Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources

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Introduction

In June 2019, the University of Virginia Library joined Ithaka S+R's study, "Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources," which examines the pedagogical practices of humanities and social sciences faculty at participating institutions who teach with primary sources at the undergraduate level. By participating in this study, the investigators from the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library seek to better understand our faculty's use of primary sources in the classroom in order that our staff may develop resources and services to support faculty in this work. In doing so, we are investing in and supporting the University of Virginia's *Great and Good: the 2030 Plan*, a strategic vision for the future that emphasizes a core commitment to the liberal arts, the pursuit of truth and knowledge, and learning experiences that prepare students for their futures. The Small Special Collections Library is committed to supporting research and teaching with rare and unique primary source materials as one of the ways it contributes to the University's mission.

Our research is connected to a suite of parallel studies being developed at other higher education institutions. We, along with the other participants, engaged Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit research and consulting organization that helps the academic, cultural, and publishing communities, to coordinate this parallel effort and to provide guidance on research methodology and data analysis.

This report describes six major themes that we discovered during the course of our research. The information herein is based on interviews with fourteen faculty from the University of Virginia's (UVA) College of Arts and Sciences and does not include data from other participating institutions. Knowledge of UVA's Special Collections and experience with the collections generated interview responses skewed toward discussions of physical primary source collections more than digital primary source collections. However, enough faculty mentioned using digital primary source material for their own research and for their classes that future studies into how our faculty use digital primary sources are warranted.

Methodology

For this study, we employed one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix) according to the research protocol outlined in the Ithaka S+R Guidelines and in our UVA Research Protocol (UVA/IRB Protocol 2597). Conversation was aided by syllabi provided by the faculty in advance of their interview. With the resulting interview recordings and transcriptions, the investigators analyzed the data using grounded theory methodology (A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*). We developed a coding structure as we read the interviews, staying attentive to clues to what support faculty need from library and archival services. The data in this report has been anonymized and aggregated; no identifying information about the interviewees appears in this report, nor sent to Ithaka S+R.

Participants

We extended personal invitations to sixteen faculty from UVA's College of Arts and Sciences, and received confirmations from fourteen. These fourteen faculty members, from various disciplines and levels of tenure, committed to the interviews during the Fall 2019 semester.

Note on COVID-19

COVID-19 split this study in two phases. We followed guidelines designed and developed by Ithaka S+R before COVID-19. We completed all interviews and obtained transcriptions of those recordings before the virus interrupted the Spring 2020 semester. Therefore, faculty observations and opinions reflect pre-COVID experiences. After the University of Virginia shifted to remote working, and over the summer as remote working continued, we completed the coding and analysis phase. Our recommendations and conclusions are informed by our experiences with instruction and teaching during this time.

Motivations for Teaching with Primary Sources

Interviewees expressed a wide range of responses when asked why they teach with primary sources. However, most felt that teaching with primary sources was an essential part of a liberal arts education in which students learn to think independently and critically. As they revealed, in this context, the *process* of learning is more important than the content in order to prepare students for a lifetime of looking for information, evaluating sources, and making informed decisions. Faculty touted primary sources as an ideal vehicle to teach this process.

The level of enjoyment that students and faculty experience is another strong motivator for incorporating primary sources into a course.

Acquiring Information Literacy/Analytical Skills

In explaining why they teach with primary sources, faculty most commonly referenced the centrality of primary sources for developing students' information literacy. While faculty do not typically use the library science-centric term "information literacy," it is clear that they are referring to this concept. As one respondent explained, "It's incredibly important for them to be able to read critically and be able to engage with the information that they're doing and understanding intent, audience, context of production, context of reception, all those good questions that we ask."[1] This concept was affirmed repeatedly in other interviews, "there is a real challenge in teaching students about credibility and authority."[2] Interviewees noted that students assigned uncritical authority to written sources—whether manuscript, printed, or online.

In teaching these information literacy methods, faculty find that many undergraduates do not have a confident grasp of the difference between a primary and secondary source. Thus, this

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[1] UVA-10.9
[2] UVA-11.14

typically marks the starting point for the inclusion of primary sources into courses. One instructor admitted, "They don't have a clue. They think the primary source is the most important one you use."[3] Another reported, "That's one of the first things I do, is to talk about, yeah, what is a primary source."[4] As a result, teaching this concept is usually an expected and fundamental step in helping students develop information literacy.

Gathering Information

Faculty are creating the building blocks for students to become experts. As undergraduates, students are making the transition from passive consumers of information to expert producers of knowledge. Working with primary sources teaches students the importance of consulting experts, whether those resources are within materials or library staff.

As such, one of the goals of primary source learning is to teach students to find information. "What a modern professoriate brings more than anything, is a kind of old forensic police gumshoe detective instinctual knowledge of actually where to go looking for answers, rather than necessarily having them."[5]

This is a new experience for many undergraduates. "The idea of going out and gathering information – I mean, they've never done it."[6] As a result, this faculty member hopes students will learn that "they've got to get used to going and asking people for help. If you're in business, if you're a lawyer, or if you're a doctor, almost any job … you have to get help from people who are well-informed about whatever it is you're working on."[7]

To help students become proficient at finding information, faculty usually direct students to people who can answer their questions—such as librarians or government policy experts—or to institutional resources, including subscription databases. However, many faculty admit to limited success with this approach: "sending them out on their own has not produced good results for me."[8] Faculty acknowledge that creating a research assignment where students solely look for and identify sources would be valuable. Faculty frequently cited limitations in time as the reason for omitting this step.

Nevertheless, if sufficient scaffolding is designed in the course, the natural outcome of finding and synthesizing information is that students develop the skills to gain their own expertise. One respondent commented that primary source assignments can show students that they are experts, "there's a real opportunity for well-trained undergraduate researchers to become, I call them public experts. That's what I tell the students they're going to be. They're going to be public experts on the text."

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[3] UVA-1.3

[4] UVA-14.9

[5] UVA-2.14

[6] UVA-1.3

[7] UVA-1.3

[8] UVA-5.11

The interviewee continued, "a lot of the students are surprised that I think that they have a voice that's worthy of saying something valuable and being published and having their name attached to it. That isn't foreign to me, to tell them that. But I think it's a little foreign to them, that they have that capacity."[9]

Transferable Skill Sets

Faculty acknowledged that they are interested in building skill sets that students can use beyond the course or discipline. These skills include determining bias and authority as well as finding, analyzing, and synthesizing information. None of the respondents expected to create scholars in their subject areas. Instead, the discipline-specific content serves as a means through which to teach analytical skills, rather than the goal that students acquire deep subject expertise. Respondents created learning outcomes that focused on the process of learning rather than the content. Interviewees believe that this process could be of value to students in other courses, future careers, or civic life.

> I care about the actual material, but I really want to teach students how to think. And I can do that with a medium that is my subject of expertise. I can do it with other stuff, too. But you could also live a rich life never knowing anything about my topic of research. But I don't think you can live a rich life not knowing how to be a critical thinker.[10]

Not only does information literacy help students in school, those skills can be useful in other aspects of their civic or professional lives. Studying primary sources help "students gain the tools to sort of understand some of the incredibly political things going on in the world around them, that shape their identity, that shape the world that they move in, that shape their relationships with the institution that they're studying in." One interviewee makes of point of telling student "about various things that my own children do that requires them to use primary sources in very, very diverse fields."[11]

Student Engagement and Perceptions of Special Collections

Student enjoyment was another factor that influenced faculty to incorporate primary sources into a course. Faculty noted that students enjoy working with primary sources, making them more engaged learners. When recounting an in-person class visit to Special Collections, an interviewee noted that for "the students, that's one of their favorite sessions of the whole term. Each time they say, like it's a highlight for them. … So yeah, that's a really fun class."[12]

One instructor noted, "I get to imagine cool assignments that create opportunities for students to engage beyond the traditional academic genre and sort of set of experiences. And I think that's

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[9] UVA-11.7
[10] UVA-3.3
[11] UVA-1.6
[12] UVA-11.6

one of the things that has been successful for me in connecting with students and having students enjoy my class."[13]

Many who were just beginning to teach with primary sources were initially surprised at this revelation, but the students' reactions encouraged them to make assignments with primary sources a staple in their teaching.

> That was eye-opening for me. Because the students loved it. They loved it. And in the way that I love doing primary research. It's like you get your hands dirty. You're actually, you know, engaging with the artifact. And after that I just decided I have to find ways that make sense for whatever course I'm teaching to build in a way for students to engage with primary source documents and not just, you know, digitized –It's a completely different experience. And the students really seem to prefer to kind of get their hands on the actual documents rather than the digitized version.[14]

Some students, in particular, enjoyed the intellectual rigor of a course that had a research element with primary sources. "It self selects for a certain type of student, you know, that wants to do that kind of deep dive."[15] Another concurred, "It requires a kind of student who is willing to – you know, it takes a little extra work. I'm not presenting the preformatted knowledge of the course that they have to memorize. I'm asking them to have a research experience."[16]

Other interviewees commented that the enjoyment developed over time. One professor cautioned students, "You're not going to enjoy reading these at the first sitting. What you enjoy, you enjoy them because they become really interesting in the analysis."[17]

For some students, the satisfaction came at the end of the course when they reflected on their learning experience. "Many of them ended up being really satisfied at the end with the source that they had. You know, they were like 'I got a lot out of it.'"[18]

Initially, however, students often find the space of special collections libraries to be intimidating. Visiting as a class and learning the various archival policies as a group help prepare students to work more independently in this space.

> The first time I taught it, I don't think I realized how much fear there was around research and using the library. So I made it more explicit in the way I talked about the class this time, that you didn't need to have skills, that we would give them to you from the ground up, that there'd be a lot of resources.[19]

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[13] UVA-3.11
[14] UVA-9.2
[15] UVA-14.3
[16] UVA-5.3
[17] UVA-13.6
[18] UVA-8.23
[19] UVA-11.7

This interviewee further explained their goals for incorporating primary source research in an undergraduate course: "I don't want only students who already feel comfortable in the library to join the course. That's not the point. The point is, anyone who is interested and wants to gain these skills, whether or not they already have them, is welcome."[20]

Another faculty member noted that they incorporate a class visit to Special Collections because "I would love for them to build up that extra bit of confidence, like, I can go into Special Collections. I can sit down at [online catalog], and at the end of that experience, … You know, they've come away with something that satisfies them."[21] After the experience of visiting Special Collections as a class, students become more comfortable about entering that space and with the process of requesting and using rare materials.

Preparation for the in-person primary source encounter was an important factor in student enjoyment. For students, knowing what to expect of the special procedures and handling requirements helped them feel more comfortable on arrival, particularly if it was their first visit to a special collections library. Some faculty also modeled their enthusiasm to students and discussed the sensory or contextual information that could be gained by seeing rare materials in person.

One faculty member described preparing students for a visit to Special Collections: "I'm trying to prime them – they – I don't see the apprehension, I see excitement. … [Going to Special Collections] in my experience it really excites the students. They anticipate it, and we talk about it along the way, and it gives them a better texture of that historical moment."[22]

These processes help to change student perceptions about consulting with librarians. "At first this look of terror comes on their faces. What? I should go talk to a librarian? But they get used to it pretty quickly."[23] This reaction was echoed in several interviews, "One of them was like, 'Oh, I've always been really scared to meet with a librarian. She was so helpful.'"[24]

Faculty Enjoyment

Several faculty also reported that they enjoy teaching with primary sources as it provides greater variety to the course content and offers new opportunities for student assignments beyond the traditional essay or research paper. "I mean, you get energy from watching them go in and be, wait, that was amazing and … when can I go back? That's awesome."[25]

Another faculty member commented,

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[20] UVA-11.7
[21] UVA-8.24
[22] UVA-12.2
[23] UVA-1.8
[24] UVA-8.27
[25] UVA-8.7

It's been a lot more fun for everyone to bring a more pedagogically creative approach. And I don't think that's come at an expense of students' critical thinking. … You're not necessarily trying to make scholars. I'm not trying to replicate myself. And so thinking about my topic in ways that are broader than how do I train people to become historians has been really fun and been really liberating for me.[26]

When offering guidance to faculty new to teaching with primary sources, one respondent advised, "I guess maybe the other thing I would say is don't be afraid of it. It's a lot of fun. … Yeah, I think I've honestly had a really positive, extremely fulfilling experience working with primary sources, working with the librarians on primary sources."[27]

Pedagogy

A recurring series of themes revolved around pedagogy, or the methods and practices faculty use for teaching with primary sources. We heard clearly that faculty want their students to be exposed to primary sources as a way of doing research in the real world. Not only do they believe the students benefit from working with primary sources, but some revealed that they learn from the experience as well.

I think those moments regardless of what topic you're dealing with, those moments are actually the most important pedagogical moments for students. Nothing is better than just being, you just exploded my brain.[28]

Faculty Training with Primary Sources

Some faculty mentioned that they had not received any formal training on teaching with primary sources during pursuit of their PhD. One faculty said, "I don't think anyone ever sort of sat me down to think about primary sources."[29] Another mentioned that pedagogy incorporating teaching with primary sources was not part of their curriculum. Consequently, teaching with primary sources has proven to be a skill that faculty have taught themselves through various means and methods and through their own initiative ("mostly just doing it myself"[30]) with assistance from other colleagues and, often, collaboration with librarians.

I was never taught, which is actually a huge problem and one of the reasons why I wanted to participate in this study . . the course that I teach here. . . was created precisely because it's the kind of thing that I never got to do and somehow was magically expected to do when I was a graduate student.[31]

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[26] UVA-3.11
[27] UVA-11.14
[28] UVA 3.3
[29] UVA 7.2
[30] UVA 5.2
[31] UVA 2.1

This lack of instruction in how to teach with primary sources may have been a consequence, in some cases, of a lack of emphasis on general teaching pedagogy. One faculty member said, "Nobody who taught me was thinking about pedagogy at all."[32] Another recalled their program as one in which the students didn't serve as teaching assistants. Across our interview cohort, which was comprised of faculty at different stages of their teaching careers, we heard consistent responses: that instruction in teaching with primary sources proved limited to none at all. We were surprised to realize that the year in which the faculty received their PhD was not a factor in whether they had training in teaching with primary sources. This may warrant follow up with the faculty cohort to explore the kinds of training they did receive and whether training has indeed changed over time.

Course Design, Assignments, and Activities

Teaching with primary sources is a deliberate pedagogical act. To illustrate this point, faculty shared observations and approaches to designing courses, creating course assignments, and structuring activities using primary sources that embrace experiential learning, a teaching practice that is incorporated into the University of Virginia's *2030 Plan*. Some faculty collaborations with library staff have become models for other faculty to use. One faculty member, who partnered with a Special Collections instruction librarian, recalled a syllabus that is now seen as a template because of the primary sources that are integrated into the course: "When I decided to embark on this adventure, there was no model to follow."[33] Other faculty noted their approach to using primary sources in making assignments: "I wanted to have something where the primary source part was kind of integral to it but not a class where that was the whole point."[34]

We learned that faculty will create assignments and activities with primary sources that vary in complexity and length and will incorporate primary sources "that makes sense for whatever course I'm teaching."[35] Faculty are keen on activities that generate participation and that "gets them [students] to engage with the primary source in a particular way."[36] To facilitate a participatory classroom dynamic, centered around primary sources, faculty shared a variety of examples. Several reported that they assign secondary sources in order to provide additional depth and context for the primary sources students will study. Many faculty work with students on close readings of all materials and require that the students report their analyses; some opt to assign in-class oral reports while others require written essays. They also told us that they often use worksheets that they distribute to students with questions and prompts that lead students through a critical analysis of the assigned primary source material

Sometimes in addition to these other assignments, faculty also require written assignments in the course. These can range from interpretive essays to research projects

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[32] UVA 4.12
[33] UVA 2.2
[34] UVA 7.5
[35] UVA 9.2
[36] UVA 10.2

resulting in a term paper where "students become experts at working with these texts."[37] Some faculty told us about semester-long projects requiring students to select their own primary sources (in either physical or digital format) in support of a thesis. One faculty member told us of a project that required their students "to choose one document, one primary document .. and they are to do a source analysis."[38] Another told us that they require the students to "write on a topic of [their] creation using sources that you discover."[39]

When asked about challenges for incorporating primary sources into courses, faculty were optimistic. One in particular summed up the sentiments: "I think more opportunities than challenges [exist] because it's so easy to integrate primary sources, even if it's sort of the digitized avatar, you can show so much more than you could when I started."[40]

Visits to Special Collections

Faculty incorporate visits to Special Collections as a way to expose, and in many cases to introduce, their students to primary source material. Collaborating with Special Collections staff, faculty use these visits as a pedagogical tool for their classes. The nature of the visit and the timing during the semester come about through consideration of class goals and desired outcomes. Some faculty arrange for distinct, multiple sessions while others conduct brief lectures alongside primary source material that they have selected. Faculty make important decisions about the timing of a visit to Special Collections, but they also consider how many visits they make, often desiring more if they had more time.

> If I had the time and I could be more organized in designing the course, I would actually have them come twice instead of once. I would have them come closer to the beginning, to the beginning of the term, and closer to the end. I've tried to get a full immersion experience and they have to be primed for it. So, if I went twice, I can prime them in a more focused way so that the second time we went they would have a better understanding of what they were looking for when they go.[41]

This could be an opportunity for further exploration with faculty about the needs that are not currently being met. Determining the barriers, beyond time, that keep the faculty from scheduling multiple visits during the semester would help special collections staff overcome those barriers and plan a more robust and responsive instruction program.

Faculty Selections of Primary Sources

Faculty told us about how they find primary sources for their courses and the considerations that help them make those important pedagogical decisions. One commented on "so many potential

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[37] UVA 11.2 and 11.3

[38] UVA 14.2

[39] UVA 1.8

[40] UVA 6.10

[41] UVA 12.7

sources" and the responsibility of "winnow[ing] that down to a few exemplary texts that are kind of illustrating what it is I'm trying to get across in class."[42] We also heard that faculty make sure that they find material that the students can read. Primary source material in other languages are problematic for the students who are not skilled at reading in foreign languages. One faculty member told us, "I can't translate for them. So that can be a problem in just finding things in English. But I just pick things they can read."[43] Faculty noted that finding primary source material takes creativity, and that sources that may yield useful information for research are not always obvious ones.

Often faculty curate primary sources for their students rather than have the students find primary sources on their own. Faculty have specific teaching goals for each course and they consider what primary sources they will use very carefully: "I try to curate. So, I think that it depends on the nature of the project. But for something that's structured as sort of like a survey, I'm very intentional about where the sources come from."[44]

Faculty may also take this approach as a measure of expediency: taking time to teach basic research skills – the skills needed to find primary source material—might usurp time that could be devoted to critical thinking and analysis. They may curate material because they want to devote time on the interpretive work rather than the logistics of finding the material. In other words, faculty may be choosing to privilege the theoretical over the practical.

One faculty member told us that to select primary sources, students "have to have a sophisticated understanding of where it [the source] comes from and how it's been superseded and they don't have that. I have found it is more useful for me at this level of course to do the selection for them, and then to let them focus on the interpretive work that it allows."[45]

Labor and Incorporating Primary Sources into the Classroom

A recurring subtheme was the time and effort it takes for faculty to adopt primary sources as a pedagogical tool. They talked about class size being a deterrent for using primary source material. The larger the class size, the less likely some would be to use primary sources. One faculty member believes that the class needs to be small in order to assign in-depth research projects. For that faculty member, the assignments require them to incorporate one-on-one sessions in the library with students. Another faculty member might take a different approach with regard to research mentoring sessions, but we heard a consistency of concern about the time it takes to teach their students how to find primary source material on their own.

> I'm eager to do that at some point . . .Is to try to build a research exercise in which
> they can use the resources we do have effectively. Actually get in the library and

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[42] UVA 14.5
[43] UVA 4.4
[44] UVA 10.9
[45] UVA 5.11

search the databases we own with a little more sophistication than they might. It'll require more of my time and support to make that happen.[46]

Library Staff

Faculty repeatedly stressed the importance of library staff when teaching with primary sources. Interviewees mentioned Special Collections library staff most frequently but also cited the value of subject liaisons and teaching and learning library workers. Faculty emphasized the need to establish relationships and communicate with library staff, both for themselves as instructors and for students as novice researchers.

> For me, I'm always thinking special collections – there is a certain amount of work that goes in to doing this and communicating with library staff, and just having a relationship with library staff. I mean I know [special collections staff member] really well.[47]

> And so this course wouldn't exist without [subject liaison] and [curator] and [subject liaison] and [teaching and learning librarian] and [Special Collections librarian] and several other people. … And so yeah, I think my biggest piece of advice would be talk to the librarians and invite them to be your collaborators. Because it makes the class so much more fun, and also better. The class is better because I am not the only voice. And there's diverse voices.[48]

Augmenting Gaps in Faculty's Teaching with Primary Sources Training

As noted earlier, faculty rarely receive formal training in teaching with primary sources. As such, they often rely on library staff to help fill these gaps when teaching. "I never during my training received … any sort of like distinct education on working on primary materials. So this is just something I'm interested in and very happy that there are librarians here who can help me."[49]

Importantly, although library staff may bring deep disciplinary knowledge to their teaching, they also contribute to students' understanding of foundational concepts, such as a basic definition of primary sources.

> One of the things that I had had a really hard time thinking about and teaching particularly with the kind of advent of the web, is how to really talk about primary and secondary sources. So [the subject liaison] basically did that for me, which was great. …Thanks to [the subject liaison], I teach it [defining primary sources] differently.[50]

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[46] UVA 5.12

[47] UVA-9.11

[48] UVA-11.13

[49] UVA-11.3

[50] UVA-7.2-3

Partnering on Course/Project Design

Faculty frequently depended upon library staff as collaborators in designing assignments and projects that incorporated primary sources and maximized their impact for student learning.

> This project would not exist if I were doing it on my own. I wouldn't have even thought of it if I was doing it on my own. That's like the whole point. Like it came about in conversations with librarians.[51]

> And that was a really wonderful experience, 'cause I came in with kind of a vague notion, and then they really, you know, helped me see what was feasible, helped me link up to -- You know, [Special Collections staff member] pulled out all of the initial resources for the class - … and did this amazing job.[52]

Knowledge of Collections

Many faculty rely on special collections staff's deep knowledge of the library's collections to identify relevant primary sources.

> I mean, I had some idea, but it wasn't a concrete sense, so very early on, getting in the Special Collections just for a conversation … [about] the courses that I am interested in teaching and having a conversation with someone who can say "here are some things." [Special Collections staff member] sat down with me …, and she was like, oh, well, we have this very cool resource and this thing, and you definitely have to talk to this person. Again I walked away and I was like, now I have half a page of things that I wouldn't have necessarily sat down at the [online catalog] computer and tried.[53]

Even faculty who are skilled archival researchers noted that they benefited from library staff's expertise in using search tools to uncover relevant materials.

> And then I started working with one of the archivists at special collections, and she was way better at searching than I was, and she found all kinds of titles that I hadn't found on my initial searches. … It's like how could I not have found that? You know, what was I doing wrong in my searching. … And I think even after that, the second year, you know, like I did some more refined search, and I think I found even more things that we hadn't found in the first year.[54]

This suggests that faculty have adapted to the search systems of the major repositories where they conduct their own research but might need training in the idiosyncrasies of local discovery systems at their home institutions. Additionally, small collections suitable for teaching may not

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[51] UVA-11.14
[52] UVA-8.9
[53] UVA-8.31
[54] UVA-9.2

receive the same level of description as a library's major research collections, thus decreasing their discoverability. Finally, faculty may teach courses in subjects that are not tightly aligned with their research interests and thus be less familiar with methods and terms for finding primary sources in those areas. All of these factors create an environment where faculty may depend heavily on library staff's knowledge of their collections. "It's always [the online catalog] search complimented by a conversation. [laughs]."[55]

Faculty also reported on the benefit of having library staff share their expertise of the materials by co-teaching during a visit to Special Collections.

One faculty member acknowledged, I "invited whichever librarian is working with me to add to that, you know, as the expert in that material history."[56] The respondent continued, "He knows the collection, you know, very well. He does not need me to tell him what to show. …. I've done the searching on my own, or I have invited the expert to share their desired text. And between the two of us we kind of form a cohesive role."[57] Similarly, another interviewee explained, "I do the instruction. And I usually have one of the librarians there to fill in details to help us with the source, with the materiality of the sources. Things like that."[58]

Working Directly with Students

Since they value library staff as partners, respondents overwhelmingly urge students to capitalize on this expertise by working with librarians outside of class. This recommendations was repeated in several interviews, "I always encourage my students. I'm like 'Go talk to the librarians.'"[59] Many students are reluctant to consult with library staff, so this encouragement from faculty helps forge relationships between students and library staff. A professor noted in their role as thesis advisor, "I'm advising only one student this year. I encourage her to meet with the librarians and do the work and go from there."[60]

Several described the importance of subject liaisons' expertise in students' primary source assignments. A professor noted from experience, "I can direct them to librarians. The librarians can help them. They're resistant to going into the library. They don't necessarily know how to do the searching effectively. … So [subject liaisons] and several others helped us out and worked one-on one-with the students to develop research resources. And that was very effective."[61] Some faculty embedded subject liaisons in their courses. "[Subject liaison] did a few sessions throughout the term. She was very, very present. And a lot of the students met with her individually as well. And she was actually listed and linked on Collab … so that she had full access, and the students were able to use her as a resource."[62]

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[55] UVA-8.17

[56] UVA-11.3

[57] UVA-11.10

[58] UVA-13.12

[59] UVA-8.5

[60] UVA-10.7

[61] UVA-5.12

[62] UVA-11.9

UVA Collections Strengths and Accessibility

Our faculty appreciate and respect the strength and the depth of the research collections at the University Library and in Special Collections. We even detected a sense of pride, when one faculty noted that "not every University or every college has a research library like we've got."[63] We often heard an appreciation of the library for making primary sources available and accessible to undergraduates. One faculty member remarked, "I've been at three big R1 institutions now and I have never encountered a library system like this that is so supportive of research and pedagogy and collaboration."[64] Many told us of their enthusiasm for the openness with which we receive undergraduates in our library spaces. Some speculated whether they would work with primary source material as much if the library was not "really committed to having the undergrads experience it."[65]

> I feel like both the Special Collections staff and I insist on how accessible, how open the library is—the hours, the availability, the encouragement of undergraduates to work.[66]

Collections Gaps

Throughout our conversations with faculty, we remained attentive to how faculty make primary sources accessible to students and in what ways. Faculty spoke about the challenges surrounding access to the materials they need for teaching and research and about how they exercise resourcefulness when assembling primary source material for class. For instance, published compilations and digital resources are commonly used. "In the big surveys, I've used some, you know, publishers have put together great compilations of shorter excerpts of primary sources and I find some of those really useful.[67] They also make use of their professional and personal networks to gather material that may or may not already be digitized (but that is shared with them through digital means). They reflected on a growing practice of scholars "translating and publishing stuff electronically instead of putting it out in a book"[68] and how receptive they are to working these texts into their courses if it meets their needs.

Faculty think carefully about what primary source materials, in physical and in digital form, they select to meet the goals for their courses. In some cases, as we've noted, they pull from resources available outside of UVA, but in other cases they build a primary source component into their classes based on our library's strengths. One faculty member told us that they "have changed what's on the syllabus based on what's in Special Collections."[69] But, while we model accessibility, our library has limitations inherent in

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[63] UVA 1.4
[64] UVA 11.14
[65] UVA 7.3
[66] UVA 6.4
[67] UVA 5.2
[68] UVA 4.8
[69] UVA 12.9

its physical and digital primary source collections. Consequently, faculty will seek those sources out, wherever they may be, to meet their needs. Despite the limitations in some subject areas, faculty remain upbeat about the library and using our collections, both physical and digital, in their undergraduate classes.

> Most of the maps I'm just taking and downloading from sites that make them available … wherever I can find them.[70]

> I use the databases that are available [at my library], or I use friends at other institutions to say, hey do you have "X," and can I get it?[71]

Even though the praise for UVA's Library system was consistent across the cohort, we did hear some criticism about gaps. "My only sort of limitation with primary sources is the databases accessible to us. So, when I was at [University], they had everything. And that was wonderful, and here they have a lot of other stuff. But it's not as robust.[72] In thinking about challenges facing libraries, one faculty member offered:

> I think that the role of the library is changing. I think that the mode by which I get my students to engage with different materials is simultaneously using digital databases created by different kinds of online and bricks and mortar archives. But also my classes depend upon the bricks and mortar archives here. . . And so I think that there's a space for both.[73]

Myth of Inaccessibility

Even though faculty acknowledge that Special Collections is supportive of teaching with primary sources, some faculty recalled their students' disbelief that Special Collections is available and accessible to them. They noted that, "students generally have thought that things like this [Special Collections] were inaccessible."[74] Faculty and special collections librarians, working together, can address the myth of inaccessibility while ensuring that students have significant engagements with primary source material.

> In my experience, it really excites students, the prospect of it. They look forward to that day [in] Special Collections . . . I think there's a benefit to just literally leaving the classroom and going to the library together.[75]

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[70] UVA 5.9
[71] UVA 7.13
[72] UVA 10.5
[73] UVA 10.8
[74] UVA 11.7
[75] UVA 12.11

While our faculty had much to say about the accessibility of the library and our collections, they also shared thoughts about how accessible the information about the collections is for undergraduates. Faculty commented on whether or not they were able to find any primary source materials through their own search efforts. Some expressed dismay in not finding materials appropriate to their research and teaching, despite being experienced researchers: "I found it surprising that I had some, that I had difficulty finding the full scope of what Special Collections had [on my topic] because you know [that] I know how to use the library.[76] They feel like they may be missing material: "I know the manuscripts that I know, but I feel like there are others that I'm probably missing.[77] With "motivated searching," and experience, one may be able to find materials, but they doubt that undergraduate students are experienced enough to surmount the barriers to discovery because of the "way things are catalogued."[78]

Discovery of our primary sources are of great concern to our Special Collections staff. We acknowledge that some topics and resources are more discoverable than others, and this discoverability affords these materials a greater profile and potentially implies greater importance and relevance. Librarians and archivists are behind those discovery systems and their biases can complicate discovery or render materials undiscoverable because of the way the material is described. Faculty's experiences with discovery systems can then direct how they construction primary source engagement for the students.

> So now I always show resistance . . . We're going to see the Black Panthers and Phyliss Wheatley, and women's temperance stuff. To look up eugenics and white supremacy . . . they can find that very easily.[79]

Archival Silences and Repair

Many faculty incorporate primary sources into courses in order to help students develop a more nuanced understanding of the past, including the ways in which particular primary sources have been selected at the expense of others to create certain narratives. Primary sources allow students to see perspectives that are not documented in their textbooks and other course materials. Faculty may also teach students to "read against the grain" when primary source materials from the perspective of marginalized groups do not exist.

When teaching with primary sources, many faculty take the opportunity to have more expansive discussions about the role of archival functions in selecting, preserving, cataloging, and digitizing primary sources. These discussions raise questions about whose perspectives are missing and incorporate methodologies for capturing views of marginalized groups. Thus,

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[76] UVA 9.5
[77] UVA 6.4
[78] UVA 9.6
[79] UVA 7.11

students learn about the ways that archivists, curators, historians, translators, editors, and others mediate which primary sources exist and are available to students.

Understanding the Structures Which Create and Maintain Archives

A number of faculty incorporated primary sources into their curricula in order to lead students into sophisticated discussions of how archives are created, maintained, and reified. As one respondent stated, "so even the way that language, that knowledge is categorized in our archives itself reveals the philosophy, ideology of the people who are preserving it. And in order to preserve it, ... that even the very act of being able to preserve documents and catalog them and you know, this sort of thing, is itself an act of power."[80] Through searching for and analyzing primary sources, students learn that the selection and availability of primary sources is not a neutral activity, but is based on collection biases and interests. "When I brought them into the Special Collections, yeah, that was the first time that they had learned what an archive was. … [leading] students [to] think about how what we know, today, about the past, is completely contingent on people in the past having chosen to preserve certain things, or having had the ability to write."[81]

> You know, it's like all of these historical narratives that then somehow get reified actually are completely contingent on the circumstances of archival production. And I think students need to know that and have some critical distance and think about things like, well, those voices weren't recorded, so we'll never know. And working directly with primary sources is a great way to create moments for conversations like that.[82]

> I stress throughout my classes how much what we think about the past is determined by the choices of the people who make primary sources available to the public and even to specialists. … They were stunned when I gave them to read a number of texts that show very powerful women. And basically said, 'Why haven't we read these before?' …I have translated the original sources to make them available to undergraduates because there is no translation. And then we talk about why isn't there a translation of this. Why have those political choices been made?[83]

What's not being preserved and why are two questions that came up in several interviews. These faculty understand this fundamental situation: what's not preserved is not accessible to anyone.

In discussing the nature of archives, one interviewee emphasized the need "to call attention to the fact that there are things that we cannot know because of the lack of archival sources. And so

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[80] UVA-14.6
[81] UVA-3.9
[82] UVA-3.9
[83] UVA-6.7

only imagination or archaeology and stuff – those voices are not accessible to us. And so, I wanted to give them a space to think about those concepts and think about silences."[84]

These class conversations also extended to the ways that digitization can create and perpetuate biases. As an interviewee related, "there are all these issues with digital searching in terms of how comprehensive actually is this and is there a bias in the material that's been collected?"[85]

Fill Gaps in Course Materials to Explore More Perspectives

Primary sources filled gaps in course materials, particularly in the potential to present perspectives of marginalized groups. Primary sources from various viewpoints help students see various sides of a narrative.

> So we take one event, one very controversial event, say in the conquest of Mexico, and we look at it from five different perspectives, and then look at the different ways in which these primary sources construct that event, taking into account who's writing it, when they're writing it, why they're writing it, who else is involved in the production and consumption of the text, what's the relationship of the text with the event, you know, in time and in place.[86]

Faculty acknowledge that this approach takes some effort, but that primary sources offer potential in expanding voices from the past. "I always want to make sure that there's female voices and, you know, people of color, who are represented. It's going to be harder to find. So, all those concerns get mixed up together and I kind of come up with a slate of sources that seem to work."[87]

Methodologies to Recover Silences in Primary Sources

Many respondents spoke to students specifically about reading against the grain to recover the perspectives of groups who have been marginalized in archival documentation as well as the historical record. As one interviewee explained, "There are just all these kind of, little tidbits in there where you can kind of get glimpses into the lives of these people that the text itself is attempting to disparage. You know but can be teased out."[88] Faculty use primary sources not only to show different perspectives, but also to teach students the methodologies needed to surface perspectives of the less powerful.

> So we're kind of reading for the most part hostile sources. You know, for the people we're trying to look at, who are the majority. I mean we're doing social history. You know? But we're using these documents that were produced primarily by colonial officials, explorers, you know, colonial army officials,

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[84] UVA-3.4

[85] UVA-8.22

[86] UVA-13.5

[87] UVA-5.9

[88] UVA-14.7

church officials, you know, people who had a vested interest in, you know, converted the savages, so-called, you know, to Christianity or subduing them under Spanish rule, etc.[89]

One of the points of that was to show students that you could ask very different questions of a complex primary document and come up with very different aspects of it. It'd be like almost as if you're reading a different document. I wanted to them to have the sense of the richness of that work.[90]

As a result, primary sources allow students to think about the ways in which knowledge is shaped and to probe for missing perspectives.

Materiality

Many faculty mentioned the importance of materiality during our interviews. They use materiality to support teaching goals and information literacy and to underscore course themes and subjects. Far more than treasures and iconic objects, physical primary sources hold evidence in their structures and material properties in addition to the information they impart, and these physical characteristics combine to make a powerful pedagogical teaching tool.

I like to get them to think about the materiality of objects, and to try to get them to think of that in the context of other things.[91]

I want them to think about the material, the material properties of the book.[92]

I talk some about . . . what it's like to feel, to page through a text. . .a volume of *The Crisis* that W.E.B. DuBois in 1925 would have edited.. .it gets them excited to think about that moment and to think of more – in a materially grounded way.[93]

Materiality as Entry Point for Study and Discussion

Faculty noted that materiality goes beyond considerations of format to questions of property, ownership, use, construction, transmittal, and purpose. Materiality is less about the information that is carried, more about the carrier of the information, and what that carrier can teach us about the world in which the object was created. Faculty spoke about a physical book having a meaningful story and that the story can be revealed through physical properties. Though faculty spoke about the extra time it often takes to teach students about materiality, the importance of doing was expressed clearly.

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[89] UVA-14.2

[90] UVA-5.3

[91] UVA 12.7

[92] UVA 12.5

[93] UVA 12.8

And now they're sitting with the document in front of them in Special Collections and they're going, how do I make sense of [this] .. so that's modeling certain questions or helping them think about things like the materiality of the object, the history of the object.[94]

Excitement and Learning through the Senses

Faculty often used very specific sensory terms to describe the student's interactions with the physical primary source materials. They spoke about the student's engagement with primary sources through touching, seeing, smelling, and hearing. Students experience the materiality of primary source material through their senses; faculty value this experience and many intentionally build it into the courses, going beyond show and tell activities. Some faculty reflected on their observations of excitement that engagement with the physical objects bring to the students and remarked on how excitement is essential to learning.

Touching the artifact makes it real, it brings it to life . . brings it home in a way that the written word can't. Almost anything that you can touch and hold … makes it [the subject] come alive for them.[95]

I want them to really appreciate the phenomenology of what is the history of the book, the tactile component, the haptic aspects of this. That it smells of the parchment and the inks. The way that these things have actually been engaged and even in some cases hurt or damaged. Some of our books are interesting precisely where the rubbings take place, for devotional reasons.[96]

They definitely get excited when they find out that we were going to be looking at some first editions. You can, you know the excitement is very visceral.[97]

Making Primary Sources Available for Research

Faculty expressed their appreciation that the library made the physical objects available for research and use by undergraduate students, and they talked of their continued interest in taking advantage of the physical collections. "I've never been to a place that makes it so easy to use Special Collections."[98] Many faculty work with library staff to create engagements that require the students to be in conversation with the physical materials. Often faculty members lead the conversation through formal lectures, brief talks, or posing questions that frame discussions while surrounded by the primary sources. At other times, library staff lead presentations that incorporate discussions of materiality.

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[94] UVA 8.12

[95] UVA 1.7

[96] UVA 2.4

[97] UVA 12.3

[98] UVA 7.3

I get them to think about the material conditions of the publications, and I have them, when we go to Special Collections, I have them look across to see what's next to it, what the cover looks like. So, I try to give them the full experience of what an original reader in the 1920s would have been experiencing.[99]

I also had the students come here to Special Collections for a document sort of hands-on workshop day. . . . It was sort of just a sensory thing. . .. Tactile active learning, engaged learning experience of seeing cool old books and maps that are hundreds of years old and being able to touch them. It just really came alive to them in a more dynamic way[100]

The Physical is Different from the Digital

Throughout our interviews, faculty members talked about access to and use of digital material, sometimes because physical primary sources are not available or because the digital presented a more convenient option even if the physical is available. However, they also mentioned that the physical was different from the digital and that they wanted their students to experience and learn from that difference: "There is a difference between working with a real manuscript and between working with the digital online version."[101] The same can be said for primary sources in other formats. Information about the materiality of an object, whether it is a book, a paper-based document, a photograph, or a textile (and there are other formats as well), can be lost in digital form. One faculty member noted, "I don't think you get the sense if you just look at it digitally."[102] Another reflected on the student's reception of experiencing the physical objects:

It's a completely different experience. And the students really seem to prefer to kind of get their hands on the actual documents rather than the digitized version.[103]

Our faculty understand that important questions can be answered through interaction with physical primary source, even while expressing strong advocacy for information in digital form. Materiality for most is as important as the convenience and accessibility of the digital.

Digitization, I guess I've already alluded to, it's a two-edged sword, because on the one hand it gives us extraordinary access; on the other hand it takes us away from the materiality of source documents.[104]

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[99] UVA 12.4
[100] UVA 3.5
[101] UVA 2.3
[102] UVA 5.7
[103] UVA 9.3
[104] UVA 13.14

Conclusion

One of the most significant conclusions was that faculty value the accessibility of using primary source material for teaching at the Small Special Collections Library. They also appreciate that undergraduates are welcome in our spaces, more so than in similar institutions where faculty taught or trained. They view library staff as experts. This study reinforces the need to maintain this accessible and welcoming environment, both physical and online.

Finding appropriate materials independently was a challenge that faculty and students both encountered, whether using search tools for Special Collections holdings, library databases of primary source materials, or freely accessible online collections. Some interviewees also mentioned the differences between the language of instruction and the language(s) of the primary sources as a complication in finding appropriate primary sources. Faculty tend to curate lists of primary sources for students to use rather than letting them find their own, which is both a matter of student inexperience with research and a lack of faculty time to teach search methods. This speaks to the need to teach researchers how to use these resources as well as to normalize asking library staff to demonstrate sophisticated search methods.

Rather than center the course instruction, and use of primary sources around training future graduate students or academics, faculty incorporate primary source material into their courses to teach skills that are valued in life and transferable across the students' course of study. Most felt that teaching with primary sources proves to be a key component of a liberal arts education. They believe that using primary sources adds value to course learning outcomes, aids in student development of information literacy, and provides students with lifelong skill sets to analyze information and produce knowledge. Given this emphasis on development of information literacy and broad-based critical thinking skills, library staff can help frame teaching with primary sources as a pedagogical tool that crosses disciplinary lines.

Some faculty mentioned time and effort (labor) as barriers to teaching with primary sources. Faculty were also concerned about class size in relation to using primary sources. Teaching novice student researchers how to find, use, and analyze primary sources requires immense scaffolding. Therefore, the larger the class, the less likely faculty are to create assignments with research-intensive primary source components, or even to incorporate primary sources at all.

A continuing challenge, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic, is that students need help locating and navigating collections of primary sources. We need to learn more about the information seeking behavior for undergraduates looking for primary sources while also evaluating how well our local discovery systems are serving them. With limited access to our physical collections, students are reaching out to library staff more frequently for ways to access alternative primary source collections in subscription databases or that are freely available online. Library staff, particularly in special collections libraries, need to become more familiar with digital collections outside of their home institutions.

Faculty rely on digital primary sources for convenience and when the physical is not available to them. Frequently, they use physical primary source materials in combination with digital. Among our interview cohort, these faculty clearly value both digital and the physical when

teaching undergraduate classes. These sentiments underscore an opportunity for a potential reframing of the way primary source instructional services are approached--from a digital *vs* physical to a digital *and* physical framework-- and potentially carries implications for collection development and digitization strategies.

Shifts to online learning, as experienced during COVID-19 underscores the need for increased attention to accessible digital primary sources and methods for incorporating primary sources into an online or hybrid learning environment. Due to the pandemic, we have had a fraction of our usual number of instructional sessions, so we have new questions about how faculty are incorporating primary sources in this remote environment. The pandemic has caused so much stress on faculty teaching and planning that it is difficult to know what decisions they would make about using digital primary sources and remote learning opportunities in an online environment under normal circumstances.

However, it is clear that faculty and students are relying on digital primary sources and that the library needs to ensure that these resources are discoverable. In the pre-COVID era, some faculty speculated whether they would work with primary source material as much if the library was not "really committed to having the undergrads experience it." Therefore, the library should expand its commitment by adopting an ethos of access to both physical and digital primary sources, as so many faculty expressed in these interviews. Making this shift requires the library to look closely at what it means to provide access to primary sources in a remote environment. We should not just rethink the format and content of our collections. Library staff also need to develop their pedagogical skills in providing primary source content, both physical and digital, in asynchronous and synchronous learning formats.

Additionally, in a remote environment, faculty continue to be interested in the materiality of primary sources, presenting new challenges. This study supports the intentional use of materiality as a lens through which to interrogate and discuss course themes. Given that faculty frequently use digital primary sources in tandem with, or in place of, physical primary sources, the research has brought up a significant question about materiality in an online environment, whether that be remote learning, asynchronous or synchronous. What does materiality look like for digital primary sources?

Within the realm of materiality, we noted that faculty used sensory information when describing their students' engagement with physical primary sources. Our bibliographic experts told us that there are no gold standards for presenting sensory information about these materials, nor are there standards for describing objects beyond the basic physical dimensions and color. Given that our faculty value materiality for the learning experience it can provide to their students, it is incumbent upon library staff to be creative and develop ways in which materiality can be presented in an online environment.

We acknowledge that there could be local practices that go beyond the basic. However, we propose that descriptions for materiality is an area needing attention and the development of an ontology for materiality-specific descriptions would benefit libraries and their users for physical materials that are to be discovered, accessed, and used in digital form.

Recommendations

Acknowledge That Archives Are Not Neutral

Teaching students to evaluate sources for bias and intent is an essential element of information and primary source literacies. However, students frequently do not sufficiently understand or deconstruct primary source materials, particularly if they come with the authority of being housed in an archival repository or library database. Being transparent about the biases and absences particular to the materials of the Special Collections Library—for example, in terms of collection development strategies, collection strengths, choices in descriptive metadata, and digitization priorities—can help students learn that no archives are neutral and thus approach their analysis with a more sophisticated framework for understanding primary sources.

Despite these biases, many disciplines, including archival science, offer methodologies that students could use to counterbalance the archival silences inherent to our collections or others'. In their teaching, library staff should incorporate these methodologies for overcoming biases.

Create Web Page with Suite of Tutorials and Other Resources

Faculty consistently noted that they lacked formal teaching with primary sources training. They also indicated that they do not have the time to use primary sources as frequently or as deeply as they would like. The Special Collections Library could help fill these needs by creating a robust instructional microsite that offers faculty and students a variety of resources including:
- tips for preparing students for a Special Collections visit;
- definitions and examples of primary sources;
- examples for faculty for how to use primary sources in courses;
- methods for conducting research in Special Collections and using search tools, such as Virgo or ArchivesSpace, to locate relevant primary source materials;
- examples of student work featuring primary sources;
- importance of materiality of primary sources, including developing an ontology for materiality;
- different methodologies for using digital and physical formats of primary sources.

Promote Use of Primary Sources

Promoting the use of our collections for teaching might help faculty new to teaching with primary sources take the plunge. Faculty who are undecided about teaching with primary sources might be swayed by testimonials from faculty and students about the experience. Tapping alumni to share the real-world skills they learned through primary source research could also be helpful.

Several interviewees cited the UVA Course Enrichment Grant (formerly the Information Literacy Grant) as the catalyst for creating fruitful faculty/librarian partnerships to redesign courses or sessions with primary sources. The UVA Library in general, as well as the Special Collections Library specifically, should continue to herald the successes of these collaborations

to alert faculty to the option of partnering with expert library staff, even for those faculty who have not been awarded the grant.

Enhancing description of teaching materials is another way to promote collections so they are more easily found by faculty and students.

Overcome Student Reluctance to Use Libraries and Consult Librarians

Although students overwhelmingly find Special Collections easy to use once they get started, many are reluctant to take the first step in using special collections materials or reaching out to librarians for help. Research into archival and academic library literature may offer suggestions for overcoming this reluctance. These findings can then be used to market primary source and library resources to students more effectively.

Create Outcome-based Evaluations for Student Learning with Primary Sources

Over the last decade, archivists and special collections librarians have become more intentional about assessing student learning with primary sources. However, there are limitations to understanding how much students are learning, retaining, or applying since library staff rarely receive additional information about student primary source learning or assignments after the archival encounter. Although faculty sometimes provide general feedback, it is rarely systematic or diagnostic enough to document measurable conclusions about the effectiveness of various teaching methods. Creating outcome-based evaluations in collaboration with professors can help both archivists and faculty refine primary source learning and demonstrate the value of these activities.

Appendices

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Background

Briefly describe your experience teaching undergraduates. *Examples: how long you've been teaching, what you currently teach, what types of courses (introductory lectures, advanced seminars) you teach*

 » How does your teaching relate to your current or past research?

Training and Sharing Teaching Materials

How did you learn how to teach undergraduates with primary sources?

 » Did you receive support or instruction from anyone else in learning to teach with primary sources?

 » Do you use any ideas, collections of sources, or other instructional resources that you received from others?

 » Do you make your own ideas, collections of sources, or other instructional resources available to others? If so, how? If not, why not?

Course Design

I'd like you to think of a specific course in which you teach with primary sources that we can discuss in greater detail.

 » Do you have a syllabus you're willing to show me? I will not share or reproduce this except for research purposes.

 » Tell me a bit about the course. *Examples: pedagogical aims, why you developed it, how it has evolved over time*

 » Explain how you incorporate primary sources into this course. *If appropriate, refer to the syllabus*

 » Why did you decide to incorporate primary sources into this course in this way?

 » What challenges do you face in incorporating primary sources into this course?

 » Do you incorporate primary sources into all your courses in a similar way? Why or why not?

In this course, does anyone else provide instruction for your students in working with primary sources? *Examples: co-instructor, archivist, embedded librarian, teaching assistant*

 » How does their instruction relate to the rest of the course?

» How do you communicate with them about what they teach, how they teach it, and what the students learn?

Finding Primary Sources

Returning to think about your undergraduate teaching in general, how do you find the primary sources that you use in your courses? *Examples: Google, databases, own research, library staff*

» What challenges do you face in finding appropriate sources to use?

» Do you keep a collection of digital or physical sources that you use for teaching?

How do your students find and access primary sources?

» Do you specify sources which students must use, or do you expect them to locate and select sources themselves?

» If the former, how do you direct students to the correct sources? Do you face any challenges relating to students' abilities to access the sources?

» If the latter, do you teach students how to find primary sources and/or select appropriate sources to work with? Do you face any challenges relating to students' abilities to find and/or select appropriate sources?

Working with Primary Sources

How do the ways in which you teach with primary sources relate to goals for student learning in your discipline?

» Do you teach your students what a primary source is? If so, how?

» To what extent is it important to you that your students develop information literacy or civic engagement through working with primary sources?

In what formats do your students engage with primary sources? *Examples: print editions, digital images on a course management platform, documents in an archive, born-digital material, oral histories*

» Do your students visit special collections, archives, or museums, either in class or outside of class? If so, do you or does someone else teach them how to conduct research in these settings?

» Do your students use any digital tools to examine, interact with, or present the sources? *Examples: 3D images, zoom and hyperlink features, collaborative annotation platforms, websites, wikis*

» To what extent are these formats and tools pedagogically important to you?

» Do you encounter any challenges relating to the formats and tools with which your students engage with primary sources?

Wrapping Up

What advice would you give to a colleague who is new to teaching with primary sources?

Looking toward the future, what challenges or opportunities will instructors encounter in teaching undergraduates with primary sources?

Is there anything else that you think is important for me to know?

Solicitation email

Subject. University of Virginia's study on teaching with primary sources
Dear Professor ,

 The University of Virginia Library is conducting a study on the practices of humanities and social sciences instructors in order to improve support services for teaching undergraduates with primary sources. We are interviewing instructors whose undergraduate students engage with primary sources in any format, such as by conducting research, analyzing sources as evidence, or curating collections of sources. Would you be willing to participate in a one-hour interview to share your unique experiences and perspective with us?

 UVA's study is part of a suite of parallel studies at 25 other institutions of higher education in the US and UK, coordinated by Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit research and consulting service. The information gathered at UVA will also be included in a landmark capstone report by Ithaka S+R, and will be essential for UVA to further understand how the support needs of instructors in teaching with primary sources are evolving more widely.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience whether you'd be willing to participate. Of course, if you have any questions about the study, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Krystal Appiah, Instruction Librarian
Brenda Gunn, Associate University Librarian for Special Collections and Preservation
Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library