses on the rules detailed in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., though instruction may be provided where a different style manual is required.]

[Image Descriptor], (Date). Collection Name (Box No., Folder No.), Repository, Institution, City, State.

FRONT OF IMAGE



BACK OF IMAGE



[Bureau of Special Education, Miami University], (ca. 1927-1928), J. E. Wallace Wallin papers (Box V35, Folder 3), Archives of the History of American Psychology, Center for the History of Psychology, The University of Akron, Akron, OH.

CHP staff provides these and all of our instructional materials to in-house and off-site researchers upon request or recognized need. Researchers receive materials about making copies and accessing images prior to arriving on-site. Access to these and all of our instructional materials will soon be available on the CHP website (<http://www.uakron.edu/chp>); until then, access is available upon request. All of the needs identified through this project now enriches the CHP information literacy agenda.

## Notes

All photographs in this document are protected under Title 17 of the U.S.C. and cannot be reproduced without permission from the Center of the History of Psychology. Images presented are from the papers of Carolyn & Muzafer Sherif, Willard E. Caldwell, Gardner & Lois B. Murphy, and J. E. Wallin.

<sup>1</sup>“Thinking in, with, and about photographs” is a phrase indicating active immersion in image documents. We borrow this phrase from *Photo Provocations: Thinking In, With, and About Photographs* by Drs. Brian O'Connor & Roger Wyatt, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> These ACRL/IRIG Standards are, of course, what we are all here to discuss. We refer to the draft from 9 February 2011 the link to which was sent to us by email from the Visual Literacy Standards Task Force.

<sup>3</sup> “Level of studiousness” is described as the degree to which a person is willing to consult sources to verify or understand a topic. A person to the 1<sup>st</sup> degree of studiousness, for example, will consult only a single source for answers or evidence with no additional documents consulted for comparison and evaluation of information. Scholars, it follows, may be studious to the n<sup>th</sup> degree, because multiple sources are consulted and evaluated for value and inclusion in academic studies and writings. We borrow this phrase from *Public Knowledge Private Ignorance* by Dr. Patrick Wilson, 1977.