Preliminary Survey Results

Archival Sources in the Classroom

Humanities for STEM: Using Archives to Bridge the Two Cultures Divide

Year 1 Wrap-Up
26 April 2017
Introduction

• 2012 faculty survey by Ithaka S+R about materials in research and teaching

  “We recognize that some terms may be used differently in different fields—for example, what scientists recognize as a “primary source” may be different from what humanists would use that term to describe. (12)

• Enhancing understanding of STEM with archives may face unexpected challenge
Methodology

• Brainstorm questions with collaborative
• Set up 15 minute survey in Qualtrics (total of 50 questions, but adaptive)
• Gain IRB approval for exempt status
• Send announcement to colleagues in NYU academic departments, ask for forward
• Open survey from March 6 to 31
• Send direct reminders to library lists, Center mailing list, and contacts
Results

- 124 attempts to respond
- Each question actually 70 responses
  - 3 declined
  - 30 did not complete in a meaningful way
  - 20 incomplete
- 12 NYU schools and institutes represented
  (CAS highest = 35; Tandon second = 14)
Good range for further analysis

**Age of respondent (n = 71)**
- 65-74: 17%
- 75-84: 3%
- 85+: 4%
- 25-44: 54%
- 45-64: 20%

**Student type**
- Cont Ed: 3%
- Other, %: 2%
- PhD: 44%
- Master: 23%

**Field (n = 70)**
- Arts: 4%
- Other, %: 2%
- First-Year, %: 6%
- Upper: 24%
- Writ- ing, 20%
- STEM, %: 36%
- Humanities, %: 36%

Years teaching = 20
Years at NYU = 13
What is a primary source?
Open-ended responses

• Something from the moment that provides context; produced in the past
• First hand account by someone who had a role in the events
• Defined by examples
• Particular to one’s field
• Data sets and journal articles are primary sources for STEM
Which of these would you consider to be a primary source? (Choose all that apply)
Choices of primary sources

• Archive documents (correspondence, photographs)
• Archive objects (equipment, models)
• Museum documents or objects
• Object you or school owns
• Digitized material from museum, library, or archives
• Digital material on the Internet
• Reprinted or transcribed content
• Journal article, book studied for time period
• Audio or visual recordings (e.g., oral histories, music)
• Raw data sets
• Other
Top 5 selections overall

- Archive documents (75)
- Digitized museum, library (70)
- Museum documents or objects (67)
- Audio or visual recordings (67)
- Journal article, book (63)
## Top 5 by discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>Social Science</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum documents or objects (24)</td>
<td>Journal article, book (15)</td>
<td>Journal article, book (9)</td>
<td>Archive documents (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archive documents (23)</td>
<td>Archive documents (12)</td>
<td>Archive documents (8)</td>
<td>Digitized museum, library, archive (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitized museum, library, archive (22)</td>
<td>Digitized museum, library, archive (12)</td>
<td>Digitized museum, library, archive (7)</td>
<td>Audio or visual recordings (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio or visual recordings (22)</td>
<td>Reprinted or transcribed content (10)</td>
<td>Audio or visual recordings (7)</td>
<td>Archive objects (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprinted or transcribed content (22)</td>
<td>Archive objects (10)</td>
<td>Owned object (7)</td>
<td>Owned object (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How often do you use physical documents from an archive (e.g., correspondence, photographs) in your teaching?
Use among respondents is high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-year undergrad-uate</th>
<th>Upper-division undergrad-uate</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please describe the variety of sources you use in the classroom with ____ students. How often do you use the following with them?
### Range of use unexpected?

*Blank = blank; never = 1; rarely = 2; occasionally = 3; often = 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of source</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>Cont.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks or textbook chapters</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer reviewed journals and scholarly articles</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films, audio, artwork, or other non-textual sources</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly monographs or edited volumes published by an academic publisher</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-scholarly books</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs or social media</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary source materials (as defined from above)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effectiveness and assessment
Mostly anecdotal understanding

• Overall:
  – 2.2 (slightly familiar) before the class
  – 3.6 (moderate to very) after

• Any kind of formal assessment?
  – Papers, exams, and projects (36)
  – No (16)
  – No answer/unclear (13)
  – Survey (3)
  – “I should” (2)
In your opinion, how familiar are your students with primary source materials before your class? What do you think accounts for this level of familiarity?
Poor familiarity before class

- Most familiar with secondaries and cannot distinguish primary
- Unaware of genres of material
- Learning about doing instead of doing
- “The Internet is a giant Xerox machine, so this is their go-to on everything”
- Previous education “focuses on a very narrow definition of literacy”
Moderate familiarity before class

- Sometimes earlier classes and personal interest drives student
- They love to read
- They have good familiarity if you point out the “everyday” primary sources they see
- Some disciplines (history) stress the use of primary sources
What challenges do students face in using or analyzing primary sources?
Broad categories

- Unfamiliar domain; not sure what to do
- Lack of historical context for analysis
- Adverse effect of Internet “lookup” culture
- Time/scheduling, motivation/frustration
Student challenges (low “after”)

- Critical thinking, analysis, judging credibility, are all difficult
- Used to instant access
- Unfamiliar with broad historical context
- Tend to use sources to add to what they want to say (not for varied voices)
Student challenges (high “after”)

- Finding a point of entry into the source and using secondaries to add to it
- Superficial analysis; just starting in fields
- Dated language and print
- Asking students to think on their own
- Want to agree or disagree, not analyze
- Lack of patience
As an educator, what kinds of challenges do you face in using primary sources in the classroom?
Challenges (low rating)

- Using digital media to study physical objects in class
- Motivating students to organize time
- Getting students to recognize they are doing new kind of assignment
- Finding a diversity of source materials
- Coordinating access
Challenges (high rating)

- Time consuming activity
- Having to move a class to a “fortress” or other institution to use sources
- Students are unwilling to think of different kinds of texts
- Hard to find archives that fit subject
Discussion: STEM

• Opportunity to broaden range of STEM primary sources (not just data/journals)
• Physical objects seem to be a source of potential opportunities (used in STEM classrooms, but do not visit museums)
Discussion: Humanities

• Using historical journal articles might be a worthy activity
• Humanities/archives should be more cognizant of presenting data sources
General discussion

• Few have used assessment as part of the activity; what does that look like
• Many challenged by articulating the rationale for this activity
• Other have made connections to creating or identifying “current” primary sources
Conclusion

• Can serve as a pilot study for broader investigation including other schools
• Clear set of opportunities for symposium:
  – Resources
  – Assessment
  – Case studies
• Guidance for collection development and potential collaborations with museums
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