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# Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors

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# Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors

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## Abstract

Undergraduate history majors need to know how to conduct archival research. This paper describes the second phase of a project to identify "archival literacy" competencies. Faculty, archivists, and librarians from baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral/research institutions commented on a draft list. This resulted in competencies in six major categories: accurately conceive of primary sources; locate primary sources; use a research question, evidence, and argumentation to advance a thesis; obtain guidance from archivists; demonstrate acculturation to archives; and follow publication protocols. Collaborations of archivists, faculty, and librarians can integrate the competencies throughout undergraduate history curricula in their institutions.

**Keywords**

Academic libraries

College and university archives

Information literacy

Because primary source materials are essential for historical research and scholarship, history faculty in colleges and universities commonly expect undergraduate history majors to know how to conduct archival research by the time they graduate. Procedures for finding archives that have relevant materials and the methods of using them are different from finding and working with library materials because the uniqueness of archival collections requires specialized knowledge.

Although some college students may have had some exposure to primary sources during their K–12 education, college history majors typically learn research processes informally and as needed rather than formally and systematically.[1] One reason may be that no standard list exists of expectations regarding the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) history majors should master to find and use archives and related primary source materials effectively. This suggests a need for a detailed list of archival literacy competencies. This article reports on the second and final phase of a study to develop a list of competencies related to finding and using archival sources that history faculty, archivists, and librarians who work with history students agree that college history majors should master. Those competencies can be systematically and progressively integrated into history courses and curricula and assessed.

**Literature Review**

The article on the first phase of this study[2] examined much of the literature on the importance of competency in finding and using archival materials for historical research ("archival literacy"), the relationship between information literacy and archival literacy, and education in the use of archival materials to study history. This review supplements that examination.

Archival Literacy

Morris, Mykytiuk, and Weiner explored the importance of archival literacy to the study of history in an article on the first phase of this project, defining archival literacy as "the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively and efficiently find, interpret, and use archives, manuscripts, and other types of original unpublished primary source materials."[3] Archival literacy can be considered a contextual application of information literacy (the ability to recognize a need for information; identify the sources needed to address a given problem or issue; find, evaluate, and organize the needed information; and use the information effectively to address the problem or issue at hand.[4] Organizations have developed specialized information literacy standards for many disciplines, but not for archival research.[5] Recently, the Society of American Archivists and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries formed a committee to establish guidelines on teaching with primary sources. The lack of attention to this in previous years is apparent from a literature review on librarian/faculty collaboration on teaching information literacy. This review cited only two publications about the discipline of history from 2000 through 2009.[6] A committee of the American Library Association developed information literacy guidelines for undergraduate history students, but makes only one statement about archival resources: "Identifies archives that may contain useful sources and uses finding aids to identify material in archival or manuscript collections."[7]

Archival Literacy in History Education

The substantial differences between libraries and archives/special collections[8] justify specialized instruction on archival research. Students may be familiar with how to use libraries,

although this is not universal, particularly with the decline in school libraries and certified school library media specialists.[9] Students who have confidence in their information literacy abilities may not transfer that knowledge to working with archival materials.[10]

Instruction is an important part of the mission of archives and special collections because it inspires learning and fosters research. But instruction usually comprises one-time experiences such as orientations, tours, and showing specific materials from a collection. It typically does not include teaching of archival research skills that can be applied in other archival settings.[11]

Students benefit from working with archival materials. Students who self-assess their experiences with archival research say they connected with the people whose first-hand accounts they used, and that experience made history real for them. Students recognize that they learned "important attributes of a historian" and that they experienced "doing history" like real historians. The comments that students made about connecting evidence with valid historical arguments and learning to approach sources with skepticism demonstrate their acquisition of critical thinking skills.[12] Use of primary sources fosters critical thinking because primary sources have a point of view or bias.[13] Students develop an understanding of how to use evidence in creating historical accounts. The use of archival sources may reduce plagiarism because fewer secondary source analyze them.[14] Perhaps most important, the ability to move beyond the filters and commentary offered in secondary sources to raw, unpublished archival materials instills in students the desire to pursue independent research.[15] Archivists and historians argue that encounters with original archives offer enriching experiences for students, engaging them in learning by capturing their curiosity and connecting them to people and events from the past.[16] This exposure to original source materials excites students, sparks their imaginations, generates new questions, and results in a desire to learn more.[17] Several authors noted that after completion

of archival assignments, students pursued additional research on a topic in the archives for a thesis, other course assignment, or independent learning.[18] Students who learn archival research skills and work with original archival materials gain a new appreciation for archives.[19]

*The Information-Literate Historian* devotes a chapter to primary sources. (Primary sources on the Internet receive coverage in short parts of the following chapter.) The chapter begins by promising four things, including that the reader "will learn . . . how to locate and use archives."[20] This chapter provides concise, admirable guidance for locating archives, including public records, genealogies, and oral histories. But it offers little more than a single paragraph on how to actually use archives for research, focusing almost exclusively on finding aids and suggesting the often omitted, yet crucial, step of consulting the archivist.[21]

Michelle McCoy[22] identified several processes and techniques to introduce history majors to archival research. The typical archival orientation session includes an introduction to the special collections and its resources, collection development, and researcher protocols. The students in McCoy's course learned how to use a finding aid, the processes for requesting copies, and how to cite archival materials. Students learned handling techniques, toured the closed stacks to be able to conceptualize the materials and their storage, and listened to their professor's accounts of her research experiences. In a series of phased assignments, students gathered and synthesized information from primary and secondary sources and presented their findings while placing sources in context. Through such assignments, students came to understand the ways different types of sources can be used to answer research questions and create evidence to support an argument. Similar to an approach used by David Mazella and Julie Grob,[23] the students gained skills they could apply in future research situations that require both primary and secondary sources.

Edwin Bridges, Gregory S. Hunter, Page Putnam Miller, David Thelen, and Gerhard Weinberg organized a brief treatment of archival research competencies for graduate students in history into "developing a research strategy; an overview of archival principles and practices; understanding archival principles and practices as a means of locating evidence; and understanding the nature and use of archival evidence."[24] The four areas may be summarized as follows:

1. Developing a research strategy includes framing the historical question, setting a research goal, formulating a guiding thesis, and devising "a process for locating and ordering the data that can address the question in a persuasive manner."[25] The researcher needs to continually refine or revise the strategy and/or process in light of increasing awareness of sources and content. Collaboration between historians and archivists can be especially beneficial to students for developing research strategies, though students and faculty may underestimate the value of a conversation with an archival specialist.

2. An overview of archival principles and practices takes into account the uniqueness, provenance, intended functions, and original order of the archival materials, as well as the fact that they are appraised, arranged, and described as collections, or *fonds*, rather than treated as individual pieces. Accurate interpretation of archival records can only be achieved by attending to their institutional context, the relationships between collections and collecting repositories, the documentation strategies that determine what is kept, and the descriptive strategies aimed at informing researchers about the records. These matters are the archivist's province, but researchers need to understand and use them.[26]

3. Understanding archival principles and practices as a means of locating evidence requires historians to know how archival systems operate. Beyond learning to use the succinct

descriptive inventories of large volumes of materials that finding aids provide, they need

to consider the administrative function and purpose of archives within an organization.

Thus, in some instances, awareness of "the structure and functions of the organization" is

a revealing aid to archival research.[27] Skillful use of search terms, searching by the

function or the form of the record, understanding in advance the access and usage

restrictions, and recognizing archivists' attempts to balance access with preservation are

all parts of the archival literacy that graduate history students need.[28]

4.  Understanding the nature and use of archival evidence means adopting a critical approach

    to "learn the way that documentary evidence may have been written to achieve—or

    conceal—a certain purpose."[29] Errors in apparently objective, basic facts could easily

    have been accidental, but might also have been intentional. The interplay between the

    archival record itself and the description of it can develop a researcher's understanding of

    the evidence and lead to other sources.[30]

The American Historical Association recently engaged in a project to "describe the skills,

knowledge, and habits of mind that students develop in history courses and degree programs."

The KSAs it identified only imply the use of archives, as reflected in descriptions of skills such

as the ability to "evaluate a variety of historical sources for their credibility, position, and

perspective . . . understand the complex nature of the historical record; distinguish between

primary and secondary materials and decide when to use each; choose among multiple tools,

methods, and perspectives to investigate and interpret materials from the past . . . seek a variety

of sources that provide evidence to support an argument about the past; develop a

methodological practice of gathering, sifting, analyzing, ordering, synthesizing, and interpreting

evidence . . . generate a historical argument that is reasoned and based on historical evidence selected, arranged, and analyzed. . . . "[31]

Except for Bridges's short handbook, almost no resources aim at teaching historians specifically how to conduct archival research. This phenomenon runs precisely counter to the documented value that historians place on archival, manuscript, and special collections primary sources, more than on any other in their actual research practices.[32] Mid-career historian researchers at two universities developed cunning techniques for conducting their own archival research.[33] Yet historians do not seem to perceive formal instruction in archival research to be needed. It seems clear that students of history in general are not systematically offered the instruction in archival literacy that is key to professional growth. In many instances, they must learn the basic research techniques and strategies on novice research trips, rather than through systematic preparatory instruction involving cooperation between a professor in his or her home department and an archivist in a convenient, nearby repository. Financial resources and time place significant constraints on historical research when travel to a distant archival repository is necessary,[34] making the process of learning on one's own more expensive, less productive, and more limited.

**Phases of the Study**

The first phase of this study took place at Purdue University in fall 2012 and spring 2013 and resulted in a draft list of archival literacy competencies that undergraduate history majors should master before graduation. The Purdue Social Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted an exemption for this study (Protocol #1210012766) on October 4, 2012. Interviews with selected faculty members of the Purdue Department of History; a review of history course

syllabi; and comments from history department faculty and recent graduates yielded a preliminary list of archival competencies.[35]

This article reports on the second phase of the study. The purpose was to refine the draft list based on comments from history faculty, archivists, and librarians who work with history faculty and students at other colleges and universities nationwide. The research question for the second phase was

> Do faculty in history departments, archivists, and history liaison librarians at colleges and universities in the United States agree that the draft list of archival literacy competencies developed by Purdue University[36] represents those that all history majors should master during their undergraduate education?

**Methods**

The method for this phase of the study was to request comments on a draft list of competencies from history faculty, archivists, and librarians at a stratified random sample of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral/research institutions in the United States.

The desired sample size was 100 institutions because this is the smallest sample size with a real effect on the standard deviation, and this number is efficient in terms of cost and energy. We selected institutions randomly from the 2012–2013 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, which incorporates information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that receives federal student financial aid.[37] The study was limited to active, degree-granting, nonprofit institutions that are baccalaureate, master's, doctoral/research, or research institutions according to the 2010 basic Carnegie classification.[38]

Table 1 summarizes the sampling strategy and shows that 1,552 institutions met the criteria for the study. A proportional representation would include 41 baccalaureate, 41 master's, and 18 doctoral and research institutions, for a total of 100 institutions. The websites of the randomly selected institutions supplied the names of their university archivists and the history liaison librarians or equivalents. In institutions with more than one archivist, we selected the one with the title closest to "university archivist." We searched her or his name in the membership database of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), believing that members of SAA would be more likely to have received some professional training and, therefore, have formalized knowledge about the archival theory and practice needed to teach archival literacy to others. Institutions that do not have an archivist, have an archivist who is not an individual member of SAA, or do not include email addresses of staff on their websites were excluded from the study. Only 71 of the 631 baccalaureate institutions employed archivists who were members of SAA.

[insert Table 1]

Some institutions designate a librarian liaison to the history department, so that person could be expected to know about the history curriculum, the course requirements, the expectations of faculty, and the students majoring in history. Since many of the institutions in the sample do not have designated history liaison librarians, we identified the librarian most likely to work with history faculty and students from the library website as the contact for the project. The job titles for these contacts vary greatly, including titles such as reference librarian, collections librarian, instruction librarian, department head, and library director. Some institutions have more than one history liaison librarian, each specializing in an area of history. In these cases, we selected the librarian who is the liaison for American history because all the institutions have that subject in common.

An email message invited the contact archivists and librarians to participate in the study (see Appendix A). If an institution declined to participate or did not respond, we invited the next randomly selected institution until we compiled close to the desired number of institutions. Of the 71 baccalaureate institutions invited, 25 agreed, 6 declined, and 40 did not respond. Of the 91 master's institutions invited, 27 agreed to participate, 7 declined, and 57 did not respond. Of the 65 doctoral/research institutions invited, 20 agreed to participate, 7 declined, and 38 did not respond. Therefore, the proportion of participating institutions was lower than the desired minimum for the baccalaureate and master's institutions and higher than the desired minimum for the doctoral/research institutions.

If an institution agreed to participate, we gave the contact archivist and librarian a prescribed email message (Appendix B) to send to their institution's history faculty with a link to survey questions (see Appendix C) asking for feedback on the list of competencies. The list of competencies (see Appendix D) was attached to the email message. The archivist and librarian were also asked to comment on the list.

**Analysis**

The purpose of the analysis was to answer the following questions:

1. Did the respondents agree that all of the competencies in the draft list should be expectations for undergraduate history majors?

2. Were there differences in agreement among respondents from baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral/research institutions on the draft list of archival literacy competencies?

3. Were there differences in agreement among history faculty, archivists, and librarians on the competencies?

4. Did respondents recommend competencies to be deleted from or added to the list?

There were 123 responses to the survey. Table 2 shows the proportion of survey respondents by position (history faculty, archivist, librarian). More than half of the respondents are history faculty (59%, $n = 73$). Respondents could check more than one position; 7 respondents are both archivists and librarians.

[insert Table 2]

Acceptance of All Competencies

Thirty-nine percent ($n = 48$) of the total respondents indicated that all undergraduate history majors should master all of the archival competencies on the draft list before graduation from their programs. Of those, 29% ($n = 14$) are from doctoral/research and master's institutions; 23% ($n = 11$) are from baccalaureate institutions; and 19% ($n = 9$) did not indicate their institution type. With respect to differences in response among type of position, 34% ($n = 25$) of the faculty responses; 38% (n=9) of the archivist responses; and 39% (n=9) of the librarian responses indicated that the students should master all of the competencies.

Recommendations for Deletion from the List

Table 3 shows the competencies that faculty, archivists, and librarians recommended for deletion. One-third or more of the total respondents recommended deleting 7 of the competencies from those that undergraduate history majors should master. Of faculty, one-third or more recommended deleting 6 of the competencies. Of archivists, one-third or more recommended deleting 15 of the competencies. Of the librarians, one-third or more recommended deleting 9 of the competencies.

Recommendations for Additions to the List

Six of the respondents commented that the list focused more on print resources and physical archives and that it should also include online archival competencies. Although the list was meant to apply to archival materials regardless of format, we specified competencies specific to online materials in some instances. Other suggestions for additions to the list related to general research skills or interpretation of any type of resource, rather than archives specifically.

**Discussion**

Respondents

History faculty were strongly represented (almost 60%), with the remaining respondents being archivists and/or librarians. Since history faculty are responsible for curricula and course content, their agreement on a list of competencies is essential if they are to be taught systematically enough to become practice. The distribution of responses by type of institution was weighted toward doctoral/research institutions. These institutions tended to have large, long-established archives and special collections, so their history faculties might have more experience in developing their students' ability to find and use archival materials.

Competencies to Delete from List

Clearly, many of the respondents think it unnecessary for all undergraduate history majors to master every one of the competencies on the draft list. They identified the competencies they recommended for deletion as still relevant, but they perceived them as being

too advanced for undergraduate students. This was consistent by type of institution and position of respondent (faculty, archivist, or librarian). More archivists and librarians than faculty think that students should master all of the competencies.

We examined the data to determine which competencies the respondents thought should be deleted. In the explanation that follows, the numbered competencies correspond to the number preceding each competency in Appendix D, which is the list distributed to the sample in this study for comments.

All respondents thought that competencies 1–30, 32–35, and 45 should remain. At least one-third each of the faculty, archivists, and librarians agreed that competencies 37–42 should not be required for undergraduate history majors. At least one-third of the archivists and librarians agreed that competencies 44, 46, and 49 should not be required for undergraduate history majors. Since most of the respondents thought that these competencies should be expected but a substantial minority thought they should be deleted, we moved competencies 31, 36–44, and 46–50 to the "Advanced Skills" section and renamed it "Advanced Skills (Not Required for Undergraduate History Majors)." (After these competencies were moved to the Advanced Skills section, we renumbered the "List of Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors" as a continuous sequence.)

Competencies to Add to List

Several comments on competencies to add to the list related to online archives, so we added the phrase "available online sources" to competency 7 in the section "Locate Primary Sources":

7.  Locate and effectively use the web sites created by archival repositories and special

    collections libraries, including reviewing finding aids, available online archival sources,

    hours, and policies prior to visit.

One respondent suggested adding the competency "diplomatics and records creation," and we added this to the Advanced Skills section. Several recommendations were not about archival competencies, but about general historiography and writing skills, or skills needed for interpreting sources of any type, so they were too general to be relevant to archival research competencies.

This resulted in the following list of competencies that faculty in history departments, archivists, and history liaison librarians at representative colleges and universities in the United States agree that all history majors should master during their undergraduate education. These competencies can be integrated into curricula and courses in a progressive manner when needed. Incorporating them into instruction will achieve more complete undergraduate history education.

**List of Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors [September 2014]**

**ACCURATELY CONCEIVE OF PRIMARY SOURCES**

1.  Define and articulate differences between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

2.  List common types of primary sources used in conducting historical research.

3.  Articulate the value of primary sources to historical research, communicating a real or

    imaginary example illustrating value. Explain why historians are expected to use primary

    sources in their research and scholarship.

**LOCATE PRIMARY SOURCES**

4. Distinguish between types of repositories that collect primary sources, including libraries, archives, museums, and special collections.

5. Name some of the wide variety of types of archival repositories, using adjectives that refer to various spheres of organized activity, such as business.

6. Give examples of some kinds of materials held in different types of archival repositories, such as religious archives, business archives, university archives, government archives, etc.

7. Locate and effectively use the web sites created by archival repositories and special collections libraries including reviewing finding aids, available online archival sources, hours, and policies prior to visit.

8. Locate particular special collections and archival repositories in a given geographic proximity, including capabilities for obtaining copies of documents without travel, and search effectively for primary sources within these existing archives and special collections in the community, state, region, and country.

9. Identify and effectively use (search) the major bibliographic databases for locating primary sources.

10. Describe how to locate and use archival finding aids.

11. Explain the lack of online access to many archival materials.

**USE A RESEARCH QUESTION, EVIDENCE, AND ARGUMENTATION TO ADVANCE A THESIS**

12. Formulate and develop a research question to be answered using primary sources.

13. Accumulate multiple primary sources, as well as secondary resources, to build or support a case for a research thesis or argument.

14. Evaluate and synthesize information and arguments from both primary and secondary sources for evidence.

15. Construct an argument using primary source materials.

16. Explain the constructed nature of history, some possible reasons for gaps in the historical record that might result from wartime and other circumstances, and how to identify promising and possible alternative search strategies for the information one is seeking.

17. Recognize historical styles of handwriting and outmoded printed scripts or fonts. Read manuscripts and books that are written or printed in these.

18. Interpret and analyze both print and digital primary sources. Include: description of the features and vulnerabilities of the physical or digital object, means for evaluating authenticity including provenance, methods for historical contextualization, indications of the purpose and intended audience, and observations that may be used to identify bias.

19. Interpret a variety of types of primary sources to glean information from them. Critically analyze and write in a critically informed way about a variety of types of sources used in historical research, such as institutional records, rare books, photographs, charts and maps, manuscripts and personal papers, ephemera, born-digital materials, 3-dimensional artifacts, audio-visual materials, and oral history interviews.

20. Articulate common biases in primary and secondary sources to be aware of in assessing their trustworthiness.

21. Describe tactics for gaining access to multiple perspectives and narratives.

**OBTAIN GUIDANCE FROM ARCHIVISTS**

22. Explain the role and potential value of the research consultation with archives staff.

23. Communicate a variety of information needs effectively to archivists, both orally and in writing.

**DEMONSTRATE ACCULTURATION TO ARCHIVES**

24. Define common terms used by archivists and historians in conducting research, such as "repository," "finding aid," "manuscript," "provenance," "IRB," etc.

25. Describe the differences between archival records, personal papers and manuscripts, and rare books.

26. Communicate a rationale that justifies security and preservation measures taken by archival repositories.

27. Find the requirements for researchers' use of a specific archival repository.

28. Describe common policies and protocols for conducting research in archival repositories, including the researcher registration process, the kinds of materials that are commonly not allowed into the repository, and processes for duplication.

29. Describe the care and handling processes for using original physical materials. Explain both why these processes are necessary and why they are important.

30. Articulate the ways in which using, experiencing, and handling original primary sources differs from digital primary sources (whether born digital or digitized) or other types of facsimiles (microfilm, microfiche, etc.).

**FOLLOW PUBLICATION PROTOCOLS**

31. Describe how one can legally and ethically incorporate unpublished sources into one's work.

32. Take effective notes on unpublished materials to capture full citation information for the materials in a paper.

33. Cite different types of unpublished primary sources such as documents, photographs, and artifacts, using more than one style of citation.

34. Describe how to obtain permission from the archival repository or library to quote from, reproduce, and/or reuse the collections in a paper or other type of publishable work.

**ADVANCED SKILLS (NOT REQUIRED FOR UNDERGRADUATE HISTORY MAJORS)**

35. Explain the differences in copyright for published and unpublished sources.

36. Specify some common restrictions placed on unpublished materials and justify such restrictions by giving the legal and ethical reasons for them.

37. Use materials from multiple archival repositories or special collections libraries.

38. Communicate effectively about one's research experience orally, visually, and in writing.

39. Produce a scholarly work that incorporates primary and secondary sources as evidence and is suitable for publication, both in writing and in a formal oral/visual presentation or demonstration.

40. Articulate issues relating to the historical memory of society that are relevant to archival research.

41. Describe some of the reasons a history major might consider a future career in the archives profession.

42. Explain how to locate special collections and archival repositories internationally.

43. Describe some ways that archival materials are collected and processed by archivists, as well as the primary archival theory and practices that guide this work (provenance, original order, etc.).

44. Recognize common preservation, organization, and archival processing techniques to distinguish the way materials have altered since being acquired by a repository. Distinguish between the work an archivist may do to make a collection accessible and to preserve it versus the work an author, creator, or collector might do, and give some instances of when to avoid drawing false conclusions based on appearance of the items.

45. Give examples of factors that might influence the order in which material is organized in an archival repository.

46. Describe effective techniques for conducting oral history interviews so that the interviews can be reused in a publication or scholarly work.

47. Describe common requirements for creating, storing, and publishing oral histories (IRB certification for conducting human subjects research).

48. Describe some ways in which archival repositories function in other countries and how access to primary sources may differ in those countries.

49. List various ways in which collections in archival repositories and special collections grow over time and how materials that may not have been available in initial visits to archives may become available in the future.

50. Plan all aspects of an archival visit that requires travel and advance accommodations including researching available travel grants.

51. Describe some of the common ways that records are created, assembled, collected, and transmitted prior to being acquired by the archival repository, and how factors such as the chain of custody and provenance of a source can influence its authenticity (diplomatics).

**Limitations of the Study**

Baccalaureate and master's institutions were underrepresented in the study. This was due to the small number of baccalaureate institutions that employ archivists who are individual members of the Society of American Archivists.

Many institutions do not assign librarians as liaisons to history departments. As a result, some of the librarians who responded may have limited knowledge of the history curriculum or the expectations of history faculty relating to history majors' use of archives and primary sources.

**Conclusion**

As a result of the second phase of this study, there now exists a nearly complete list of archival literacy competencies for undergraduate history majors that a substantial aggregate of history faculty, archivists, and librarians in the United States generally agree upon. We have not found any similar, agreed-upon list of archival competencies in any publication in English. Two main results logically follow, which will make implementation much more achievable: 1) members of all three professions now have a much firmer basis on which to collaborate in teaching archival literacy to undergraduate history majors; 2) the resulting list of competencies can be consciously and intentionally integrated into existing courses so that students have formal and consistent training in finding and using archival resources.

Further down the road, collaboration among history faculty, archival professionals, and librarians and their professional organizations can make possible learning resources relevant for all institutions for efficient and effective teaching of many of the competencies.

Recommendations for Next Steps

1. *Increase* collaboration among history faculty, archivists, and librarians.[39] Such collaborations will introduce students to a multidimensional perspective on primary resources. The students will experience the expertise of each, which will foster a deeper understanding.

2. *Contextualize* archival literacy in history courses.[40] There are many competencies on the list, but each can be introduced when relevant to the course content or when necessary for specific course assignments. They are intended to be interwoven throughout the undergraduate program. Many could be taught during a research course, if offered. Bridges et al. described teaching practices, such as scenarios and special arrangements at particular locations, for developing research competencies in history students.[41]

3. *Assess* instruction and students' mastery of archival competencies. Since this list of archival literacy competencies is new, it will benefit the professions of history teaching and archives as well as history students to learn about effective practices for teaching students archival literacy. This can be done by developing methods and assessing student learning as a result of those methods. Methods and models from information literacy work can be adapted for this purpose.

4. *Create* practical tools and tutorials relevant to all institutions to teach archival research skills.[42] Collaboration between associations such as the Society of American Archivists, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL, and the American Historical Association could result in high-quality resources acceptable to history faculty, archivists, and librarians. Expand such tools to include archival literacy for disciplines outside of history that rely upon archival sources.

**TABLES**

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**Table 1. Sampling Strategy**

| Carnegie Classification | Total # of Institutions | % of Total | Actual # in Sample | Actual % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baccalaureate | 637 | 41% | 25 | 35% |
| Master's | 634 | 41% | 27 | 37% |
| Doctoral/Research | 281 | 18% | 20 | 28% |
| Total | 1,552 | 100% | 72 | 100% |

**Table 2. Positions of Survey Respondents**

| | Faculty | Archivist or both Archivist and Librarian | Librarian | Not Specified | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % of Respondents | 59% (73) | 20% (24) | 13% (16) | 8% (10) | 123 |

**Table 3. Competencies Recommended by One-Third or More of Respondents to Delete**

| # to Delete | % All Recommended | % Faculty Recommended | % Archivists Recommended | % Librarians Recommended |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | - | - | 33% | - |
| 36 | - | - | 33% | - |
| 37 | 34% | 33% | 46% | 39% |
| 38 | 34% | 32% | 54% | 35% |
| 39 | 33% | 32% | 50% | 35% |
| 40 | 35% | 33% | 50% | 39% |
| 41 | - | 29% | 50% | 35% |
| 42 | 33% | 30% | 54% | 35% |
| 43 | - | - | 46% | - |
| 44 | 33% | - | 46% | 35% |
| 46 | - | - | 46% | 35% |
| 47 | - | - | 33% | - |
| 48 | - | - | 38% | - |
| 49 | 36% | - | 42% | 35% |
| 50 | - | - | 33% | - |

**Appendix A. Text of Invitation to Participate (Message 1) to Archivists and History Librarians at Sampled Institutions.**

This email message was sent to the archivist and history librarian at each institution that is selected for the sample.

Dear [Name of Archivist] and [Name of History Liaison Librarian],

We are conducting a study to develop a list of competencies related to finding and using archives that college history majors should master. We developed a list this year in collaboration with the faculty of the Department of History at Purdue. Our next step is to obtain feedback from history faculty, liaison librarians, and archivists outside of Purdue. Your institution was randomly selected to invite to participate.

If you decide to participate, this is what we will ask you to do:

1. Send a message with a request for comments on the list of archival competencies we developed to the history department faculty in your school. **We will provide you with a standard cover message** that we crafted.

2. Send a reminder message one week after the request for comments.

3. Comment on the list yourselves.

Your anonymous responses will be evaluated collectively, rather than individually. They will be kept indefinitely, and will only be used collectively for presentations or publications. Only the investigators and Purdue University's IT department will have access to the data. However, research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. This study has been approved by the Purdue University Institutional Review Board.

**Would you let us know if you will participate by [date—1-2 weeks from date of sending of this email message]**? Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any questions.

Best,

Larry Mykytiuk, Sammie Morris, and Sharon Weiner

Purdue University Libraries

**Appendix B. Text of Request for Feedback (Message 2) to Be Sent by Archivists and History Librarians to History Faculty at Sampled Institutions.**

This email message was sent to the history faculty by the institutions' archivists and history librarians.

Dear History Faculty, Archivists, and History Liaison Librarians,

Our school is participating in a multi-institutional study to develop a list of competencies related to **finding and using archives** that college-level history majors should master. The Principal Investigators are Purdue University's Sammie Morris (University Archivist), Larry Mykytiuk (History Librarian), and Sharon Weiner (Booker Chair in Information Literacy). Their research resulted in a preliminary list of competencies and they would like to invite you to review the list and comment on it. Specifically, they would like to know:

1. Do you think there are any other competencies they should add?

2. Do you think there are any competencies they should omit?

3. Do you think the list sufficiently represents what undergraduate history students should know about archival resources?

They plan to compile the anonymous responses from participating institutions, consider them in developing a final list of competencies, and publish the list for use by faculty, archivists, and librarians.

It should take **about 10 minutes** to review the competencies and respond. **Would you review the list and respond with your comments to this survey [insert url] by [date 2 weeks from date of email message]**?

Your anonymous responses will be evaluated collectively, rather than individually. They will be kept indefinitely, and will only be used collectively for presentations or publications. Only the investigators and Purdue University's IT department will have access to the data. However, research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. This study has been approved by the Purdue University Institutional Review Board.

We hope you will provide your comments on this important project that has the potential to influence curricula for history students nationwide!


Sincerely,


[Signature of Participating Institution's Archivist]

[Signature of Participating Institution's History Liaison Librarian]

**Appendix C. Survey Questions for History Faculty, Archivists, and History Liaison Librarians at Participating Institutions.**

This survey requests comments about a list of competencies that college history majors should master during their undergraduate program related to **finding and using archival repositories**. The email message with the link to this survey contained the preliminary list. Please review the list and respond to the five questions in this survey.

1. In your opinion, should **all** undergraduate history majors master **all** of the competencies on the preliminary list before graduation from their programs?

__Yes, and these are my comments:

__No, and these are the competencies on the list that students don't need to master (please separate with semicolon):

2. Are there additional competencies **not already on the preliminary list** that you think all undergraduate history students should master before graduation?

__Yes, and they are (please separate with semicolon):

__No

3. The full name of my institution is:

4. My institution is located in the following city and state:

5. My position at my college/university is (check all that apply):

  __Member of the history faculty

  __Archivist [if yes, then ask, "In what year was your institution's archives founded?"

  __Librarian/information specialist

Thank you for participating in this project!

**Appendix D. Draft Archival Literacy Competencies for Undergraduate History Majors**

This draft list of archival literacy competencies was sent to those who agreed to participate in the second phase of this study. The number that precedes each competency is its code for analysis purposes. This article refers to individual competencies by these numbers.

**1. ACCURATELY CONCEIVE OF PRIMARY SOURCES**

    a.  (1)Define and articulate differences between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.

    b.  (2)List common types of primary sources used in conducting historical research.

    c.  (3)Articulate the value of primary sources to historical research, communicating a real or imaginary example illustrating value. Explain why historians are expected to use primary sources in their research and scholarship.

**2. LOCATE PRIMARY SOURCES**

    a.  (4)Distinguish between types of repositories that collect primary sources, including libraries, archives, museums, and special collections.

    b.  (5)Name some of the wide variety of types of archival repositories, using adjectives that refer to various spheres of organized activity, such as business.

    c.  (6)Give examples of some kinds of materials held in different types of archival repositories, such as religious archives, business archives, university archives, government archives, etc.

    d.  (7)Locate and effectively use the web sites created by archival repositories and special collections libraries including reviewing finding aids, hours, and policies prior to visit.

    e.  (8)Locate particular special collections and archival repositories in a given geographic proximity, including capabilities for obtaining copies of documents without travel, and

search effectively for primary sources within these existing archives and special

collections in the community, state, region, and country.

    f.  (9)Identify and effectively use (search) the major bibliographic databases for locating

        primary sources.

    g.  (10)Describe how to locate and use archival finding aids.

    h.  (11)Explain the lack of online access to many archival materials.

## 3. USE A RESEARCH QUESTION, EVIDENCE, AND ARGUMENTATION TO ADVANCE A THESIS.

    a.  (12)Formulate and develop a research question to be answered using primary sources.

    b.  (13)Accumulate multiple primary sources, as well as secondary resources, to build or

        support a case for a research thesis or argument.

    c.  (14)Evaluate and synthesize information and arguments from both primary and secondary

        sources for evidence.

    d.  (15)Construct an argument using primary source materials.

    e.  (16)Explain the constructed nature of history, some possible reasons for gaps in the

        historical record that might result from wartime and other circumstances, and how to

        identify promising and possible alternative search strategies for the information one is

        seeking.

    f.  (17)Recognize historical styles of handwriting and outmoded printed scripts or fonts.

        Read manuscripts and books that are written or printed in these.

    g.  (18)Interpret and analyze both print and electronic primary sources. Include: description

        of the features and vulnerabilities of the physical object, means for evaluating

authenticity including provenance, methods for historical contextualization, indications of the purpose and intended audience, and observations that may be used to identify bias.

h.  (19)Interpret a variety of types of primary sources to glean information from them. Critically analyze and write in a critically informed way about a variety of types of sources used in historical research, such as institutional records, rare books, photographs, charts and maps, manuscripts and personal papers, ephemera, born-digital materials, 3-dimensional artifacts, audio-visual materials, and oral history interviews.

i.  (20)Articulate common biases in primary and secondary sources to be aware of in assessing their trustworthiness.

j.  (21)Describe tactics for gaining access to multiple perspectives and narratives.

## 4. OBTAIN GUIDANCE FROM ARCHIVISTS.

a.  (22)Explain the role and potential value of the research consultation with archives staff.

b.  (23)Communicate a variety of information needs effectively to archivists, both orally and in writing.

## 5. DEMONSTRATE ACCULTURATION TO ARCHIVES.

a.  (24)Define common terms used by archivists and historians in conducting research, such as "repository," "finding aid," "manuscript," "provenance," "Institutional Review Board," etc.

b.  (25)Describe the differences between archival records, personal papers and manuscripts, and rare books.

c.  (26)Communicate a rationale that justifies security and preservation measures taken by archival repositories.

d.  (27)Find the requirements for researchers' use of a specific archival repository.

e. (28)Describe common policies and protocols for archival repositories, including the researcher registration process, the kinds of materials that are commonly not allowed into the repository, and processes for duplication.

f. (29)Describe the care and handling processes for using original physical materials. Explain both why these processes are necessary and why they are important.

g. (30)Articulate the ways in which experiencing and handling original primary sources differs from use of digital or other facsimiles.

## 6. FOLLOW PUBLICATION PROTOCOLS.

a. (31)Explain the differences in copyright for published and unpublished sources.

b. (32)Describe how one can legally and ethically incorporate unpublished sources into one's work.

c. (33)Take effective notes on unpublished materials to capture full citation information for the materials in a paper.

d. (34)Cite different types of unpublished primary sources such as documents, photographs, and artifacts, using more than one style of citation.

e. (35)Describe how to obtain permission from the archival repository or library to quote from, reproduce, and/or reuse the collections in a paper or other type of publishable work.

f. (36)Specify some common restrictions placed on unpublished materials and justify such restrictions by giving the legal and ethical reasons for them.

## 7. ADVANCED SKILLS

a. (37)Explain how to locate special collections and archival repositories internationally.

b.  (38)Describe some ways that archival materials are collected and processed by archivists, as well as the primary archival theory and practices that guide this work (provenance, original order, etc.).

c.  (39)Recognize common preservation, organization, and archival processing techniques to distinguish the way materials have altered since being acquired by a repository. Distinguish between the work an archivist may do to make a collection accessible and to preserve it versus the work an author, creator, or collector might do, and give some instances of when to avoid drawing false conclusions based on appearance of the items.

d.  (40)Give examples of factors that might influence the order in which material is organized in an archival repository.

e.  (41)Describe effective techniques for conducting oral history interviews so that the interviews can be reused in a publication or scholarly work.

f.  (42)Describe common requirements for creating, storing, and publishing oral histories (IRB certification for conducting human subjects research).

g.  (43)Use materials from multiple archival repositories or special collections libraries.

h.  (44)Describe some ways in which archival repositories function in other countries and how access to primary sources may differ in those countries.

i.  (45)Communicate effectively about one's research experience orally, visually, and in writing.

j.  (46)List various ways in which collections in archival repositories and special collections grow over time and how materials that may not have been available in initial visits to archives may become available in the future.

k.  (47)Produce a scholarly work that incorporates primary and secondary sources as evidence and is suitable for publication, both in writing and in a formal oral/visual presentation or demonstration.

l.  (48)Articulate issues relating to the historical memory of society that are relevant to archival research.

m.  (49)Plan all aspects of an archival visit that requires travel and advance accommodations including researching available travel grants.

n.  (50)Describe some of the reasons a history major might consider a future career in the archives profession.

**About the Authors**

[Insert bios and photos]

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