

Session twelve: Archival literacy and teaching with primary sources

INFO 7401 Archival Appraisal, Arrangement, and Access



Archivist as educator

Requires the archivist to increase:

1. theoretical knowledge of learning
2. teaching methodologies (pedagogy)

Why should an archivist be an educator?

Literacy

The ability to **identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate** using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context.

Over time, literacy has been applied to a wide range of activities; in such contexts, it refers to basic knowledge of rather than to anything specific to reading and writing.

Information literacy

1. the ability to recognize when sources of knowledge or data are needed to address a situation or problem, and
2. to identify, locate, evaluate, and use the sources

Archival literacy

A contextual application of information literacy.

Competence in or knowledge of archival terminology, organization, and reference tools

Artifactual literacy

The ability to understand, contextualize, and interpret primary sources, in part by taking into consideration their physical characteristics

Archival intelligence

The knowledge of archival theory, concepts, practice, institutions, research tools and strategies needed to successfully engage in archival research



Archival literacy

Do I need archives?
How do I find archives material?



Artifactual literacy

Do I know what a primary source is?
Can I identify it?
Can I distinguish archival material
from interpreted material?



Archival intelligence

Do I know how archives are
acquired, arranged, described?
Do I know what an archivist does and
why?

Primary source

Material that contains firsthand accounts of events and that was created contemporaneous to those events or later recalled by an eyewitness.

Primary sources emphasize the **lack of intermediaries** between the thing or events being studied and reports of those things or events based on the belief that firsthand accounts are more accurate.

Primary source literacy

the knowledge and competency in finding, interpreting, evaluating, and using primary sources

Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy

Developed by the
SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task
Force

These guidelines articulate the range of knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively use primary sources.

These guidelines detail what should RESULT from good primary source instruction, not how to do the instruction.

Core ideas of the guidelines

Analytical concepts

- Interrogation of materiality, historical context, narrative, mediation

Ethical concepts

- Laws, regulations, privacy rights, and how that affects ability to use primary sources in their own work

Theoretical concepts

- Evidence, authority, power, authenticity, context, agency, value, absences, privilege

Practical considerations

- Finding, accessing, gathering, handling primary sources

Learning objective

A clear statement of what the student or pupil should have learned by the end of the task, the lesson, the scheme of work, or the course of study.

Learning objectives provide **focus and direction**, and clarify what must be assessed in order to ascertain whether learning has taken place.

Learning objectives: **Conceptualize**

1. What is a primary source? What is a secondary source? How do you use primary sources, and how do primary and secondary sources interrelate?
2. What is an archives, and why do primary sources live there?
3. Understand that research is an iterative process and that as primary sources are found and analyzed the research question(s) may change.

Learning objectives: Find and access

1. Search strategies for primary sources/archives
2. 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.
3. Understand that historical records may never have existed, may not have survived, or may not be collected (by accident and on purpose) and/or publicly accessible.
4. How do different repositories provide access? What kinds of access, what does access look like?

Learning objectives: **Read, understand, and summarize**

1. Examine a primary source
2. Identify and communicate information found in primary sources
3. Understand that a primary source may exist in a variety of iterations, including excerpts, transcriptions, and translations, due to publication, copying, and other transformations.

Learning objectives: Interpret, analyze, and evaluate

1. How does the primary source fit into your research or your project?
2. Critically evaluate the perspective of the creator(s) of a primary source and the context in which it was created
3. 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.
4. What is the relationship between materiality and content in the examined record?
5. Cultivate historical empathy, curiosity about the past, and appreciation for historical sources and historical actors.

Learning objectives: **Use and incorporate**

1. How to do research/write a paper: examine and synthesize a variety of sources in order to construct, support, or dispute a research argument.
2. Citation, copyright, privacy concerns

Pedagogical models

Object-centered learning

“Deep learning by interacting with objects...derive meaning by interacting with a single document and/or object.”

To avoid the passive historical nature of the “show and tell”/“look at the cool stuff”, you must identify learning outcomes.

Inquiry-based learning

Archival research instruction:

Follow the iterative nature of a
research process:

- Ask a question
- Try to find evidence to answer that question
- Come up with new questions to refine initial question

Partnerships and stakeholders

Archivist as resource or consultant

Instruction sessions

- Single instruction sessions
- Multiple sessions

Embedded archivist

Instructor/co-instructor of record

Developing a lesson plan



Archivists must, essentially, teach
ourselves to teach

Centers for Teaching and Learning

[CUNY Graduate Center](#)



Society of American Archivists

[Case studies on teaching with primary sources](#)



**Teaching with
Primary Sources**

NARA

Educator resources

Educator Resources

Home > Educator Resources

Civics for All of US



Civics for All of US is the new education initiative from the National Archives that promotes civic literacy and engagement.

DocsTeach



Teach with documents using our online tool. Explore primary sources. Discover fun and engaging teaching activities. Create your own online or print activities for your students!

Distance Learning

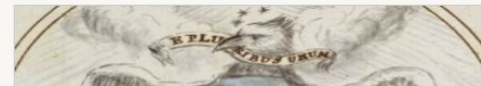


Visit the National Archives without leaving your home or school through our free distance learning programs for students and educators.

Teaching With Documents



Milestone Documents



New York State Archives

[Consider the Source](#)



The image shows the header and navigation menu of the 'Consider the Source New York' website. The header features a compass rose logo on the left, the title 'Consider the Source New York' with the subtitle 'Teaching with Historical Records', and logos for the 'Archives Partnership Trust' and 'New York State Archives' on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with three main categories: 'BROWSE Historical Records' (purple), 'ACCESS Learning Activities' (orange), and 'BUILD/SHARE Learning Activities' (green). Underneath these are four sub-menu items: 'GETTING STARTED', 'USING PRIMARY SOURCES', 'FEATURED COLLECTIONS', and 'PROFESSIONAL LEARNING'. The bottom of the header area features a landscape photograph of a small town with a red-roofed house in the foreground and green hills in the background under a cloudy sky.

 **Consider the Source New York**
Teaching with Historical Records

 Archives Partnership Trust |  New York State Archives

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Historical Records

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