Special Collections + Developing a Primary Source Literacy Curriculum

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Wallace E. Mason Library, Keene State College (Keene, New Hampshire) builds a new Special Collections & Archives in 2010.

Special Collections houses 5000 volumes of rare books and 200 linear feet of archival records and manuscripts, i.e. the college archives, NH history, modern poetry collection, holocaust studies, women’s history, and social justice activism.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum

- Since 2010, significant increase in request for primary source class sessions in special collections.
- Hosted 20 classes; over 400 students.
- Education, English, History, Sociology/Anthropology, and Women & Gender Studies,
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum

- Began developing a primary source literary curriculum in 2012.
- Information Literacy Coordinator asked the Archivist to develop curriculum.
- Integrated with Mason Library’s information literacy curriculum.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: 
**Purpose**

- Develop critical research skills needed for using primary sources (specifically archival material).
- Provide students with an opportunity to work with original archival material and promote interest in historic preservation.
A primary source is a document or physical object written or created during the time under study. These sources were present during an experience or time period and offer an inside view of a particular event.

Types of primary sources:
- ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records
- CREATIVE WORKS: poetry, drama, novels, music, art
- RELICS OR ARTIFACTS: pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings

Borrow from http://www.princeton.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Outcomes

- Identify types of archival material in order to demonstrate the essential ability to judge and differentiate between various archival media.

- Determine subject, narrative, and research application of archival material in order to demonstrate the critical interpretative and analytical skills needed to conduct primary source research.

- Cite archival material in order to demonstrate the ability to properly document primary sources.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum:

Lessons

- Under Development:
  - Photographs
  - Legal/Diplomatic Documents
  - Letters/Diaries
  - Oral Histories

- One hour sessions.

- A la carte or presented over the course of a semester.

- Minimal or no technology needed.

- Can be made discipline-specific.

- General taught by Archivist; but can be delivered by general library faculty.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Lesson - Photographs

- A historical overview of photographic formats.
- Students divided into groups and assigned a format to identify
- Groups asked to determine what is represented visually and determine possible research uses.
- Groups asked to provide an appropriate citation.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Lesson - Legal/Diplomatic Documents

- Student groups will examine a Holocaust survivor passport.
- Develop a narrative of the survivor based on the evidence in the passport.
- Discuss how each group developed their narrative.
- Discuss how to appropriately cite the passport.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Lesson - Letters/Diaries

- Student groups given handwritten letters or portion of a diary to transcribe.
- Groups will share transcription and discuss if the letters/diaries form a narrative.
- Groups asked to determine possible research uses.
- Groups asked to provide an appropriate citation.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Lesson – Oral Histories

- Groups asked to transcribe a portion of a digitally-recorded oral history interview.
- Groups asked to share transcription and discuss if a narrative can formed from the interviews.
- Groups asked to possible research uses.
- Groups asked to provide an appropriate citation.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Assessments

- Students will be given worksheets to record their responses, share in class and receive feedback. [Formative]

- The worksheets will be collected and reviewed to determine if the class completed the activities and understood the concepts of the lesson. [Summative]

- The Archivist will work with the faculty member to have students use the skills learned in a real assignment or research paper. [Affirmative]
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: **Future Plans**

- Complete and test curriculum Spring Semester 2013.
- Implement curriculum Fall Semester 2013.
- Considering under lessons:
  - Architectural Drawings
  - Scrapbooks & Photo Albums
  - Prints & Graphic Material
  - Ephemera & Memorabilia
- Create a for-credit course based on curriculum.
Primary Source Literacy Curriculum: Contact Info / Questions?

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- Keene InfoLit Bank Website
  - Will be posted in February under “Primary Source Literacy Curriculum”