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The History Labs: Integrating Primary Source Literacy Skills into a History Survey Course

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In this case study, a special collections librarian and a history instructor partner to develop a series of cumulative exercises teaching primary source literacy skills for a small history survey course. This sequence of lab sessions is implemented to improve student performance in the history survey and to test this pedagogical approach. Assessment tools such as rubrics, observation, and reflective journals revealed a clear improvement in students' aptitude for a wide range of skills. The author discusses options for adapting the exercises to larger class environments and digital primary sources, as well as the transferability of primary source literacy skills to other academic settings.

KEYWORDS *active learning, collaborations, information literacy skills, instruction, outreach, primary source literacy*

INTRODUCTION

For many students, the U.S. history survey course is often a quick tour through 10 or more decades in as many weeks, dwelling on specific eras and episodes only long enough to point out the most relevant facts. Students are asked to quickly absorb large amounts of information as they speed through the high points of history, then regurgitate that data on a final test, or paraphrase it on a final paper.

Time constraints and large classes often prevent history survey instructors from helping students develop crucial historical thinking, analysis, and

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communication skills. Writing assignments and final papers frequently reflect this pedagogical inattention to skill development. Exams and papers show that students remain fuzzy on the differences between primary and secondary sources. They display difficulty formulating or supporting a thesis statement, and struggle to mobilize evidence from primary sources to support a thesis. The evidence they use to support arguments is often tenuous, and they miss vital connections between related primary sources. These trends suggest that many students may leave the history survey course without comprehending even the most basic skills of historical inquiry.¹

In this case study, conducted at Oregon State University (OSU), the history instructor wished to develop an approach that focused on asking survey students, including nonmajors, to not only think like historians, but also to work like historians, in a way not typically possible in traditional survey courses. He wanted them to engage in “historical thinking,” which, as Samuel Wineburg has argued, involves developing the “skills and habits of expert historians, such as how to approach sources, criticize assertions, corroborate evidence, examine the intent of the author, consider the audience, observe artifactual clues, and contextualize documents.”² The instructor approached the special collections librarian to explore how the resources of the library’s Special Collections and Archives Research Center (SCARC) could help him create a different kind of history survey course. We worked collaboratively to develop and adapt a series of exercises using original materials designed to teach the necessary primary source literacy skills required for historical analyses within the final paper, then implemented these over a sequence of six class visits.

Through performance assessment rubrics, observational assessment, and student feedback, we sought to determine whether the integration of cumulative primary source literacy exercises into a history survey course improved student performance on final papers, and strengthened and enhanced overall historical thinking skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Primary Source Literacy

As academic libraries have increased focus on unique materials in recent years, and as higher education has begun to value the active learning experience, special collections and archives have seen a tremendous jump in their instructional activities.³ Special collections librarians and archivists who work closely with the collections in their charge have the particular privilege of spotting the educational power and potential within materials. Through active outreach and instructional programs, librarians and archivists broadcast this potential to faculty and to students, trying to make connections between unique collections and their appropriate audiences. Faculty

also increasingly understand the educational benefits of working directly with original materials. The literature on instruction in special collections and archives environments has enjoyed considerable growth over the last decade, as archivists and librarians partnering with faculty on instruction share their expertise through published research and case studies.

Much of the literature emphasizes the use of special collections and archives for “one-shot” single sessions.⁴ Librarians and archivists welcome more intensive use of our collections, but faculty trying to fit a significant amount of course material into one term are often unwilling or unable to spend more than one class session away from course lecture or discussion. Single sessions are often mere orientations to collections, research policies, and procedures, or methods for locating materials held by the department. Although covering all of this material within one 50- or 90-minute class session presents significant challenges, librarians and archivists are called upon to teach this type of session most frequently.⁵

Other case studies showcase courses that have made more intensive use of collections to supplement the curriculum. Often focused on final projects or large group assignments, these courses result in exhibits, research papers, or websites that use the collections to explore course content or to research particular topics. In contrast to the single-session orientation, this sort of intensive research-focused use of the collections may require multiple visits but is often closely tied to a single outcome or final product, rather than a broader, cumulative skill set that can be transferred into other academic situations.⁶

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on the specific skills that archivists and special collections librarians are particularly qualified to teach. Elizabeth Yakel called for the development of an “information literacy for primary sources” in 2004, and the profession has recently begun detailing what this concept would look like.⁷ Peter Carini’s groundbreaking “curricular concepts” delineated the distinct skills related to the use of historical primary sources in our collections and advocated further development to increase curricular collaborations, generate thoughtful learning outcomes, and enable adequate assessment of our work.⁸ More recently, the editors of the compilation *Using Primary Sources: Hands-On Instructional Exercises* build on Carini’s work and suggest a set of primary source literacy skills modeled on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards, focusing on information location, evaluation, and use.⁹

Identifying and describing these skills allows special collections librarians and archivists to offer more than basic orientation or project-based work in special collections instruction sessions. Even the one-off class visit can become more meaningful if the pedagogical focus shifts to active learning exercises to teach sustainable primary source literacy skills.¹⁰ Working with authentic primary sources naturally engages students, and the use of tailored exercises and activities using these materials for the purpose of

learning transferable skills creates a more deliberate and significant learning experience.

Working in the Laboratory

Archivists, librarians, and administrators have frequently used the metaphor of the laboratory to refer to the instructional environment of special collections and archives. As a “learning laboratory” for the humanities, we can entice faculty and students to our spaces and collections, and emphasize our unique instructional contributions. The phrase connotes an atmosphere in which students can learn in a hands-on, exploratory manner, and can also evoke a controlled, methodical place where a profession is learned—where the skills necessary to become a historian, for example, are acquired and practiced. This characterization is supported by the Society of American Archivists, whose Guidelines on College and University Archives state that the archives should function as an “educational laboratory” where students can “learn about a particular subject, different types of available resources, and the proper procedures and techniques using primary archival resources in their research projects.”¹¹

Barbara Rockenbach envisioned the concept rather more actively than these guidelines, arguing that conceiving the archives as a laboratory “creates an experimental space where hands-on experience in analyzing, asking questions of, and telling stories with primary source documents are possible. Archival materials allow for the development of analytical and interpretive skills; skills often associated with the empirical work done in a laboratory.”¹² Shan Sutton stressed that all necessary elements of a laboratory environment are present in archives and special collections and noted that “these learning spaces offer raw materials (collections), research technicians (staff), and tools (finding aids) that students can use to conduct original research, make discoveries, and test hypotheses just as they do in scientific labs.”¹³

But many of these uses of the laboratory metaphor in the literature leave out an important component of the pedagogical notion of laboratory. On the whole, they do not take into account the frequency of laboratory coursework and the cumulative learning inherent to the laboratory model. Within science or language classes using a traditional laboratory format, students visit this space frequently, often once or twice a week, to practice ongoing observation and experimentation in groups. Within the hands-on lab, students progressively practice the skills required to succeed in the discipline over a series of sessions, learning the cognitive tools of the discipline in a structured, guided way. The science community has long acknowledged the benefit of these repeated, inquiry-driven processes for all students, including nonmajors; the National Science Teachers Association advocates laboratory sessions

for all students because they offer the opportunity for students to “design investigations, engage in scientific reasoning, manipulate equipment, record data, analyze results, and discuss their findings,” thereby functioning as a gateway to important higher-order skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, and analysis, as well as teamwork and communication.¹⁴

Further, laboratory sessions are typically one of several required components of a course, which can also include lecture and discussion sessions. The laboratory is equal in importance to the lecture and discussion as part of an integrated suite of education and serves to bridge the gap between conceptual and operational knowledge. By asking students to test hypotheses, analyze data, solve problems, and offer conclusions, the laboratory session supplements and extends course content, making it relevant and practical. As students progress through the lab work, they become more comfortable questioning and testing the boundaries of their knowledge. Laboratory coursework evolves in tandem with the course’s lectures, enabling students to put theory into practice.

The cumulative elements of progressive laboratory sessions are difficult to reproduce within a special collections and archives instructional setting. Librarians and archivists are not often able to explore their effectiveness as a laboratory because they are rarely afforded the luxury of multiple visits from classes, though there are a few examples of the instructional power of multiple visits. Julie Grob and David Mazella, for example, in their article on an English class collaboration using special collections materials, had students visit three times over the course of a term, each visit “ramp[ing] up in complexity so that students could feel they were taking on bigger and more self-directed tasks at each successive stage.”¹⁵ Their case study showed that students developed more advanced disciplinary understanding, as well as more sophisticated research and writing skills, through visits that included basic analysis and transcription exercises.

Several instructors have described case studies that use multiple visits to teach skills needed for a specific course or discipline. Ryan Bean and Linnea Anderson detail their development of three modules that can either stand on their own or be used with the others to form a unit.¹⁶ Created for a required undergraduate history methods course, these modules teach archival theory and practice, as well as research skills. In one module, students have a discussion and demonstration session with the curator on a topic such as the physical characteristics of primary sources. This hands-on interaction with multiple types of primary sources introduces students to the myriad of physical characteristics associated with historical sources, and sets up issues of authenticity and source evaluation. The next module, a guided facilities tour with a question-and-answer session, breaks down misconceptions or fears surrounding archival research by acquainting students with collections, policies, and procedures. The final module asks students to explore

a document together to practice analysis skills. Strung together, these three sessions form a solid basic introduction to archival research skills for history majors.

James Gerencser and Malinda Triller describe a similar set of activities, also designed for an introductory history methods class.¹⁷ Spread over two 75-minute class periods, these inventive exercises introduce vital concepts for history majors. The first activity prompts students to challenge authority by giving them multiple versions of a story appearing in several different publications. The second is a basic primary source analysis exercise, requiring students to observe and describe a document. The third prompts students to think of ways they might research and establish context for a document or artifact, and asks them to test their methods in class. Similarly, the final exercise proposes a research question and asks students to suggest places to find answers, then prompts them to test these hypotheses in class.

These examples demonstrate innovative methods for introducing history students to archival research. However, they do not take an incremental, sequential approach to student learning—skills and concepts are detached and do not follow each other in a purposeful, scaffolded progression. Though these examples do take place over multiple class sessions, they do not show a structural integration with class topics and are not meant to result in a comprehensive suite of primary source literacy skills for the student.

Arlene Diaz and her colleagues recommend a progression that results in a fairly thorough set of skills.¹⁸ These scholars surveyed history faculty within their department to discover what problems instructors were having with their students. The surveys showed frustration that students lacked the historical competencies that special collections librarians and archivists would call primary source literacy skills. The study resulted in the development of a scaffolded curriculum recommended to teach these skills, over the four years of the history major. At the 100 level, they expect students to differentiate primary from secondary sources, learn how to analyze a primary source, and comprehend how to extract information from artifacts, contextualize them, and connect them back to course themes. The 200 level classes introduce historical empathy. In these classes, students should be able to interpret human agency in the context of how an artifact from the past was produced and of the times in which it was produced. At the 300 level, students are expected to be able to evaluate and explain the authority of sources and to engage with questions of ambiguity and contradiction. At the 400 level, students should be able to develop relationships among multiple sources and synthesize the major connecting issues among them.

Though the study presents a useful delineation of necessary primary source skills, identifying particular exercises or set curricula to teach these skills was not within its scope. And though the skills are presented

sequentially and progressively, they are spread over the four years and learning levels of the undergraduate student. As with Bean and Anderson, and Gerencser and Triller, the study is geared toward students who have chosen history as their major, and does not identify or include necessary lessons for the non-history student.

Revisioning the History Survey Course

Though most academic historians have suffered through the trial of the survey course as students, they still largely reproduce the traditional pedagogy in survey courses as faculty. In recent years, however, there have been increasing efforts to shift the lecture model from its pedagogical inertia as the discipline of history has expanded to include the “scholarship of teaching and learning.” Lendol Calder proposes a move away from a fact-based approach in favor of a “signature pedagogy” for history, similar to that of law and medical schools.¹⁹ This model, as Calder practices it, involves teaching students to be historically-minded by de-emphasizing facts and instead encouraging the cognitive habits that one must hone to really “do” history. This is accomplished, argues Calder, through a focus on questions that students find meaningful, a standard pattern of instructional routine, and regular, public student performances. Adding responsive digital elements, such as clickers or polls, has also helped encourage student participation and engagement where there were propped chins and snores before. Other methods, such as small group work, peer review, and even monitoring Twitter to encourage student ownership of and engagement with content, have also contributed to a progressive (albeit gradual) pedagogical shift within the discipline.²⁰

Working with original primary sources has been only occasionally adopted as part of these instructional reforms. Although there are of course exceptions, as evidenced by the rise in demand for instruction in special collections and archives settings over the past decade, the discipline as a whole does not acknowledge the potentiality of original sources to function as instructional tools in survey courses.²¹

Historians also do not fully recognize the special collections and archives environment as a potential laboratory containing the tools and materials necessary for this instruction. Doris Malkmus, in her groundbreaking study of historians and their academic habits related to primary sources, shows that faculty who bring their classes to work with documents report that students are “powerfully moved” by working with original authentic materials. However, her study also shows that the overwhelming majority of academic historians—a full 90%—use published source books rather than locally held archives and special collections, or even online sources.²²

In a roundtable discussion of the pedagogy of the U.S. survey course conducted in 2001, very few of the faculty interviewed mentioned a focus

on teaching the skills that make up primary source literacy, and one even argued against using primary sources at all in a survey course.²³ And though the history survey pedagogy is changing, it is not shifting toward an emphasis on basic primary source literacy skills for students. Some of this ambivalence lies in the logistical predicament of bringing survey courses into spaces not designed to accommodate them, and which have limited hours and staff. But the lack of instruction in primary source literacy skills within survey courses can also be attributed to a lack of attention to non-majors. Within the discipline, the survey is generally seen as a prelude to the acquisition of these “specialized” history skills, which, if taught at all, are emphasized only at the higher levels for declared majors. As Malkmus pointed out, “while faculty design survey classes to benefit non-majors as well as majors, many may prefer to focus their creative efforts on courses designed for majors.” Of the 35 articles written about history survey courses in the journal *The History Teacher* since 1998, for example, only eight contain any suggestion or discussion of the need for survey students to develop historical research or analysis skills. Nor do any of these articles discuss the potential use for these skills in other areas of their academic careers.

In summary, this literature demonstrates that the body of research on instruction using special collections and archives currently focuses on one-off classes or specific uses of collections for particular assignments. Case studies that highlight multiple visits focused on the acquisition of skills are fewer, and when they appear, skills are generally not integrated with course content or presented in a scaffolded, linear way meant to cumulatively build skills. Though history survey pedagogy is changing, it has not embraced the use of primary sources within special collections and archives, nor has it seen the necessity of discipline-based skill acquisition for survey students.

THE HISTORY LABS

History 202 is the second in the three-course American history survey at OSU, covering the period 1820–1920 and topics such as the Civil War, western expansion, and social reforms of the Progressive Era. As a survey course, it typically attracts students in a variety of majors, at all levels of the college career. The class fulfills a requirement for the Baccalaureate Core, a requisite general education program for all students at OSU. In the traditional format, students are typically asked to complete several multiple-choice tests, short essay assignments, and to write a final paper on a particular topic covered in the course.

The section of History 202 in this case study was designated a University Honors College course, meaning that participation is limited to University Honors College students or non-Honors students with a qualifying grade point average, and enrollment is usually capped at 15 to 20 students.

Students at OSU undergo a highly competitive process to be admitted into the University Honors College, and are high-achieving, self-motivated individuals with academic distinction.

The class met twice a week for 2 hours each class, with 4 hours total class time per week. Due to of scheduling issues, this sample class had only five total students enrolled. However, we decided to proceed with the class plan nonetheless, reasoning that this experience might inform future planning with larger enrollments and suggest whether this pedagogical approach had potential in this setting. Also, five students is the size of a typical “lab group” in other laboratory environments, so we thought it was possible that this class would give us a better sense of how a history lab group would function within a larger survey class. The students were a mix of majors, including engineering, biology, and international relations.

The instructor for this session met with the author to discuss his concern with previous student performance on final papers. We connected students’ poor performance to an unfamiliarity with the basic skills needed for historical analysis and inquiry. Together, we worked to identify the basic skills needed to work and think like historians at the undergraduate survey course level. By imagining an ideal final paper, we worked backwards to distill the qualities of this product into the skills needed to produce them. The following skills were identified through this process:

- identify the basic features of a primary source; observe and describe creator, type of source, date created, place created, physical details;
- evaluate a primary source to detect bias and to engage with issues of authority, authenticity, ambiguity, contradiction, and tone;
- interpret content and analyze meaning;
- recognize links and relationships between primary sources and/or secondary sources;
- locate and select relevant primary sources;
- effectively use primary sources as evidence to support a perspective or argument;
- summarize sources and synthesize them into an argument; and
- respond to other perspectives using evidence from sources.

The instructor devised a class model that included an hour of lecture per class meeting. The second hour of each week’s first meeting was designed as a Writing Workshop, in which the instructor gave students targeted instruction in academic writing skills. The Writing Workshops introduced concepts such as structuring historical essays, formulating thesis statements, and discussing the use of primary sources in historical writing.

The second hour of each week’s second meeting was designated as a History Lab, building student skills by using hands-on engagement with

original historical sources in the collections of SCARC. We planned a progressive sequence of exercises, advancing from a foundation of fundamental interpretation, evaluation, and analysis skills to a zenith of using historical evidence to argue a position.

To judge the effectiveness of these exercises, we used a combination of grading rubrics, in-class observational assessment, and student reflective feedback. To establish a baseline to gauge student performance, we conducted a basic preassessment during the first class session by asking students to write briefly about what their previous experience with primary sources had been, either in secondary or college level environments, and to report their own assessment of their primary source literacy skills. All students reported that they had had very little previous exposure to primary sources. One student wrote, "I have never used original primary sources before, to my knowledge."²⁴ Another remembered seeing primary sources in a high school textbook, and one had visited SCARC previously to see an exhibit but didn't remember much about it. From these reports we concluded that students had no real prior experience with primary sources and possessed few or no primary source literacy skills at the beginning of the class.

Magia Krause has examined the use of rubrics in special collections and archives instructional settings, and argued their effectiveness in measuring learning and in judging whether specific skills are being acquired.²⁵ The analytic rubrics we designed were adapted from those by Krause, and tailored to reflect course-specific goals. For each rubric, we matched the learning objectives to a scale of demonstration and took care to be specific about the ways in which students could demonstrate the skills being taught. We followed the process for developing full-model rubrics recommended by RAILS (Rubric Assessment of Information Literacy Skills)²⁶ by describing the desired learning outcomes, identifying the specific attributes that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of the instruction, and writing narrative descriptions of the levels of performance. This resulted in defined criteria, performance levels, and performance descriptions that helped us better define and clarify the goals of each exercise (see Appendix 1).

To gather observational assessment, we took turns in the role of observer for each class session, taking a fairly detached stance in the class operations to watch and record student behavior. The observer took notes on the steps students took to complete tasks, how they handled any problems encountered, and recorded any questions asked by students. The other instructor facilitated the exercise by explaining it to students, answering questions and providing guidance to students throughout. Though the observer was not prevented from contributing to the class session, their primary role was to watch and record. After each class, we worked together to expand the observer's notes, filling in as much detail as possible.

We gathered feedback by asking students to write a brief, five- or six-sentence paragraph reflecting on what they learned after each exercise. In

addition to aiding students in articulating and understanding their own process of skill development within the History Labs, this reflective writing was intended to improve our analysis of successes and failures, and to help counteract any potential interpretive biases.

The following discussion describes the in-class exercises, analyzes student performance for each exercise, and recommends improvements based on student performance. Results of performance rubrics are summarized in Appendix 2.

Exercise 1: Fundamentals

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify different types of primary sources (letters, diaries, newspapers, ledgers, ephemera, photographs, published books, reports).
- Identify basic features of primary sources, such as creator, place of creation, date of creation, and intended audience.

The first exercise was a basic primary source analysis exercise,²⁷ asking students to examine a source and answer a series of general questions about it, such as:

- What type of document is this? Describe it in a few sentences.
- What person or organization produced this document?
- When was the document produced? Describe some physical details that hint at when it was produced.
- What does this source reveal about the period in which it was produced?

This exercise functioned as a sort of warm-up for students, easing them into the process of looking closely at a document to glean historical information from its details. Especially suited to students who have no prior experience with primary sources, this exercise helps students begin to make connections between historical content and historical artifacts. Because the answers to several of these basic questions can be fairly straightforward, this exercise also addresses a common tendency of undergraduates (left over from a K–12 education stressing standardized testing) to believe there is only one right answer to any question; however, depending on the sources used, this exercise can also help students begin to realize that these answers can sometimes be complicated. We chose materials with some ambiguity to encourage students to begin to anticipate the complexity in primary sources that we would be exploring in future exercises. Collection items included a handwritten letter, a manuscript ledger book, a manuscript diary, a photograph,

a book, a newspaper, and several pieces of ephemera, all dating from within 1820 to 1920 and related to the full range of course topics.

After we gave a brief introductory inventory of the materials on the tables and explained the exercise, the students chose their first primary source and worked through the questions on a worksheet. They were then encouraged to seek another and repeat the exercise. By repeating the process at least twice (and for some students, up to three times), students gained exposure to several different types of sources and to the observational adjustments necessary for each type. After each student had visited at least two sources, we then visited each source as a class, working through the questions, discussing potential answers, and exploring possible complications in gathering historical details.

This initial exercise saw mixed performance from the students. Although some grasped these basic concepts easily, others were challenged by their first interaction with original historical materials. We observed that many students were hesitant about the physical nature of the sources, resisting encouragement to touch and browse them. Most students easily identified common source types such as newspapers, photographs, and published books but were somewhat confused by less familiar types such as ledgers, reports, and ephemera. For example, one student, referring to a plain, bound 1870 report on railroad expansion in the West, noted during discussion that "I didn't think a pile of paper like this could be a primary source." Both observation and performance rubrics revealed that students identified basic features correctly but were also hesitant to guess when questions such as date or creator were slightly ambiguous.

Their reflective journal entries confirmed a hesitancy to handle materials we had noticed during class. Almost every student alluded to this, including one who said, "Anything that looks too brittle I stay away from because I don't want to ruin it." However, this was the only negative element of the exercise mentioned in the journals. Students noted that their original concept of "primary source" was broadened to include things they had not thought about before, including newspapers, ephemera, and books. One student noted, "I thought it would be dry and boring . . . working with old things. I was excited to see that there were historical materials I hadn't known about before."

In this first exercise, students may have felt overwhelmed by the combination of a new instruction space, unfamiliar materials, and unfamiliar questions about primary sources. Though we wanted to encourage an atmosphere of exploration in the session, the request to visit as many sources as possible within the given time may have caused anxiety to students who were already trying to process an unfamiliar environment. These issues might easily be resolved by describing the instructional space of SCARC in the class session prior to the first meeting, as well as by giving a preliminary handling lesson and an outline of the exercise and materials students will encounter.

Exercise 2: Interrogating Sources

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Interpret and analyze a source's content and physical details.
- Evaluate issues of authority, bias, provenance, authenticity, and tone in a source.

The second exercise encouraged students to build upon and sharpen the observational and analytical skills awakened in the first exercise. In this exercise, the instructors introduced issues of authority, bias, tone, provenance, and authenticity by asking specific questions tailored to the selected primary sources. This visit coincided with lecture coverage of the Civil War, and a variety of relevant sources were selected from the collections, including camp newspapers, handwritten march song lyrics, and Confederate children's literature. We developed a list of targeted questions tailored to each individual source (rather than the generic questions in the previous exercise). Some questions focused students' attention on basic details, such as the creator, type, or date of the document, but most were intended to spotlight author bias, issues of authority and origin, and identification of tone. For example, the worksheet for an 1866 letter written by a bitter Southern survivor of the war expressing his views on slavery and emancipation asked,

- Where was this letter written from? Who was it written to?
- What is the author's position on the Civil War? On slavery?
- Do you question any of the details provided by the author? Why?
- What is the bias of the author? How do you know?

Because the questions required deeper examination of the source and more careful thought, students spent all of their time with one source during this exercise. Students then reported to the class, and we used their answers to lead a discussion on the ways that bias can be detected and expressed, how to discover their own interpretive biases, and how authority and authenticity can be evaluated.

By reinforcing the analysis skills begun in the first exercise, and adding another layer of evaluative skill, this exercise encouraged students to consider answers more deeply and add nuance to their interpretations of primary sources. Many undergraduates privilege "fact," and become uncomfortable when examining ideas of perspective in historical issues.²⁸ This exercise integrates enough facts to make them cognitively comfortable, but also begins to open their minds to differing interpretations and perceptions.

All students performed either at the good or exemplary level in this exercise. We noticed that some students were slow to get started, and seemed to need time to absorb both the directive and the source. However, others jumped in with gusto and seemed already more at ease with the sources.

Based on observations from the first exercise, we opened with a short lesson on handling, and saw that the techniques covered were immediately adopted by the students; their early concerns were clearly assuaged, and each student commented in their reflections that they felt more empowered to handle materials after this part of the class. During discussion, we noted that several students who were previously confident about gleaning straightforward answers began to think again about complexity. For example, one student observed an error in the date of a handwritten letter, and noted to us that his interpretation of the content was skewed until he noticed that detail, “because everything changes when you see that they made mistakes too.”

Though most students did well in responding to targeted questions about a source’s content, some working with handwritten sources were somewhat stymied. The cramped, looping style of 1860s American handwriting was difficult for these students to decipher, and this task took up much of their time, leaving less time to spend on critical thinking questions related to interpretive elements such as authority, bias, or tone. However, most students performed relatively well on these questions. One student was unclear on the meaning of the word bias. Two students had worksheets with prompts asking whether they would question any content related by the source’s author. Both hesitated at this, and in both cases, this was their weakest answer. Two exemplary students offered further speculation on the cause of bias in their sources’ creators, and also connected their sources back to course content covered in the readings for that week. In their reflection journals, the majority of students commented on bias. One noted that by identifying the causes of his source’s personal standpoint he was “reminded that we are studying real people.” Another noted that he hadn’t realized until this exercise that “people in the past think like we do.”

Improving this exercise would involve a short lesson on 19th-century handwriting, as well as including a definition of terms, either on the source’s worksheet or as a preliminary discussion. Though not clearly expressed in the worksheet rubric results, observation led us to sense students’ slight unwillingness to be critical of the source. In the future, an opening discussion about the scholarly need to look critically at sources would anticipate and address this reluctance.

Exercise 3: Research Uses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Observe and communicate potential scholarly uses for primary sources.
- Recognize the role of primary sources in the cycle of scholarship.
- Distinguish links and relationships between primary sources and/or secondary sources.

In this exercise, we wanted students to make the connection between original primary sources and interpretive scholarly products. This exercise illustrates the cycle of scholarship, showing how a primary source can both raise historical questions to inspire further research, and generate evidence to answer historical questions. We did this by asking students to articulate answers to two questions: “What research questions could this primary source help to answer?” and “What questions does this primary source raise?” By answering these, students hone the analysis and interpretive skills developed by the first and second exercises, and begin to zero in on how and why details about bias, authority, content, or physicality become relevant to students and scholars of history.

This session coincided with lecture coverage of westward expansion during the mid- and late-19th century. We selected collection materials that offered evidence for a wide range of potential topics, but that were also provocative enough to inspire curiosity and new questions. Materials included documents related to railroad construction in Oregon, emigrants’ guides to overland journeys, miners’ manuals, and period photographs showing interactions between Native Americans and white settlers. Students were given worksheets with the questions, and were asked to visit as many primary sources within 20 minutes as they could, generating at least three answers to each question for each source. After 20 minutes, we asked students to report their replies.

Working through their answers in discussion, the class explored the multiple potential roles of primary sources and different ways to use them in each stage of the research process. Rubrics and observation showed that each student performed at the exemplary level, generating both potential questions raised by the source and potential scholarly uses of the source as historical evidence. Though there was some overlap among students’ answers, most answers were remarkably original, and we noted that our discussion generated significant enthusiasm about research in general. Students noticed elements of the sources that even we had not noticed, and thought creatively about the role of those elements in the process of scholarship. During discussion, we observed that there was even a bit of one-upsmanship as students tried to provide responses more creative and original than others. Each student displayed a nuanced and perceptive understanding of the items, and their questions and uses engaged with issues of bias, audience, and the purpose of the documents. As we discussed their responses, each student connected source matter to that week’s class topics in thought-provoking ways. Students testified to the success of this exercise in their reflection journals. One noted that after this activity, he understood “how to tie primary documents together.” Another asked questions about one of the readings for that week in light of something he had read in a primary source document selected for the class.

This exercise challenged two assumptions typical of many history survey students. First, students tend to recognize only one way of using or interpreting a primary source, and are unable to identify other potential perspectives or uses of that source.²⁹ This exercise inspired them to think about how primary sources can inspire multiple routes of inquiry; as one student exclaimed during discussion, “I never thought you could do so much with one document!” Second, insecure in their developing knowledge and skills, students rarely see themselves as part of the scholarly conversation. Through the act of generating potential research questions inspired by a source, students began to see how scholarship is created and build confidence in their ability to contribute to it.

Exercise 4: Gathering Evidence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate primary sources to determine relevance to an historical question.
- Identify and communicate evidence to support a perspective or argument.

In this exercise, we wanted students to practice their growing skills in analysis and use of primary sources, as well as their new skill of identifying linkages and relationships between sources. Building on this foundation, this problem-based exercise prompted students to recognize and discover intellectual and thematic connections between disparate primary sources, then muster those connections to answer an historical question. The instructors selected a set of 12 primary sources related to the topical emphasis of the week, which was labor, consumerism, and capitalism. Materials included issues of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Puck*, and *Collier's* filled with advertisements highlighting the rise of consumer culture, as well as articles and political cartoons reflecting labor and capital issues. Late 19th-century manuscript ledgers from local general stores and hardware stores, along with a number of chromolithographed advertising trade cards, suggested consumer values and behavior of the period. In making selections for the session, we looked for complementarity between different sources, as well as the potential for diverse, broad, and potentially contradictory possibilities for interpretation. We devised an open-ended question that offered multiple paths of analysis using these sources: “How did advertising and print culture shape the growth of consumerism in America?”

Students were asked to examine the sources together as a group, then together devise a cohesive answer to the question using evidence gathered from the sources. By asking students to identify potential evidence in a range of primary sources, this exercise stressed that substantiation for an answer or argument can come from many different sources, and that examining a

network of relevant items results in nuanced understandings of historical issues.

The fourth exercise saw a significant drop in performance for some students, whereas others maintained their exemplary work. We noticed that some seemed overwhelmed by the task, and looked closely at only one or two sources during the time given for the group to examine sources and locate evidence to answer the question. Some also did not participate as freely in the group discussion as they gathered evidence, hesitating before making conclusions or connections and preferring to listen intently to others' analyses and arguments. Other students examined all the available sources, saw potential connections between them, and appraised them critically to see which held evidence for the question and which did not. They also succinctly listed their pieces of evidence during the class discussion, noted what sources were not especially useful in providing evidence, and communicated their answer clearly as they connected the sources to class readings and lecture topics for the week.

Looking critically at the design of the exercise reveals several flaws that may explain the drop in performance. Each prior exercise had asked students to look at individual primary sources removed from a larger context. The amalgamation of many sources for one exercise was likely overwhelming to some students. One student reported in his reflection journal that although he thought the exercise was useful as a whole, it was overwhelming to absorb so many sources at once. The exercise could be improved and strengthened with a change to the mechanics; instead of asking students to look over and analyze multiple sources in one short time period, we might have divided the sources so that each student would have one or two to examine within that period. Then, students could pool their observations from each source, find connecting themes emerging from the sources, and offer examples from their assigned sources for support of the cohesive argument. Another improvement would be to simply limit the number of chosen sources to a more manageable size.

Exercise 5: Exhibit Build³⁰

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate and select sources in support of a perspective or theme.
- Summarize sources and synthesize them into an argument.

This penultimate exercise drew on the full suite of previously introduced skills; the added skill here is the call to summarize and synthesize evidence into an argument. In contrast to the previous exercise, where sources were preselected for students, this activity asked them to exercise their evaluative

skills to choose appropriate sources to illustrate a theme. We devised a set of themes related to the week's content emphasis on World War I: Home Front Responsibilities, The Role of the U. S. in the World, Appeals to Nationalism and Patriotism, The Role of Women, and Depictions of the Enemy. Students were asked to build an exhibit on World War I using posters from a World War I Poster Collection. Each student was given a packet of printed copies of the posters, and assigned one of these themes. After examining the packet of copies, students chose three posters they thought were most illustrative of their theme and prepared an argument for why they chose their selections. While they explained the reasoning behind their choices, we laid out the actual full-size posters from the collection on classroom tables so that we could view the original artifact as they spoke.

Besides developing skills in evaluating sources for relevance, this exercise targeted development of students' ability to marshal evidence to make an argument and to communicate their ideas. It also expanded students' ability to recognize connections between sources, as many of the posters had overlapping themes, and some worked equally well in multiple areas.

Student performance was mixed in the penultimate exercise. Each student appeared to grasp the concept of the exercise once it was introduced, and each dove into their packet of propaganda posters with enthusiasm after receiving their assigned theme. Most students made selections that clearly supported their theme. These students clearly compiled relevant details about their posters, and summarized them succinctly for the class. Interestingly, several students independently chose the same posters to represent different themes. We had not anticipated this, thinking that with 30 potential posters and only three needed for each of the five themes, a natural variety of selections would emerge. Each student had a solid argument for why that poster supported their theme in particular. Discussing the same posters in different thematic contexts gave students the opportunity to shift their perspectives and to consider the real work each poster was doing. Upon reflection after the exercise, we thought at first that imposing a "no duplicates" rule on the exercise would ensure an entertaining and instructive diversity of choices; however, upon further consideration, we believe that a dialogue that considers the same posters from multiple angles gives a valuable educational opportunity for students that outweighs the appeal of variety.

We observed that after summarizing their sources, a few of the students initially struggled to articulate their reasons for selecting specific posters. However, once others began asking questions and even challenging their arguments, each student explained their choices with clarity and depth of thinking. With some exceptions, students made clear claims that showed a grasp of the many possible interpretations of a source, and why a particular source had distinct relevance to the topic. Some arguments were multilayered and related very well back to the course's readings and lectures for the week.

Students noted that they had learned important ideas about evaluation and synthesis within their reflection journals; one student commented that “it was fun to put together all the pieces of evidence.” However, the results of the performance rubrics and our observations suggest two revisions. First, having students work in pairs might improve this exercise. There were some hints of nervousness about addressing the whole class alone. Working in pairs would potentially alleviate this nervousness and allow for an exchange of ideas that would put students at ease, as well as deepen their understanding. Second, some students seemed to rush to make their choices, paging rather hurriedly through their packets. Having all the posters (or reproductions) laid out all at once in a “smorgasbord” atmosphere might allow for easier browsing and more considered choices.

Exercise 6: Debate

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Summarize sources and synthesize them into an argument.
- Respond to other perspectives using evidence from sources.

The final exercise improved students’ ability to summarize sources and synthesize them into an argument, and built on all of the previously introduced skills by asking students to analyze and interpret sources, to detect authority, bias, or contradiction within them, to recognize and select appropriate sources to use to support a claim, and to identify potential connections between sources. The further skill of responding to divergent points of view using evidence from primary sources was also introduced in this exercise. We selected two sets of five primary sources related to the Progressive Era, including items such as *The Anti-Saloon Yearbook* for 1914, sex education pamphlets from the Oregon Social Hygiene Association, treatises on women in the labor force, ephemera on home sanitation measures, books on industrial labor reform, and magazines on eugenics. These sets were placed on opposite sides of the room, and students were split into two groups. The instructors gave each side an opposing prompt to argue. One side was given the prompt, “The primary ethic of the Progressive Era was to help people improve their lives in order to create a better society.” The second side was given the prompt, “The primary ethic of the Progressive Era was to change people’s behavior to conform to how reformers thought the world should be.”

Each side was asked to argue their prompt, using their selected set of sources to gather evidence supporting their argument. A student moderator was appointed and tasked with observing and judging the preparations. After twenty minutes, students came together and held a debate. After each side

gave their opening argument, the other side was given the opportunity to rebut the points of the opposing view. After hearing the arguments and weighing their strength, the moderator selected a winner and made an evaluative statement defending his choice.

This exercise combines each of the prior primary source literacy skills into one activity, and most closely simulates all of the intellectual processes required for a successful final paper. This exercise was timed to coincide with the week in which students would be working on their final papers most intensely and confronting the task of coalescing arguments and sources into cohesive, substantiated analyses.

Student performance was firmly good in the final exercise. Each student reviewed the selection of sources carefully, and worked together in their groups to compare notes and exchange details. Their engagement with the sources, each other, and the argument resulted in a flurry of spirited, whispered conversations as they came up with the most powerful evidence to enhance their argument and defend their position. In their arguments, students incorporated logical supporting evidence from most, if not all, of their sources. They became passionate as they argued and showed increased eloquence and a surprisingly intense investment. Rebuttals on both sides were well-reasoned and thorough, and students maintained an attitude of respect for each other throughout. In their reflection journals, students noted that this exercise was their favorite, though their comments on what exactly they learned were limited. One specifically mentioned critical thinking skills in reflecting on this exercise, and another noted that this exercise pointed out to him that he “should not make so many assumptions” in his initial assessments of primary sources.

There was one possible change we spotted that might introduce an opportunity for deeper and more productive discourse. If we identified a source that could potentially support both sides of the argument, and include it in the selections for both sides, students would be compelled to approach the shared source from opposing sides. This would reinforce the lessons on bias, ambiguity, and complexity from previous exercises and encourage a more sophisticated understanding of the issues on both sides.

DISCUSSION

The results of the grading rubrics show that most students either gradually improved their performance or maintained achievement from exercise to exercise. The only drops in performance occurred between Exercise 3: Research Uses and Exercise 4: Gathering Evidence (two students), and between Exercise 4: Gathering Evidence and Exercise 5: Exhibit Build (one student). We attribute the success of Exercise 3 to the selection of particularly engaging and relevant materials, as well as its placement in the term. Students had

just received their final paper assignments and were just beginning to think about what sources they would be using, what questions they wanted to engage with, and how they would be using sources as evidence, which synced perfectly with the tasks of the exercise. The drop in performance for the next exercise is curious, as both exercises had to do with linkages—Exercise 3 with connections between sources and scholarship, and Exercise 4 with connections between sources and a specific research question. However, we note that an important cognitive shift happens between these two activities. Up to Exercise 4, students had been asked to explore sources, or to think about how they *might* be used. Exercise 4 asked them to transition from exploration into *actual* use, applying what they found in exploration to respond to a question. This move to organization and synthesis of observations for a research purpose is challenging, and may have been too abrupt for some students. In the future, we would make the above-mentioned modifications to Exercise 4 to make this transition easier and to improve student confidence about deploying their observation skills into applied use of primary sources.

For their final papers, students were asked to develop an original historical argument based on primary sources about a topic of their choosing from the period of 1820 to 1920. The instructor required them to choose one principal source from any of the primary sources they had seen during their first five visits. This principal source needed to be complemented by at least one other primary source. Complementary materials could be either digital or physical. Using their pool of primary sources as substantiating evidence, along with the varying perspectives of the required readings for the course, students were asked to create and support an original thesis statement about their topic.

The grading rubric for the final paper was closely informed by the list of skills we developed as markers of success for the course (see Appendix 3). To ensure that grading was consistently applied, we read not only the final papers but consulted each of the sources cited as well. To minimize our own biases, we asked an assistant to remove all identifying information before reading the papers. We were surprised and delighted to see that each student, even those whose performance had fluctuated in the History Lab exercises, achieved an exemplary rating for their final paper. Compared with their responses to our pre-assessment question, student performance on the final paper demonstrated the History Labs' positive influence on students' historical thinking and primary source literacy skills.

CONCLUSION

These assessments show that the regularity of student exposure to primary source literacy skills, as well as the cumulative skill development gained as part of a laboratory approach to learning history, resulted in a positive effect

on student comprehension and production in the survey course. Each student experienced a relevant way to extend and deepen the course content, and each left this class proficient in primary source usage, with some excelling at numerous primary source literacy skills. Student performance on their final papers indicates that a skills-based laboratory approach positively affects student achievement in the history survey course.

There were several notable limitations to this study. The primary limitation is its focus on only one small class. To generate more solid conclusions about this model, a longitudinal study of the effects of History Labs on student performance in survey courses would be necessary. Further, the very limited sample size prevents any large-scale analysis of the effects of History Labs on student performance. Because of the small sample size, the results of the current study may not be fully generalizable to other history survey courses; however, the performance patterns emerging from this sample can inform and influence future directions with similar programs. Another limitation was the fact that this was an Honors College course, made up of students who are typically high-achieving in any academic environment. A longitudinal study of the performance of survey students at a mix of academic levels would shed light on the further successes and limitations of this pedagogical model. Further, a preassessment test of skills, rather than a personal reflective journal entry, would establish a clearer baseline from which to gauge a change in the students' skill levels.

There are also complications to this model that may not allow it to be implemented in some settings. One important complication lies in what the collections can yield. In many cases, the SCARC collections had multiple primary sources on a topic and could support the exercise without a problem. Other topics, however, were not as well represented in the collections. For example, it was difficult to make decisions about which primary sources would best support Exercise 3: Gathering Evidence, which corresponded with western expansion in the course schedule. SCARC has a large History of the Pacific Northwest Collection that includes numerous emigrant guides, works on mining and other early West industries, as well as photographs and ephemera related to settlement in the West, and any number of these could have stood in for this exercise. This variety is important to have for this model—if it is frequently repeated or employed, selecting different sources each time will help minimize the physical impact of instruction on the materials and aid in their preservation. But other topics, such as labor rights, were not as well represented in the collections. Although there are some materials that can support inquiry in this area, it is not a natural strength of the collection. In this case, we turned to the general stacks to provide more primary sources to choose from. Not only did this yield a bounty of usable and relevant sources, it brought several fragile and rare items eligible for transfer from the general stacks to SCARC to the librarian's attention.

Though staged here for a small class, the exercises can be modified to accommodate larger class sizes. Class size is often viewed as prohibitive for the smaller classrooms of special collections and archives environments, but arranging staggered sessions of smaller group visits would preserve an intimate interaction with each other and the materials.³¹ Another option would be to arrange for a special collections or archives professional to visit a survey class with materials.³² In either case, some exercises that were previously geared toward individual work would have to be modified for group work (such as Exercise 1: Fundamentals and Exercise 2: Interrogating Sources). A close collaboration between the repository and the instructor would also be crucial. But with careful selection of materials, clear handling instructions, sufficient space, and adequate supervision, a large survey class working in groups can often mimic the small class experience and result in increased engagement and learning.

Each exercise might also be adapted to incorporate digitized primary sources. In many cases, physical details are crucial to a complete understanding of a primary source. However, many of the concepts addressed in the exercises might still come across without access to those physical details, and might open an important dialogue about the perils and benefits of digitized versus physical sources and how these affect the work of history. The entire curriculum might also be adapted for online-only classes, using course management software features, blogs, and other applications such as Flickr, Omeka, and Smore.

Another issue inherent to this model is the amount of time required to find suitable sources. In this case study, the librarian was primarily responsible for initial item selection, based on in-depth conversations with the instructor about what materials would be tied to the week's topics and appropriate for the exercise's learning goals. We met prior to the History Lab each week to refine the selections and plan the lessons, and this process was time-intensive. Though rich collections and a thorough knowledge of them aid the process greatly, laboratory sessions of this type take a significant amount of time to find, evaluate, and ready appropriate materials. For some exercises, such as Exercise 2: Interrogating Sources, the instructor, librarian, or both must look closely at each individual source to identify and select questions surrounding bias, authenticity, authority, and other issues. This can be almost prohibitively time-consuming, especially if the exercises were scaled for a large class. However, once the work was done for one or two classes, the sources could be reused for further classes without much further time investment, provided they were able to withstand continued handling.

We noted several potential general improvements through our first experience with a laboratory approach. First, we failed to make evaluation rubrics available to students for either the exercises or the final paper. Doing so would help students better understand what was expected of them, and more easily explain their earned grades to them.³³ Second, we would fully

embed the librarian for all 10 weeks of the quarter in the future. Students only visited SCARC six of the 10 weeks, with five of those visits occurring Weeks 5 through 10 and largely focusing on artifactual intelligence skills. For the other weeks, we would like to develop further lab sessions that teach archival literacy skills, such as how to locate primary sources in a special collections and archives environment, or how to use a repository. These may not make direct use of the collections, and also may not require physical exposure to materials, which means students would not have to physically visit. Though these skills were not directly required by the final assignment, they would round out and enhance the set of primary source literacy skills that students gained via the laboratory sessions, offering further practical proficiencies such as catalog searching that students could easily transfer to other academic situations.

In recent years there have been numerous conversations within higher education about the real purpose of attending college.³⁴ Some have argued that developing habits of mind or critical thinking skills are more crucial than mere content mastery for young adults. A laboratory approach to the American history survey course such as the one described in this article builds relevant, practical, and transferable critical thinking skills for students in any major, which can be applied widely in other life situations or academic environments. Each exercise builds crucial close observation skills necessary in numerous disciplines, including the physical sciences, social and health sciences, and the humanities. The important evaluative skills developed by these exercises can transfer to many other situations where information must be critically assessed to determine the source of the information, as well as its relevance and level of objectivity. Students in all disciplines must frequently practice recognizing historical and conceptual connections to current conditions; these skills can in turn contribute to refined analytical and interpretive skills such as the ones developed in the History Labs. The teamwork and communication skills practiced can translate immediately into academic and general situations, as can techniques in understanding other perspectives and alternate interpretations. Supporting arguments with clear and convincing evidence is a necessary skill no matter what students go on to do in their careers. The History Labs show that special collections and archives can make significant contributions to the development of these habits of mind through teaching primary source literacy skills. When they are coupled with content mastery in survey courses, these skills can result in rich, transformative educational experiences for every student.

NOTES

1. Arlene Diaz, Joan Middendorf, David Pace, and Leah Shopkow, "The History Learning Project: A Department 'Decodes' Its Students," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (2008): 1211.

2. Doris Malkmus, "Primary Source Research and the Undergraduate: A Transforming Landscape." *Journal of Archival Organization* 6, no. 1 (2008): 52.
3. Adam Berenbak et al., *SPEC KIT 317: Special Collections Engagement* (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2010): 14.
4. See, for example: Pablo Alvarez, "Introducing Rare Books into the Undergraduate Curriculum," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 7, no. 2 (2006): 94–104; Julia Walworth, "Oxford University: Speed-Dating in Special Collections: A Case Study" in *Past or Portal: Enhancing Undergraduate Learning through Special Collections and Archives* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2012) [hereafter referred to as *Past or Portal*], 30–34; "A Novel Approach: Teaching Research through Narrative," in *Past or Portal*, 97–102.
5. Reference, Access, and Outreach Section, Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group, "Survey Findings and Recommendations," accessed May 15, 2014, http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/TPS_survey_final_report_080513.pdf
6. Examples of this type of course using special collections and archives include Trevor Bond and Todd Butler, "A Dialog on Teaching an Undergraduate Seminar in Special Collections," *Library Review* 58, no. 4 (2009), 310–316; Marianne Hansen, "Real Objects, Real Spaces, Real Expertise: An Undergraduate Seminar Curates and Exhibition on the Medieval Book of Hours" in *Past or Portal*, 237–241; Robin Katz, "Teaching Cultural Memory: Using and Producing Digitized Archival Material in an Online Course," in *Past or Portal*, 179–185.
7. Elizabeth Yakel, "Information Literacy for Primary Sources: Creating a New Paradigm for Archival Research Education," *OCLC Systems and Services* 20, no. 2 (2004): 61–64.
8. Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources Into the Curriculum." *Journal of Archival Organization* 7, no. 1–2 (2009), 41–50.
9. Anne Bahde, Heather Smedberg, and Mattie Taormina, eds. *Using Primary Sources: Hands-On Instructional Exercises* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Libraries Unlimited, 2014), xviii–xx.
10. Reference, Access, and Outreach Section, Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group, "Survey Findings and Recommendations," accessed May 15, 2014, http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/TPS_survey_final_report_080513.pdf
11. Society of American Archivists, "Guidelines on College and University Archives," accessed May 30, 2014, <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/cnu/cuguide2005.pdf>
12. Barbara Rockenbach, "Archives, Undergraduates, and Inquiry-Based Learning: Case Studies from Yale University Library," *American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011): 297–311.
13. Shan Sutton, "The Special Collections Laboratory: Integrating Archival Research into Undergraduate Courses in Psychology and Music," in *Past or Portal*, 175–178.
14. National Science Teachers Association, "Position Statement on the Integral Role of Laboratory Investigations on Science Instruction," accessed July 20, 2014, <http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/laboratory.aspx>.
15. David Mazella and Julie Grob, "Collaborations Between Faculty and Special Collections Librarians in Inquiry-driven Classes," *portal: Libraries & the Academy* 11, no. 1 (2011): 467–487.
16. Ryan Bean and Linnea M. Anderson, "Teaching Research and Learning Skills with Primary Sources: Three Modules," in *Past or Portal*, 156–162.
17. James Gerenscer and Malinda Triller, "Hands-On Instruction in the Archives: Using Group Activities as an Engaging Way to Teach Undergraduates about Primary Sources," *Journal for the Society of North Carolina Archivists* 6, no. 2 (2009): 55–66.
18. Arlene Diaz, Joan Middendorf, David Pace, and Leah Shopkow, "The History Learning Project: A Department 'Decodes' Its Students," *Journal of American History*, 94 (2008): 1211–1224.
19. Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Towards a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *Journal of American History* 92 (2006): 1358–70.
20. For examples of these strategies in use, see Stephanie Cole, "Quit Surfing and Start Clicking: One Professor's Effort to Combat the Problems of Teaching the U. S. Survey in a Large Lecture Hall," *The History Teacher* 43, no. 3 (2010): 397–410; Elizabeth Ann Pollard, "Tweeting on the Backchannel of a Jumbo-Sized Lecture Hall: Maximizing Collective Learning in a World History Survey," *The History Teacher* 47, no. 4 (2014): 329–354.
21. Using copies or digital sources is somewhat more frequent, although still not widespread. An example of an approach using non-original primary sources is Frederick Drake and Sarah Drake Brown, "A Systematic Approach to Improve Students' Historical Thinking," *The History Teacher* 36, no. 4 (2003): 465–489.

22. Doris Malkmus, "Old Stuff for New Teaching Methods: Outreach to History Faculty Teaching with Primary Sources" *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 10, no. 4 (2010): 413–435.

23. Gary Kornblith and Carol Lasser, "Teaching the American History Survey at the Opening of the Twenty-First Century: A Roundtable Discussion." *Journal of American History* 87, no. 4 (2001): 1409–1441.

24. All student quotes in this article are taken from their feedback, which is in the possession of the author.

25. Magia Krause, "Undergraduates in the Archives: Using an Assessment Rubric to Measure Learning," *The American Archivist* 73 (2010): 507–531. For other examples of rubrics used to measure student learning in information literacy environments, see Erin Rinto, "Developing and Applying an Information Literacy Rubric to Student Annotated Bibliographies," *Evidence Based Library & Information Practice* 8, no. 3 (2013): 5–18; Stefanie Rosenblatt, "They Can Find it But They Don't Know What to Do with It," *Journal of Information Literacy* 4, no. 2 (2010): 50–61.

26. RAILS (Rubric Assessment for Information Literacy Skills), "Norming Session for Participating Institutions," accessed May 30, 2014, http://railsntrack.info/media/documents/2011/5/Norming_Session_for_Participating_Institutions_20102011.pdf

27. Further similar worksheets available at National Archives and Records Administration. 2013. "Docs Teach: Document Analysis Worksheets," accessed August 15, 2013, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/>; Library of Congress, "Primary Source Analysis Tool," Accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/>

28. In his discussion of the ethical and cognitive development of college students, William Perry suggested that students at this level are often not ready to be critical of sources (including faculty and textbooks) which they consider to be authorities and tend to think in binaries of right or wrong without middle grounds. William Perry, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (New York, NY: 1970), quoted in Diaz et al., "The History Project," 1213. Sam Wineburg also addressed this tendency in *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).

29. Through interviews with history faculty members, Diaz et al., "The History Project," articulated this and other common issues associated with student history work which they term "bottlenecks": 1213–1217.

30. This exercise was adapted from "Quick Curation: Building Analytical Skills through Context and Juxtaposition" by Peter Carini in *Using Primary Sources: Hands-On Instructional Exercises* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Libraries Unlimited, 2014).

31. Heather Smedberg has discussed the logistics of having large classes visit special collections and archives and the necessary consideration. Heather Smedberg, "500 Students, 3 Approaches, 1 Quarter," presented as part of the seminar "Pecha Kucha with our Stuff: Teaching with Rare Books, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections" at the RBMS Preconference, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 2011.

32. For a discussion of special collections materials in large survey classes, see Anne Bahde, "Taking the Show on the Road: Special Collections Instruction in the Campus Classroom," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 12, no. 2 (2011): 75–88.

33. Megan Oakleaf recommends transparency of rubrics to increase the quality of student performance. See Megan Oakleaf, "Using Rubrics to Assess Information Literacy: An Examination of Methodology and Interrater Reliability," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60, no. 5 (2009): 969–983.

34. See, for example, Dan Berrett, "Habits of Mind: Lessons for the Long Term," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 8, 2012. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/Habits-of-Mind-Lessons-for/134868/?cid=at>

APPENDIX 1

Exercise 1: Basic Analysis

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify different types of primary sources (letters, diaries, newspapers, ledgers, ephemera, photographs, published books, reports).
- Identify basic features of primary sources, such as creator, place of creation, date of creation, and intended audience.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

- Needs Work: identified sources incorrectly; incorrect answers about features; did not answer all questions; answers are cursory
- Good: correctly identified all types of sources; correctly identified creator, place and date of creation, and intended audience; answered all questions thoroughly
- Exemplary: correctly identified all types of sources; correctly identified creator, place and date of creation, and intended audience; made further observations not prompted by questions.

Exercise 2: Interrogating Sources

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Judge the handling techniques needed for a source based on physical cues and adjust accordingly.
- Interpret and analyze a source's content and physical details.
- Evaluate issues of authority, bias, provenance, authenticity, and tone in a source.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

- Needs Work: some attention to handling; did not answer all questions related to content or physical details; answers to interpretive elements are cursory; incorrect answers.
- Good: attention to handling issues and logical judgment in technique; answered all questions related to content or physical details with care; correct answers; explains reasoning for answers on questions related to interpretive elements.
- Exemplary: careful attention to handling issues and superior judgment in technique; answered all questions related to content and physical details thoroughly and correctly; correctly evaluated interpretive issues; made

further observations about sources unprompted; connected sources to class subject content.

Exercise 3: Research Uses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Observe and communicate potential scholarly uses for primary sources.
- Recognize the role of primary sources in the cycle of scholarship.
- Distinguish links and relationships between primary sources and/or secondary sources.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

- Needs Work: two or fewer questions; no clear connection to subject matter given; understanding of connection to scholarship is not complete.
- Good: three questions offered; three uses offered; clear connection to subject matter; clear understanding of connection to scholarship.
- Exemplary: three or more questions offered; three or more uses offered; nuanced understanding of connection to scholarship; perceptive connection to subject matter

Exercise 4: Gathering Evidence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate primary sources to determine relevance to an historical question.
- Identify and communicate evidence to support a perspective or argument.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

- Needs Work: participated some but did not look closely at sources to identify potential connections or relevant portions; brief communication of evidence.
- Good: had insightful answers that connected sources and used relevant portions.
- Exemplary: offered sophisticated connections between sources and observations about relevant portions.

Exercise 5: Exhibit Build

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate and select sources in support of a perspective or theme.
- Summarize sources and synthesize them into an argument.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

- Needs Work: selected primary sources that somewhat fit the theme; minimal summary of sources; minimal explanation of synthesis.
- Good: each selected primary source fit the theme; thorough summary of sources; thorough explanation of synthesis.
- Exemplary: each selected primary source fit the theme; thorough summary of sources; sophisticated explanation of synthesis and relation back to course themes of the week.

Exercise 6: Debate

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

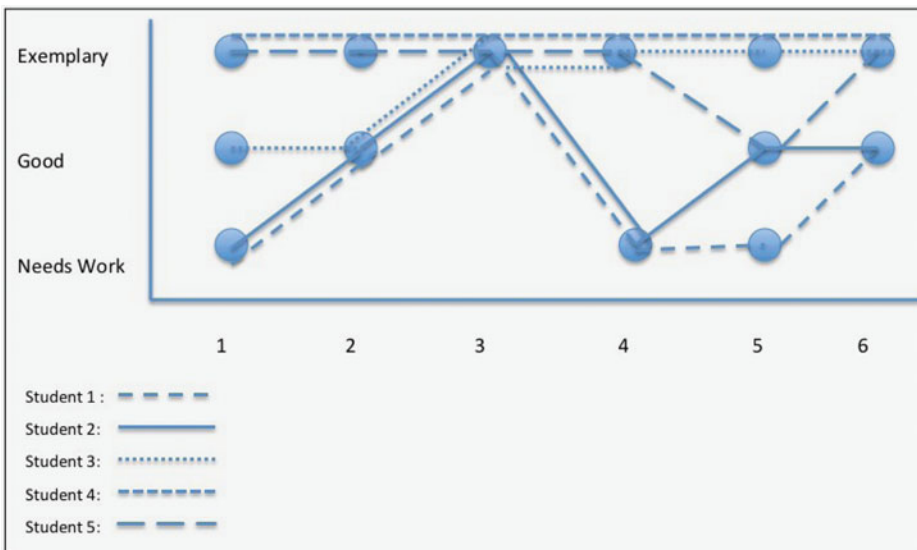
- Summarize sources and synthesize them into an argument.
- Respond to other perspectives using evidence from sources.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

- Needs Work: evaluated only one source; summary and/or argument not cohesive or thoughtful.
- Good: evaluated all sources; summary covers important points; argument incorporates clear evidence; cogent rebuttal.
- Exemplary: evaluated all sources; summary covers important points; argument incorporates superior evidence; sophisticated rebuttal.

APPENDIX 2

Student Performance



APPENDIX 3

Final Paper Rubric

	Needs Work	Good	Exemplary
Identification of basic source details such as creator, place and date of creation, and intended audience	Missed or misidentified some details	Identified all details	Identified all details and offered more
Engagement with issues of bias, authenticity, authority, contradiction, and tone	Missed or did not fully engage	Missed or misinterpreted some indicators of source bias, authenticity, etc	Correctly identified and interpreted source bias, authenticity, etc.
Analysis of content	Analysis missing some key portions	Analysis complete but incorrect or misinterpreted	Complete and correct analysis of content
Recognition of connections and linkages between primary and secondary sources	Did not recognize connections	Recognized all connections between primary and secondary	Recognized all connections between primary and secondary and suggested further thoughts
Location and selection of sources	Located and selected basic sources	Located and selected adequate sources	Located and selected model sources
Use of sources as evidence	Missed possible uses of sources as evidence	Sources used but key points are missed	Detailed and nuanced use of sources
Sources summarized and synthesized into argument	Incorrect or incomplete summary; argument does not relate to source evidence	Summary of sources is complete and accurate; argument relates to some sources	Summary of sources is complete and accurate; argument related to all sources
Response to other perspectives and alternate interpretations	Minimal response to other perspectives	Response to other perspectives is present but not developed	Nuanced response to other perspectives
Quality of argument	No argument discernible	Argument is present but reader must reconstruct from text	Clearly stated argument
Citations	Some sources unreferenced or incorrectly cited	Minor problems	Complete and correct
Overall clarity and style	Errors in grammar and word usage	Minor problems with grammar, word usage, etc.	Clear and accurate