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Digital Archival Literacy in the Classroom

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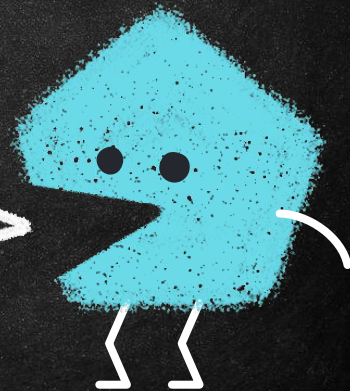
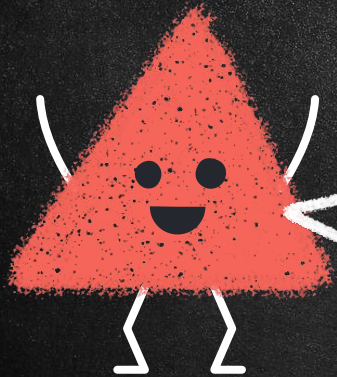
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DIGITAL ARCHIVAL LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM

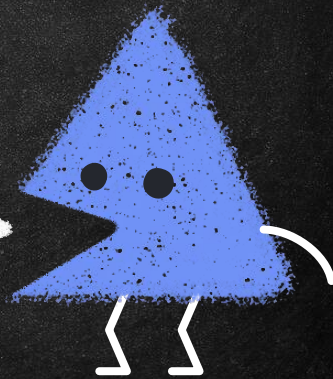
Elliott Kuecker, Teaching Assistant
Professor, UNC-CH

Rebecca Fitzsimmons, Special Collections
Librarian, Illinois State University

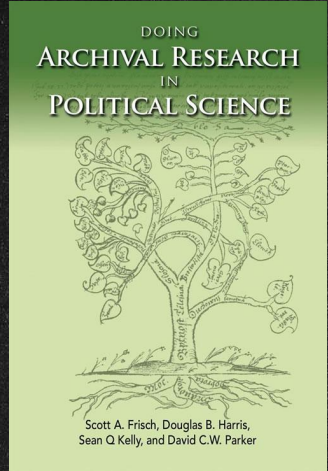


AGENDA

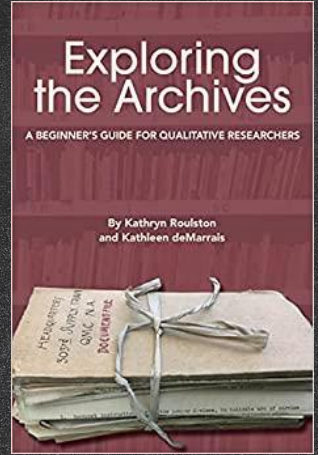
- The interdisciplinary archival turn
- Explanation of archival literacy and digital archival literacy
- Example digital archive classroom project



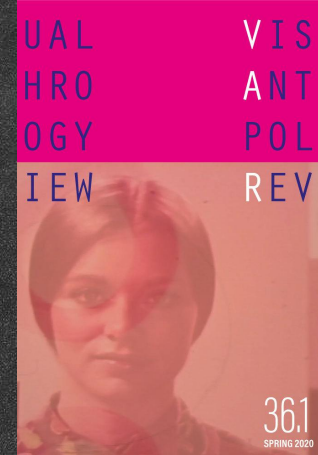
INTERDISCIPLINARY ARCHIVAL TURN



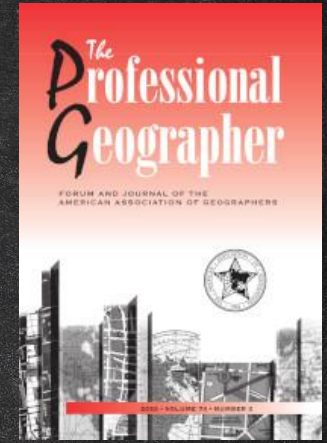
Doing Archival Research in Political Science (2012)
Frisch, Harris, Kelly, Parker



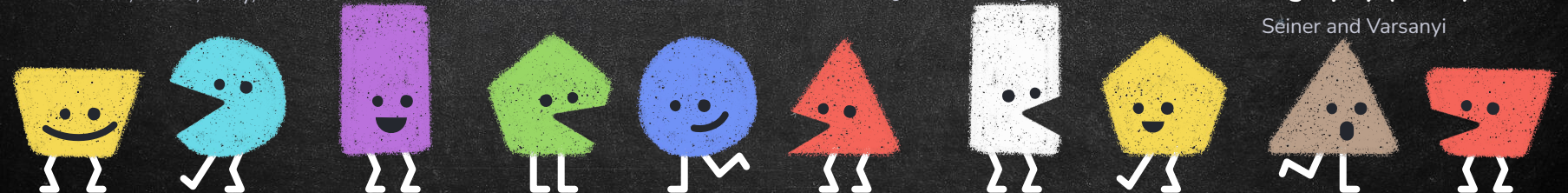
Exploring Archives: A Beginner's Guide (2022)
DeMarrais and Roulston




Bodies of Archives / Archival Bodies (Anthropology) 2020
Battaglia, Clarke, Siegenthaler



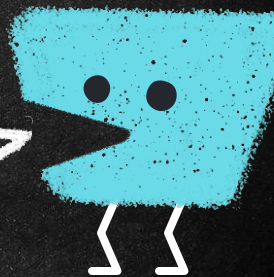
Methodological Challenges in of Archival Research in Geography (2022)
Seiner and Varsanyi



SIMPLE ARCHIVAL LITERACY

A yellow, textured, circular character with two black dots for eyes and a simple curved line for a smile. It has two thin white legs.

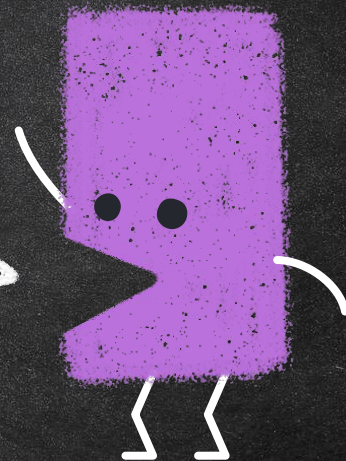
Works against the idea that archival documents and objects are pure, uninterpreted materials to be “found”

A blue, textured, rectangular character with two black dots for eyes and a simple curved line for a smile. It has two thin white legs.

Emphasizes archival materials in **context**, emphasizing not only the content of the archives, but the presentation, organization, metadata, mission statement, etc.

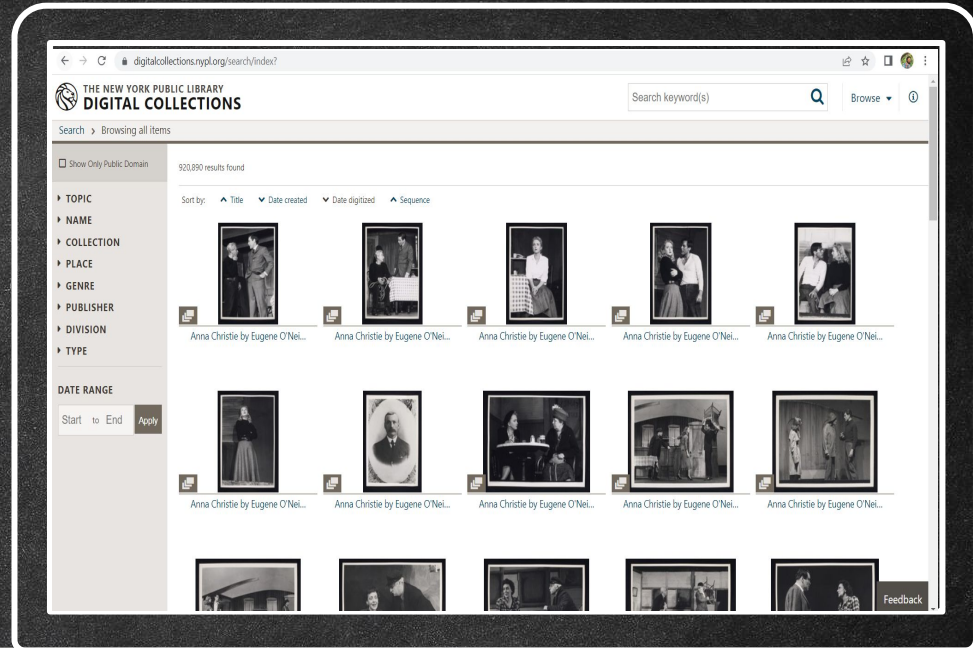
“

Like everything else, archives were constructed “by human beings who make decisions about preservation, and presentation of materials” that dictate the kinds of meanings that emerge (Enoch & Vanhaitsma, 2015, p. 21)




WHAT ABOUT DIGITAL ARCHIVES?

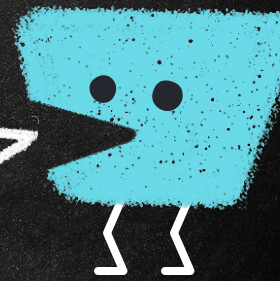
Digital archives are made of digitized materials/born-digital, available openly at a url



DIGITAL ARCHIVAL LITERACY

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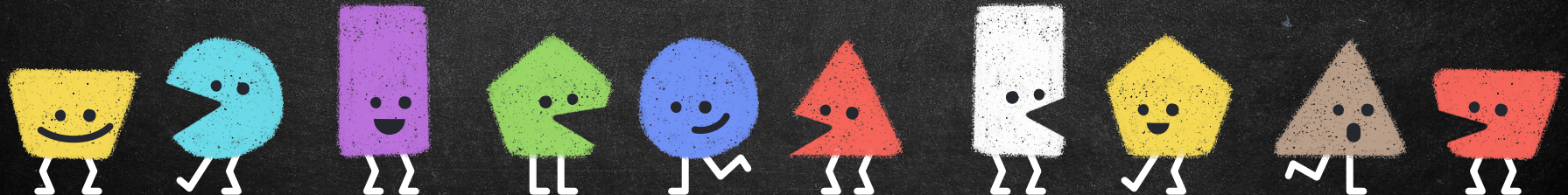
Expands the accessibility of archives by making them not place-bound, but requires new ways of critical “reading”

A blue, textured, rectangular character with two black dots for eyes and two legs, positioned to the right of the second speech bubble.

Combines information literacy with archival literacy because of the blurring between artifact and data

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Is this an archive or an exhibit?
2. What is the mission/purpose of this archive/collection/exhibit?
3. How are users encouraged to engage with the materials?
4. Could users easily download materials from this archive to analyze or transform?
5. If this archive was being used by researchers, who would benefit? What disciplines or thematic areas could ask research questions within this archive?
6. Who performed the labor of creating this and/or funded this?



CRITICALLY READING DIGITAL EXHIBITS AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO DIGITAL ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH METHODS

Class details:

WGS 120: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies

Undergraduates:
Primarily sophomores and juniors from a variety of majors

Underpinnings and Equal Terms

How the Suffrage Movement Changed American Women and American Women Changed the Nation

The National Woman's Party
Ghah! It has done—Ghah! It is doing

National Woman's Party Headquarters
Oppose National Prohibition
U.S. Senate Congressional Campaign

Hazle Buck Ewing Women's Suffrage Collection, Ewing Cultural Center, Illinois State University

On June 4, 1919, the United States Senate approved the 19th amendment to the Constitution. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the amendment.

On August 26, 1920, the amendment was certified, clearing the final hurdle to guaranteeing through federal law that women now had the right to vote. This culmination marked a victory in the long and difficult journey of generations of suffragists who had organized

Underpinnings and Equal Terms

A Legacy of Local Voices

- Celestia Rice Colby
- June Rose Colby
- Rachel Crothers
- Florence Fifer Bohrer

How Women Changed the Nation

- Sojourner Truth 'Ain't I a Woman?' speech
- Ida B. Wells forms the Alpha Suffrage Club

National to Local

Suffrage Quarters Open Circus Day

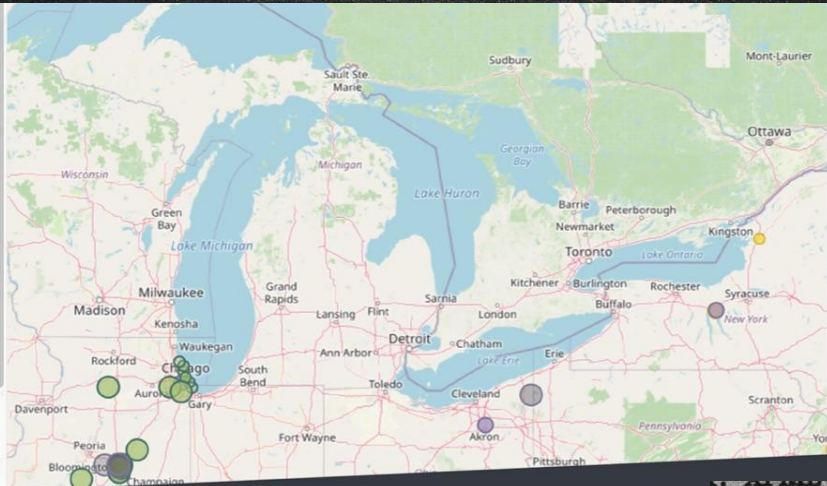
1910 1911 1912 1913 1914 1915 1916 1917 1918 1919 1920 1921 1922

Suffrage Quarters Open Circus Day

Suffrage Quarters Open Circus Day

MEMBERS OF ORGANIZATION WILL SERVE A LIGHT LUNCH AT DAY

Suffrage quarters in this city will be open on Wednesday of next week. This marks the opening of the circus in this city. The affair was hurried forward, so that the country might have the privileges of the rest room which will be maintained and also the privilege of a light and inexpensive lunch which...



In **unpacking the research process** required to create the exhibit, students learned about **evaluating visual materials** and **understanding their value** apart from and alongside written sources.



ENLIST SUFFRAGISTS FOR A CIRCUS HOLIDAY

Baby Giraffe Named "Miss Suffrage" at a "Votes for Women" Rally.

MISS MILHOLLAND ABSENT

Yet the Affair Had Been Postponed to Suit Her Convenience, They Say at the Garden.

All the women in the ranks of the Barnum & Bailey circus who are avowed advocates of the ballot for their kind, gathered yesterday afternoon around the giraffe cage in Madison Square Garden and there, after the incorrigible photographers had been satisfied and after plenty of speeches had been made, the baby giraffe, without previously being consulted, was ceremoniously named "Miss Suffrage."

For a long time it was not known who would officiate and in the hearts of some of the circus women the indifference of Miss Inez Milholland still rankles cruelly. According to all accounts obtainable at the Garden yesterday Miss Milholland had solemnly agreed to go to the circus on the morning of either Wednesday or Thursday of last week, for the organization meeting of the Barnum & Bailey Circus Women's Equal Rights Society, at which time the giraffe was to be named.

The Lady Hercules
Ratie Sandwina



Underpinnings and Equal Terms

How the Suffrage Movement Changed American Women and American Women Changed the Nation

The National Woman's Party
What is it doing?
What is it doing?

Had to Back Ewing Women's Suffrage Collection, Ewing Cultural Center, Illinois State University

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Women's Suffrage

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The Library of Congress offers classroom materials and professional development to help teachers effectively use primary sources from the Library's vast digital collections in their teaching.

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To help your students analyze these primary sources, get a graphic organizer and guides.

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The Woman Suffragists
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A Squeal for Woman Suffrage
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Alice Paul Describes Force Feeding
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"Votes for Women" International Hymn of the Suffragettes
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The Woman Suffrage Movement and Frederick Douglass
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Newspaper clippings and other suffrage exhibit resources
View the items in Newspaper clippings and other suffrage exhibit resources

Florence Fifer Bohrer and the McLean County League of Women Voters
View the items in Florence Fifer Bohrer and the McLean County League of Women Voters

Women in the Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives, Illinois State University
View the items in Women in the Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives, Illinois State University

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Suffrage Parade a Success; Greatest Demonstration

MANUSCRIPT MIXED MATERIAL

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SUFFRAGE PARADE A SUCCESS.
If Any Came to Jeer They Stayed to Cheer the 3,000 Women.
New York took its first suffrage parade seriously and respectfully, and if any of the 3,000 women who marched down Fifth Avenue on Saturday afternoon set out on the two-mile tramp to Union Square with any uncomfortable feeling that she might hear disagreeable comment from the curbs, she probably forgot all about it before she had covered the first block of the route.

"At any rate, there was no such comment to justify her fears. On the contrary, there was cheering from the crowds all the way along, and at no point between Fifty-seventh Street and Seventeenth Street, where the marchers left the avenue to go through to the square, was the crowd of spectators a thin one. For forty blocks, on both sides of the Avenue, it stood six deep at the curbs, and at every window in every building there was a group of watchers.

Nearly every trade and profession was represented by the women, and after calling attention to the fact one bystander remarked: "They seem to know how to organize a parade and keep step in a march."

"Just as well as men."

"This will help them," exclaimed another onlooker. "I've been sniffing at the idea of this parade ever since I first heard of it. I thought that it would be an undignified rabble that would put back the cause of suffrage about ten years. But that was all wrong. A more impressive and dignified body never paraded down the avenue, and it will help in getting the ballot for the marchers."

"Greatest 'Votes for Women'; Demonstration Ever Seen in This Country to Take Place To-day.

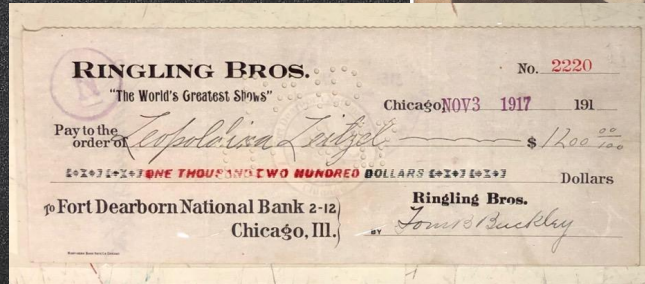
Two thousand strong, the suffragettes, advocates of equal rights, pledgers for equal franchise and petitioners for a square deal for women, will parade this afternoon in this city, and unless all signs go wrong it will be the greatest woman's rights demonstration that has ever taken place in the United States. In the procession will be women farmers, women lawyers, women mechanics, clerks, teachers, artists, musicians, aeronauts, chauffeurs, and in fact every

SUFFRAGE PARADE A SUCCESS
4,000 Women Took Part in the Greatest Demonstration Ever Seen in This Country to Take Place To-day.

WOMEN TO TAKE PART IN SUFFRAGE PARADE
The women of New York City will take part in the greatest demonstration ever seen in this country to take place to-day.

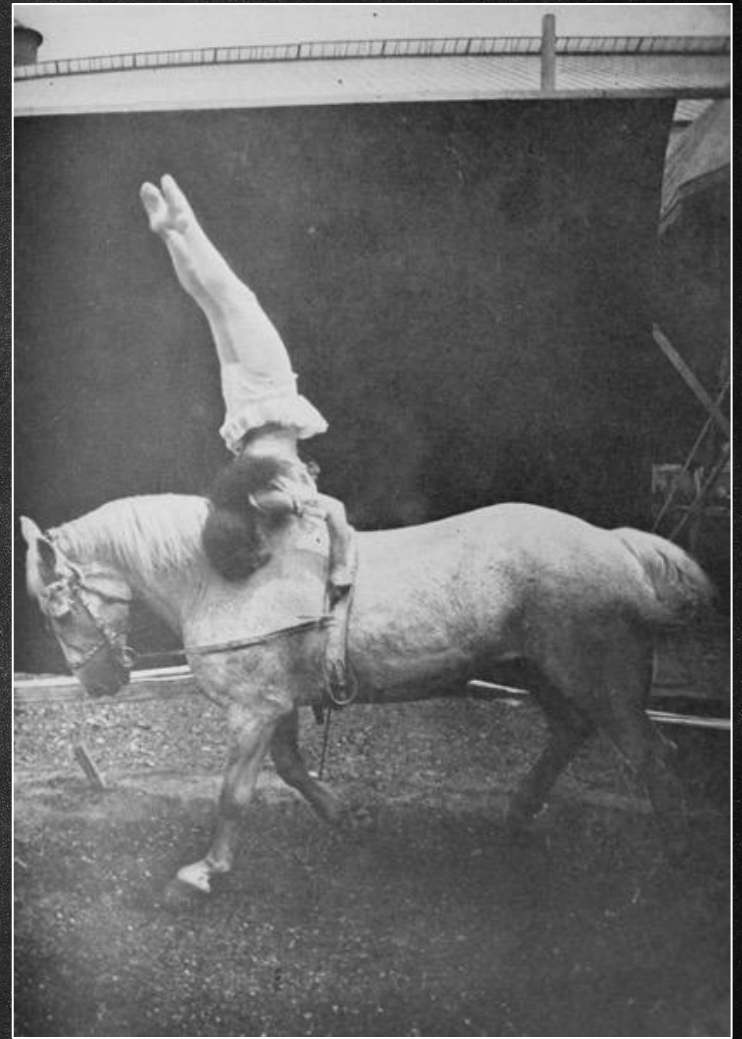
“You earn salaries. Some of you have property. You have a right to say what shall be done with it. You want to establish clearly in the mind of your husband that you are his equal. You are not above him, but his equal.”

– Josie Demott Robinson



“There is no class of women who show better that they have a right to vote than the circus women, who twice a day prove that they have the courage and endurance of men.”

– Elizabeth Cook





WHEN THE DOORS OPEN.

Suffrage Orator as Circus Card



MRS. J. S. GREVE.

Mrs. Jeannette S. Greve of Chattanooga has found a new way to spread the doctrine of woman suffrage. W. B. Sparks, owner of the Sparks circus, which has recently played in Maine, heard her speak once outside the circus tent to the crowd buying tickets. He invited her inside and gave her ten minutes, during which she proved as great an attraction for the audience as some of the regular stunts on the program.

RECORD CROWD GREET'S CIRCUS

HUGE AMPHITHEATRE PACKED
TO UTMOST CAPACITY AT
AFTERNOON EXHIBITION

The largest crowd of people ever
congregated at Portage on any occa-



MRS. AL. RINGLING

encouraged. Beautiful suburban location. Address
G. M. WENSLLOW, Ph. D., Principal, 121 Woodland Road

RINGLING BROS. HELP WISCONSIN

Wives Are Members of Suffrage Society—Allow Campaigning on Circus Grounds.

The Wisconsin Woman's Suffrage Association is very busy just now in organizing the different wards of the city of Racine. Several wards have already been successfully organized and others are in process of organization. When the whole fifteen wards are organized the officers of the ward will appoint sub-committees who will take charge of the different blocks, thus reaching every voter in the city, either by personal conference or at least with literature. Independence Day was utilized by driving an automobile on to the circus grounds and distributing literature there. The Ringling Brothers held their circus in Racine on the 4th. The wives of two at least of the Ringlings are members of the Suffrage Society at Baraboo and are deeply interested in the movement. Our workers, therefore, received the cooperation of the Ringling Brothers in reaching with literature the crowds that attended the circus.

Some time ago the W. W. S. A. addressed letters to all the principal organizations of men in the city asking for a hearing before their different orders on the subject. In accordance with the request they were invited by the Independent Order of Apostles to address their meeting. Miss Grace King of Appleton and Rev. Olympia

Brown addressed them. They gave excellent attention and at the close some of the members expressed themselves as willing to do all in their power to carry the day next November. They gave a unanimous vote of thanks to the ladies for their address. Rev. Olympia Brown spoke at the Old Settlers' picnic at Union Grove on the 20th, and also addressed a meeting of the Sons of Veterans in the open air at Hancock on the 27th of June. There was a large attendance and much enthusiasm. One of the old soldiers at the close proposed three cheers and a tiger in recognition of the speech they had heard. The people in that part of the State seem to be very much interested in the cause and ready to vote in favor of the measure.

Mrs. Laidlaw has been spending two weeks in the State speaking in German at various places. Among others, she addressed a large company of German people in German at Watertown, also at Burlington, Racine County and at Jamesville. She has also been active in assisting in the Ward organization of the city of Racine. On July 1 she spoke to the employees of the Mitchell Motor Company of Racine, which is perhaps the largest body of working men in the city. She addressed them in German.

The room is very cheerful and inviting, and it is hoped that all suffragists visiting the city of Milwaukee will call at the Suffrage Headquarters for suggestions for work, books and literature and other help.

Wisconsin suffragists are looking forward to a very active campaign in the near future. They have the promise of the assistance of a number of people from abroad. Clara E. Colby recently of Washington, D. C., expects to be in the State during the campaign. Also Mrs. May Wright Sewall, the founder of the National Council of Women, has offered her services for a month. Dr. Funk of Baltimore, his wife, Mrs. Funk, and Miss Etta Maddox of Baltimore, are expected. They also have the assurance that Rev. Caroline Bartlett Crane will spend some time with them during the campaign. With so much help from abroad it would indeed be most shameful to fail.

NEW YORK IS READY

Suffrage Workers Welcomed Everywhere—Not Even Hot Days Dampen Enthusiasm

By Harriet May Mills

June has proven a strenuous month for us. The New York State Association has had several organizers at different sections; the corresponding secretary, Mrs. Harrow, has been forming new clubs and holding a number of meetings. In addition to all this we have been carrying on the month's campaign of outdoor meetings in the beautiful towns of the Hudson river and adjacent counties. Wonderful meetings they have been, with great enthusiasm and splendid cooperation all along the line. The party consists of Miss Harriet May Mills, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Loudon and Miss Nettie A. Posell, our advance agent and manager for all the counties except Dutchess. Mr. Loudon is a barrister and an actor-manager; Mrs. Loudon a Cornell graduate and an actress. Corning

little Dutch towns, formerly so dead, are waking up to the call of the hour, and it is the time to reap the fruits of the earlier work of our suffrage pioneers, who sowed seed in such hard ground that it has been slow in germinating.

New York is ready for the suffrage gospel, for the victory now near.

A wonderful open-air rally for suffrage was given by Doubleday, Page & Co. on Friday afternoon. The company put up a huge tent on their grounds at Garden City, invited all their hundreds of employees, and thousands of other people to listen to Mr. Anna Howard Shaw, Miss Mills, Col. Alex. S. Bacon, and Mrs. Laidlaw. Miss Mills presided.

Mrs. Alfred J. Eno is taking care of the party work in Queens Borough this summer. She is filling requests for suffrage speakers from many of the Republican and Democratic clubs. A surprising interest in the cause is springing up in the men's political circles. Mrs. Penfield, Mrs. Laidlaw and Mrs. Beatrice Forbes-Robertson Hale have been heard and other meetings of the same kind are planned.

NEVADA DEMOCRATS ENDORSE SUFFRAGE

Only One Opposing Vote—Bishop Makes Appeal to Indifferent Women

The endorsement of equal suffrage by the Democratic State Convention recently held at Fallon is a great encouragement to the workers in Nevada. As a non-party organization dependent for success upon the support of all parties, we feel that the Democratic endorsement really starts votes for women on the way to constitutional victory. The question is now recognized as one of practical politics in Nevada. In the interests of justice to women we are very grateful to our friends in the convention.

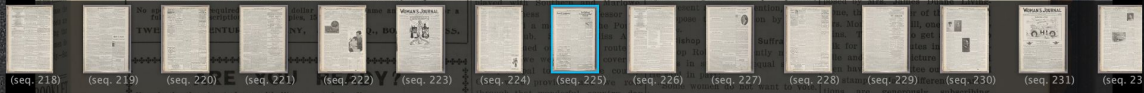
The resolution in the Democratic platform endorsing equal suffrage met with but one opposing vote, that of C. E. Gardiner of Lyon county. Ex-Governor Dickerson, who has put himself on record as opposing equal suffrage in the Ely Examiner

Advertisement for Filow Shoes Company, featuring an image of a shoe and text: "The Last Resort... Filow Shoes Company, 116 Boston Street, Dept. G. ROYAL, MASS."

You make no mistake when making purchases from our advertisers. The best articles only find a place in our advertising columns. Write and tell the advertiser how much you appreciate his cooperation and buy his goods when you need anything in his line.

TO HELP OHIO

The 25th assembly district of the Woman Suffrage Party of New York city in their zeal to help Ohio have been getting out a campaign stamp, the proceeds of the sale of which are to go to Ohio. Many novel schemes for pushing the stamp are being pro-



Women distribute flyers at the Ringling circus lot.

Student Research Examples

Photo from the collection:

1932 news photograph of Mrs. Charles (Edith) Ringling. Associated caption notes she did not think women should be involved in business, despite running the 1,600 employee Ringling Bros. Circus.

Student research directions:

Found newspaper articles associated with image. Articles also noted that Mrs. Ringling did not think women should have been granted the right to vote.

**WOMEN SHOULD
LET MEN RUN
WORLD, CLAIM**

**Mrs. Charles Ringling
Says They Do Better
Job Of It**

By Ruth Cowan,
Associated Press Staff Writer.
Chicago, Aug. 5.—(AP)—Step right
up, men, and hear—

"Women should be content to let
men run the world, for they can do

Students thought an interesting research direction would be the comparison to an earlier suffrage newsletter noting that Ringling Bros. allowed a local suffrage group to distribute flyers on the circus lot, specifically stating that two Ringling wives were members of the suffrage group.

MRS. RINGLING BEGS FOR SHOW TO GO ON



Mrs. Charles Ringling, widow of one of the founders of the Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey circus, appeals in vain to 1,600 striking employees to accept a 25

per cent wage cut, just before the show was closed Saturday night at Scranton, Pa., preparatory to returning to winter quarters in Florida.

Abandon Hunt On Cliff Face

Young McCormick's Body
Hunted in Brush

By Associated Press
ALBUQUERQUE, N. M.—Searchers moved through the tangled underbrush at the base of north Sandia peak today in a broadened hunt for Medill McCormick, Chicago publishing heir lost on a climbing expedition. Virtually abandoning belief that the youth might be lodged on the steep face of the peak, the searchers prepared thoroughly to scour the brushy terrain below the ledge on which the body of his companion, Richard Whitmer, was found last Thursday. They were working on the theory that young McCormick gained the foot of the peak's sheer face with little or no injury, but was killed, lost or severely hurt in

Ringling Circus Packs Up

Performers Almost in Tears as Big Show, Closed
By Strike, Heads South

By Associated Press
SCRANTON, Pa.—The Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey circus, stalled here by a strike, rolled southward today, its summer tour ended after nine weeks on the road. Circus officials and performers—some nearly in tears—watched roustabouts, working in a heavy rain, run the last wagon aboard the circus trains for the journey to winter quarters at Sarasota, Fla. "I'm heartbroken," said Fred Bradna, ringmaster, who has been with the circus for 38 years. "I can't realize the show is closing." **Workers Reject Pay Cut** It was the first time in the 54-year history of the circus that a strike had cut short the 30-week season. The company's 1,600 employees struck last Wednesday aft-

er refusing to take a 25 per cent wage cut. Saturday night an agreement was signed with the American Federation of Actors under which the union agreed to furnish the labor needed to move the circus south. The packing started Sunday, but was interrupted by rain. **Will Reopen Next Year** "We have a \$250,000 nut in the treasury," said President John Ringling North, "and we'll be starting on the road again next spring." William Dunn, treasurer of the circus, said it cost \$17,500 a day to operate the big show "when things are running smoothly." "But we lost \$40,000 last week," he said. "We've been losing money right along this season, and it was either cut wages or close up the show."

Ringling Brothers' circus parade at Fargo the other day had a suffrage float, entered by the local women. Anticipating trouble in the saloon district of Moorhead, they perched a vicious looting bulldog on the front seat with the driver, and when some anti-suffragists on the sidewalk attempted to tear the banners from the float, the dog did some valiant work. Sort of a canine suffragette.

Student Research Examples

Photo from the collection:

Using the same 1932 photo, along with a 1938 image of Ringling talking with striking circus employees.

Student research directions:

Found newspaper articles about a strike at the Ringling Bros. Circus, along with images from our collection showing pickets and negotiations. Students thought an interesting direction would be to research the role that Ringling played in negotiations.

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DECATUR, ILLINOIS, TU

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Circus Actors Union Strikes

Ringling Laborers Hit Wage Offer

By Associated Press

NEW YORK — The American Federation of Actors (A. F. L.) went on strike last night against the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus, just as the "big show" was folding up to move from Brooklyn to Washington.

Following a conference of union and management representatives, Ralph Whitehead, union executive secretary, told a union man, "go get out the picket signs."

The circus was about to start its season on the road.


The union staged a two-day strike on the circus a month ago when it was in Madison Square Garden. The strike was settled by a wage increase.

After a week of negotiations about wages and alleged employment of non-union men in violation of a closed shop contract, several hundred laborers at a mass meeting Friday night voted authority to union executives to call a strike any time.

Whitehead said a mass meeting had voted to reject a proposal "in the form of an ultimatum" from the circus management to reduce laborers' wages from the present minimum of \$60 a month and board.

He said John Ringling North, president of the show, had suggested \$20 a month and board, but North said his offer had been \$35, "the most we can afford."

QUESTIONS?



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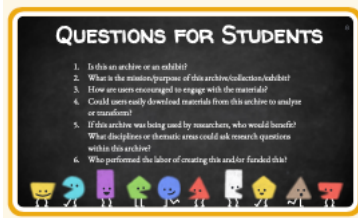
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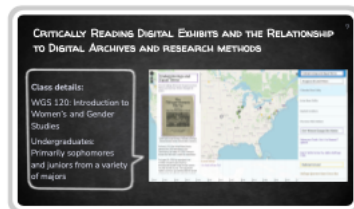
Slide Notes:

Slides 1-8: Elliott



Slides 9-18: Rebecca

Slide 9: Critically Reading Digital Exhibits and the Relationship to Digital Archives and research methods



Moving on to putting digital archival literacy instruction into practice in the classroom, the example I'm going to discuss today involves using an online exhibit as an entry point to engage undergraduate students with examining the process of conducting research. This project was completed over the course of a week during three 50-minute class sessions in an introductory Women's and Gender Studies class. The Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program at ISU offers only minors and certificates, so this prerequisite class was made up primarily of sophomores and juniors from a variety of majors.

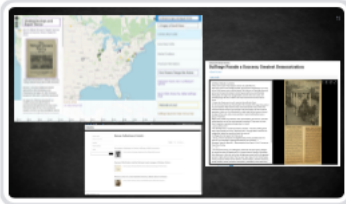
Slide 10: Suffrage Digital Exhibit



One of the main goals was to have students better understand conducting primary source research online by first exploring an online exhibit. We then worked together as

a class to reverse engineer parts of the research process. By analyzing the narrative focus of a specific exhibit, then working backwards to unpack the research process, students were asked to consider the differences between interpretative content and what they often view as more neutral digital archival repositories. The focus on intersections between circuses and the suffrage movement provided a starting point for students to assess the exhibit. I'll talk more about that in moment.

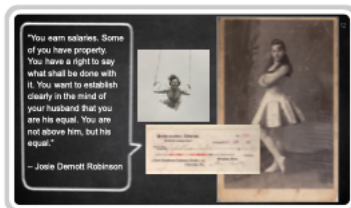
Slide 11: Digital Exhibit Screenshots



The lines between a digital archive and an exhibit can be blurred, so we spent time talking about the obvious differences and also the less obvious similarities, including the role of curation in all of these projects. Students were asked to consider things such as the perspective of a digital archive and whether there was a dominant narrative or focus emerging from the arrangement of the materials, and what was included or excluded. I also asked them to look at what else was appearing in that archival repository space, including things such as collection descriptions, timelines, narrative content, exhibits, and anything else intended to contextualize the materials or situate them within a specific framework.

So for example, here you see an exhibit built using Neatline, an Omeka database holding the underlying collections for that exhibit and links to other exhibits built into that platform. We also have a page of highly-curated primary source sets located while searching “primary sources” and “women’s suffrage.”

Slide 12: Josie Demott Robinson and Lillian Litzel



Josie Demott Robinson Lillian Litzel on rings and one of her paychecks

So, a quick breakdown of where the class started their evaluation. I had previously collaborated with some other library colleagues on an exhibit titled *Underpinnings and Equal Terms: How the Suffrage Movement Changed American Women and American Women Changed the Nation*.

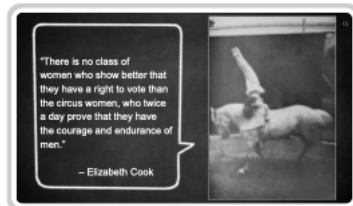
We created it around the anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Students in the WGSS course explored how the overarching theme and sub-narratives were developed, specifically considering the sections of the exhibit that are focused on

intersections between women's suffrage activities and circuses. I chose that focus because it gave me a chance to share how my research had led me someplace different than where I thought it would end up.

The quote here was delivered by the famous equestrian performer Josie Demott Robinson, who was in charge of convening the Barnum & Bailey Circus Women's Equal Rights Society. "You earn salaries. Some of you have property. You have a right to say what shall be done with it. You want to establish clearly in the mind of your husband that you are his equal. You are not above him, but his equal."

The cabinet card shows Demott Robinson in her younger performing days. The other photograph shows Lilian Leitzel, the highest paid and most important aerialist working during the time that women's suffrage activities were happening, along with one of her paychecks which we have in our Ringling collections.

Slide 13: Elizabeth Cook Quote



Students first explored the online exhibit, and then I demonstrated how my research focus had shifted while creating the circus section of this exhibit.

I had started out by focusing on the Barnum & Bailey Circus Women's Equal Rights Society, but then I began finding a lot of sources about local women's suffrage organizations leveraging large crowds that were gathering at circuses in order to communicate their messages. This fit into a completely different but important narrative about the grassroots activities of local suffrage societies and the connections to the work of the national movement.

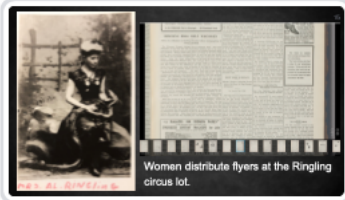
Slide 14: News Clippings



The class analyzed newspaper accounts of suffragist activities at or related to the circus and then they compared these to photos and autobiographical accounts to assess different versions of events and portrayals of women activists and circus performers in the media. I provided some digitized materials in a digital archive created for the class,

but also encouraged them explore other online repositories, with an eye to critically examining those resources.

Slide 15: Ringling Circus Lot



Students worked individually or in small groups to examine photos, posters, and other special collections materials and they searched newspaper databases to find at least one relevant article. They were asked to create their own small collection of digitized primary source materials in order to support a research question developed during this process. After the class sessions each student created a short reflective essay on their inquiries, searches, critical evaluations of the online archival repositories they used, and the process of identifying and refining their research questions.

Slide 16: Student Research Examples

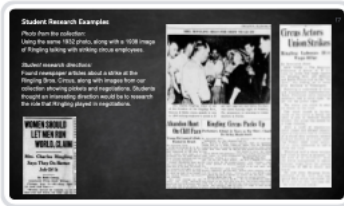


And for just a couple of examples of research directions that the class came up with, a student found a 1932 news photograph of Mrs. Charles Edith Ringling with an associated caption noting that she did not think that women should be involved in business, despite the fact that at the time she was running the Ringling Brothers Circus, which employed around 1,600 people.

The student then found newspaper articles associated with this image, and those articles also noted that Mrs. Ringling did not think women should have been granted the right to vote.

Students thought an interesting research direction might be the comparison to an earlier suffrage newsletter noting that the Ringling Brothers Circus managers had allowed a Wisconsin suffrage group to distribute flyers on the circus lot, specifically stating that two of the Ringling wives were members of the suffrage group. We also discussed whether the news coverage of Edith Ringling might have had a calculated focus on a specific role of women in society as a way to soften her image in the face of management and labor issues—and whether this was part public relations generated by the circus and part news story.

Slide 17: Additional Student Research Examples



Another student found a 1938 image of Edith Ringling, who was talking with workers, and then found a newspaper article about a strike at the Ringling Brothers Circus, along with images from our collection showing pickets and negotiations. Students thought an interesting direction here might be to further research the role that Ringling played in the negotiations or the way that she was portrayed in the media during this time.

Finally, beyond practice at synthesizing primary sources into a narrative, one of the most significant components of this assignment was that students had a chance to really use a critical eye to review the context and content of the repository sources, exhibits, primary source teaching sets, and other online spaces where materials appear and to reflect on their own experiences with using and creating them.

Slide 18: Questions



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