

# Beyond the Physical Archive: Imagining Primary Source Literacies in the Digital Age

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## **Introduction: A Constellation of Issues**

In 1993, Trudy Huskamp Peterson, in her essay “Using the Finding Aids to Archive and Manuscript Collections,” considered the emerging digital landscape and how it might transform the research practices of historians and other denizens of archives and special collections.

Although electronic versions of print finding aids had already arrived, she noted that “full development of these linked, searchable databases is a decade away”—before she reflected on even greater possibilities for the future:

But what of automating the holdings themselves? What of the day when, with a personal computer and a modem, the papers of Felix Frankfurter of the records of the World War II War Crimes Trials can be read in the researcher’s living room?<sup>1</sup>

Twenty years later, Peterson’s vision—albeit with some upgrades to the technological tools and infrastructure—is the reality for many researchers.<sup>2</sup> Primary sources that were once confined to archives, selectively published in sourcebooks, or shelved in the microfilm cabinets of research libraries are now, it seems, everywhere, and increasingly accessible to new audiences. Digitized primary sources, freely available online or found within subscription databases, are not just a boon to faculty and other advanced schol-

ars, but to undergraduates as well. The American Historical Association’s Task Force on the Undergraduate History major recognized that online collections of primary sources “encourage students to grapple with complex evidence directly,”<sup>3</sup> but the proliferation of digitized primary sources doesn’t just affect historians; the greater availability of diverse sources transcends disciplinary boundaries.

Librarians who have had the pleasure of assisting students with primary source research in the digital age know that although the world of digitized primary sources has exploded, it is by no means true that everything is available online, or that we have access to everything that has been digitized. So, while many documents and collections are indeed available in researchers’ living rooms (or dorm rooms), research with primary sources can be fraught with complications—not just due to gaps in the availability of sources, but because of differing faculty expectations for undergraduate research, students’ often narrow understandings of what constitutes a primary source, and the challenge of knowing where to look for both archival and digital sources. These complications knit together into a constellation of issues, a constellation that shifts depending on our own particular library contexts.

In the realm of digitized primary sources—which is truly a hybrid landscape of print and digital, object and surrogate—librarians often act as intermediaries. Twenty years ago, a researcher might have traveled to

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an archive and met with an archivist to discuss these collections; now, new digital resources frequently enter librarians' instructional toolkits, and we are called upon to be their guides and interpreters. In the instruction classroom, at the reference desk, or in research consultations, we connect students and faculty alike with sources that might be found in our local collections, through subscription databases, or on the Internet. Because of this intermediary role, librarians are uniquely positioned to collaborate with both faculty and archivists to enhance students' learning and research with digitized primary sources: to work with faculty to develop activities and assignments that expose students to a wealth of source materials, and to work with archivists to restore some of the clarity, context, and archival research practices that are sometimes lost when primary sources move from the archives into digital space.

In this paper, we propose strategies for outreach and collaboration with faculty and archivists that are centered on digitized primary sources. These strategies are based on our experiences and informed by a review of the literature of teaching faculty in several disciplines, as well as the archival literature, to identify current methods of teaching and supporting undergraduates' research with primary sources.<sup>4</sup> Next, we present examples of activities, assignments, and approaches to digitized primary source pedagogy that are linked to relevant information literacy and visual literacy standards. Finally, we offer concluding thoughts on the development of primary source literacies, not just in an era of digital abundance, but at a time in which the rapidly expanding field of digital humanities has the potential to complicate and alter students' relation to sources even more dramatically.

### Partnerships with Faculty

Teaching faculty in many disciplines recognize the potential of research with primary sources. Historians were among the first to see the possibilities of digitized primary sources for transforming undergraduate research. Roy Rosenzweig, who directed the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, wrote extensively on teaching and learning in digital archives, and sought to assuage concerns about the quality of online historical resources; he was worried "not that students will find junk online, but rather they will fail to gain full access to the Web's riches or won't know what to do with those riches when they

find them."<sup>5</sup> Other historians, like Slatta and Atkinson (2008) and Hingson (2008) propose classroom and research activities for undergraduates that use particular collections of digitized primary sources. Slatta and Atkinson recommend American Memory from the Library of Congress, along with other faculty-selected portals for documents, and emphasize "uncoverage" through primary sources: that is, using documents to uncover "the subtleties, nuances, and interpretations" of history, rather than covering facts.<sup>6</sup> Hingson turns to the National Security Archive as a collection that can stimulate students' critical thinking and encourage them "to make personal and political connections" between themselves and their sources.<sup>7</sup> Schmiesing and Hollis (2002), focusing on research in the physical archive, detail a collaboration between a professor of German and a special collections librarian to integrate active learning and hands-on research with primary sources into an undergraduate course on the Enlightenment.<sup>8</sup> Studstill and Cabrera (2010) present active learning exercises designed to assist undergraduate researchers in religious studies with their use of digitized primary sources; these activities are proposed as part of a collaboration between the librarian and the faculty member to ensure that the focus of the library session meets the professor's goals for the course.<sup>9</sup>

When considering opportunities for collaboration, it can be challenging to identify and engage potential faculty collaborators because of the seemingly endless variety of teaching styles, pedagogical aims, and approaches to primary source research. There is considerable diversity of views and methods related to the use of digitized primary sources—and the diversity of views at our own institutions might be even greater. For some faculty, primary sources are always found in archives. Even if digitized versions of sources exist, the experience of archival research—that is, of physically traveling to an archive, of sifting through boxes and folders, of handling documents and examining artifacts from all possible angles—is irreplaceable and irreplaceable. For others, introducing students to primary source research is done through the careful selection of documents, with buttressing secondary literature to assist with context and interpretation. Others still might not require their students to seek primary sources at all, whether because of the approach taken in a particular course, the availability of appropriate source material, time constraints, or

other logistical considerations.

Because of this diversity of views and methods, talking to faculty about research with primary sources is an important first step, even before the actual outreach and collaboration begin. These discussions might be formal (as in a department meeting) or informal (by email or in a chat over coffee), and provide an occasion to tease out what course syllabi rarely describe: the faculty member's approach to primary sources in the classroom, and the expectations for student research beyond producing "a final paper." A liaison librarian might meet with several professors from the same department and learn that each has a different take on primary source research, and that the department as a whole does not have a consistent view on the role of primary sources in their students' research and learning. While these conversations will not always lead to massive overhauls of departmental curricula and expectations, they might inspire further discussion and reflection among faculty. They also make the librarian aware of courses and assignments that require engagement with primary sources, and alert him/her to potential faculty collaborators.

Outreach is an excellent way to better understand faculty views and interests regarding primary sources. Soliciting feedback on database trials of digitized documents isn't just valuable input for collection development decisions; it can also spark discussions about the faculty member's teaching and research interests, about the availability of sources more broadly, and about how a particular database or collection might be used in the classroom or for students' independent research. Sharing links to new or interesting digitized collections that are freely available online is another way to establish a dialogue with faculty about primary sources.

With all outreach activities, it's best to communicate with professors as early as possible—or at least before syllabi are solidified and before students are flustered and desperate for sources. By talking to faculty early on, when courses and primary-source-based assignments are still under development, the librarian can address expectations about what's available and how sources might be discovered and used by students. Conversations with faculty can ensure that students either have access to the digitized primary sources they need, or that they are made aware of the limitations of the available sources. These conversations can lead to increased familiarity with digitized

primary source collections, and possibly influence the creation of assignments that take advantage of these collections.

The examples of primary-source-specific information literacy strategies outlined in section four ("Pedagogical Approaches") grew out of many different modes of librarian/faculty collaboration: from one-shot sessions to embedded librarianship, with almost every possible permutation in between. Flexibility is one of the cornerstones of collaboration, and finding approaches that reflect the realities of one's institutional culture is paramount. Even if a librarian isn't fully embedded in a course, one goal of collaboration related to digitized primary sources might be to foster closer links between a one-shot instruction session and students' independent research. Faculty can encourage students to seek out librarians beyond the instruction classroom, as a means of expanding their understanding of the sources that are available to them. While a one-shot session can lay the groundwork for engagement with these sources and research methods, individual consultations with a librarian provide students with personalized assistance that is relevant to their particular topics and questions. In a rapidly changing, archival-and-digital hybrid environment, one-on-one support both helps students to navigate the resources that are available to them and to take ownership and construct meaning out of the research process.

### Partnerships with Archivists

Of course, faculty and librarians aren't the only stakeholders in a discussion of primary source research beyond the archives. Although digitized primary sources have the potential to take researchers out of the archives, the expertise of archivists and special collections librarians, and their ability to provide clarity and context for both primary sources and the information architecture of collections, can inspire exciting collaborations to enrich students' learning and research.

In the archival literature, the past decade has seen an increase in calls for primary source literacy. Authors writing in the earlier years of the digital era, including Matyn (2000) and Schmiesing and Hollis (2002), focus on archival research skills that can be developed in the archives. Matyn comments on the "special value to having students do hands-on work with original primary sources,"<sup>10</sup> while Schmiesing and Hollis build on the view of the archive as a "laboratory

for the humanities” and see it as a locus of active, collaborative learning through engagement with sources that students can select for themselves.<sup>11</sup> Malkmus (2008) explores the challenges of preparing undergraduates for primary source research in the archives, in particular the importance of establishing the context for the documents one finds there and strategies for honing searches through the incremental building of contextual knowledge.<sup>12</sup> Yakel and Torres (2003),<sup>13</sup> Pugh (2005),<sup>14</sup> and Carini (2009)<sup>15</sup> have also written about archivists as educators and the need to establish, teach, and assert the value of archival research competencies. Yakel (2004) calls these competencies “information literacy for primary sources.”<sup>16</sup> The need for IL-like competencies is borne out in the work of Archer, Hanlon, and Levine (2009), who studied students’ research behaviors related to primary sources and noted that students rely on the research tools and strategies with which they are most comfortable, even if these tools and strategies are not appropriate to primary source research.<sup>17</sup> There are a few examples in the literature of collaborations between archivists and librarians related to primary sources; one such article, by Sutton and Knight (2006), offers promising methods for integrating primary sources into library instruction that might otherwise focus solely on secondary literature, but the authors comment that these sessions “intentionally avoid more advanced issues, such as the online availability of digitized archival collections.”<sup>18</sup>

Because of our shared concerns about building students’ information literacy skills and research competencies, it seems that research with digitized primary sources is an area that is well suited to librarian/archivist collaboration. The most direct path to collaboration begins with librarian/archivist communication—even when this path can have significant, but hardly insurmountable, obstacles. While some faculty members might schedule an instruction session with a librarian and a separate session in the archives, others might interact with just the librarian, or just the archivist. At most colleges and universities, the librarian and the archivist are geographically distant from one another, on separate floors or in entirely different buildings. Furthermore, liaison librarians/subject specialists who interact with particular communities of patrons as “the librarian for” or “the liaison to” a certain subject, can be reticent to cede professional territory

to another, especially when they have worked diligently to build relationships and promote their own expertise. However, the unique and ever-growing realm of digitized primary sources offers a space where librarians and archivists can meet to contribute their specialized knowledge and skills in the service of better understanding and supporting their patrons’ research needs.

In the same way that discussions with faculty about primary source research illuminate varied pedagogical approaches and suggest opportunities for collaboration, conversations with archivists are the foundation of primary-source partnerships. A librarian and an archivist might meet to discuss the courses, assignments, and research interests of students and faculty that have a connection to primary sources—whether those sources are found in the archives or in the library’s digital collections. The archivist can share information about in-house collections that intersect with the librarian’s subject areas and about any recent or anticipated digitization projects that will make these collections available to researchers outside the archives. Similarly, the librarian can keep the archivist in the loop about new subscription databases or acquisitions that resonate with the archives’ holdings. While this type of communication can seem basic, it is the key to effective partnerships.

These discussions inform one approach for primary source collaborations between librarians and archivists: blending the local and the digital. What is available for researchers in the archives and special collections, and do these sources intersect with digitized primary sources that are available either freely online or through the library’s databases? Instead of creating a primary source dichotomy in which sources are either in the archives (and the purview of the archivist) or somewhere online (and the domain of the librarian), a blended approach presents a more holistic—and accurate—view of the primary source research landscape. In the instruction classroom, pairing local archival materials with related digitized materials also offers an opportunity for the archivist to elucidate valuable concepts of archival research that are often lost when students interact solely with online sources: where primary sources come from, how collections end up in archives, why some collections are more readily discoverable than others, and what finding aids can reveal about sources.

When proposing models for librarian/archivist collaboration as part of a larger model of faculty/librarian/archivist collaboration, it is useful to think beyond the goal of getting both the librarian and the archivist into the classroom at the same time. While some of the examples of collaboration we detail in the next section feature a librarian and an archivist co-teaching a one-shot session, others do not. Such simple steps as including the archivist's contact information on a course guide, or featuring relevant, related collections of digitized primary sources on finding aids and special collections websites, will encourage students to see the big picture of primary source research: there's more to it than what's online and more available than what's found in local archives. A network of professionals is there to support their research and exploration.

Finally, for all of these outreach strategies, whether they involve faculty, archivists, or both, it is important to find at least one active collaborator who will share his/her positive experience with colleagues. Roy Rosenzweig wrote that, "for many students, the abundance of primary sources can be more puzzling and disorienting than liberating and enlightening."<sup>19</sup> As digitized primary sources proliferate, partnerships between librarians, faculty, and archivists can help students go beyond disorientation and become savvy researchers—not just in finding and using digitized primary sources, but in understanding how these sources fit with archival collections and secondary literature. A network of collaborators who will advocate for instruction with digitized primary sources—whether that instruction occurs in the library, the archive, the classroom, or one-on-one—is a way to ensure that students develop the skills they need to make use of the abundant, exciting resources available to them in the digital age.

### Pedagogical Approaches

This section will focus on pedagogical approaches to incorporating research skills that map to the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards, and, in some cases, to the ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.<sup>20</sup> While primary sources are mentioned throughout the information literacy standards, we believe that the visual literacy standards begin to get to the heart of some issues related to finding and engaging with diverse,

often non-textual sources, particularly in the digital age. We also highlight relevant visual literacy standards here because one could argue that understanding primary sources "equip[s] a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use" of these sources.<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of this essay, we will focus on the skills required to identify, evaluate, and analyze primary sources rather than the skills required to create them.

Furthermore, although we link these approaches to two sets of literacies and standards, we recognize that in many institutional contexts—including our own—these standards do not always reflect the desired learning outcomes and pedagogical concerns of the teaching faculty with whom librarians collaborate. We cite these standards as guides for librarians as they integrate digitized primary sources into the teaching of research skills, and as a helpful framework when thinking through their own pedagogical aims. While we employed many of these aims and strategies in history and sociology classes, they are easily adapted to other disciplines.

**Our aim: Identify available primary sources created at the time of a specific historical event or question.**

Information Literacy Standard One: The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

Second performance indicator: The information literate student identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

Visual Literacy Standard One, second performance indicator: The visually literate student identifies a variety of image sources, materials, and types.

**Strategy: Brainstorming.**

Brainstorming helps students to consider the range and formats of available primary sources and how to use them through the lens of a particular discipline. We have asked students to brainstorm, as a class or in small groups, definitions and types of pri-

mary sources. When one asks a history class, “What is a primary source?” the usual answer is often, “a first-person account of events.” While correct, this is a little narrow, at least as students initially imagine it. Students often don’t consider the primary-source potential of creative works of art (novels, songs, films), government information, or original scientific research. As Studstill and Cabrera argue, “context sensitivity seems to be one of the key characteristics of primary sources,” and by privileging “firsthand accounts” or a prepackaged list of possible source types, students might miss out on sources that are relevant to their own research questions.<sup>22</sup> Through the brainstorming process, we focus on a particular student’s topic, asking: when did this event or moment take place, and what media were available at that moment in time? For example, television and film are formats available to students interested in World War II but not to students interested in the Crimean War. Brainstorming helps students to understand what is available as well as what is not available and why. For example, while it would be ideal to read slave narratives written at the time of the American Civil War, the librarian and faculty member can lead students in a discussion that explores reasons behind the scarcity of such sources (slave literacy, access to writing materials and leisure time, etc.) and suggestions for locating other types of sources from the period, along with the ways in which source availability impacts our ability (or inability) to ask certain research questions.

Once students have brainstormed a list of types of sources, they can then identify strategies for accessing each source, such as possible databases, library catalogs, or government websites. Not only does this approach open students’ eyes to different or wider definitions of primary sources, but it also allows the librarian and faculty member to gauge the types of materials that students will need. It gives the librarian an opportunity to point out particular databases and print bibliographies and to follow up with the class via e-mail or subsequent sessions. This approach works especially well as part of a series of sessions and does require some flexibility on the librarian’s part. Also, this activity is easily adaptable: students can do this as a class discussion that the librarian and faculty member facilitate or in small groups while making concept maps on chalkboards or large pieces of paper.

**Our aim: Identify strategies for finding different types of primary sources.**

Information Literacy Standard Two: The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

Second performance indicator: The information literate student retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.

**Strategy: Bibliographic tracing.**

The uneven availability of digitized primary sources presents several paradoxes for researchers. So much is now accessible outside of archives, and yet there is still so much more that can only be discovered through traditional research methods in traditional archival settings. The Internet and subscription databases offer tremendous efficiencies for primary source research, particularly with respect to keyword searching (versus consulting finding aids and poring over documents) and anytime, anywhere access (versus research trips to archives that maintain standard business hours). However, these efficiencies can only be realized if the researcher has first identified a relevant digitized collection—which can be, in itself, an inefficient slog.

One of the strategies that many librarians and professors encourage students to employ in their research is bibliographic tracing. With secondary literature, this is an efficient, effective method of identifying additional relevant resources and of situating the sources one has found within the larger body of scholarship on a topic. Bibliographic tracing to identify potential primary sources allows students to work backwards from secondary sources to get to primary sources, since the primary sources are often less readily findable than the secondary literature.

In an instruction session, the librarian can present students with the bibliography from one of the course readings and ask the students to either work in small groups or as a class to identify which citations refer to primary sources, what types of primary-source materials the author has engaged with, and potential paths to finding these sources. For example, if the bibliography includes newspaper articles and government documents, this provides an occasion for students to recommend (or learn about) the library’s digitized newspaper

holdings and online resources for government information. A citation to a book from the seventeenth century might lead them to Early English Books Online. References to an individual's papers in an archive can be an opportunity to show the students ArchiveGrid, WorldCat, or the archive's website and finding aids, and to suggest strategies for determining if these papers have been digitized, either on the archive's site or in a collection of digitized primary sources like Gale's Archives Unbound collections, which can be searched by the name of the archive/institution.

This approach to finding primary sources through secondary sources can, in some cases, be more efficient than trawling Google and library databases and hoping that a primary source will reveal itself. The purpose of this exercise is not for students to recreate the source list of the author but to offer students a model for scholarship in a particular discipline or subject area by making them more aware of the types of sources that researchers rely on and the diverse methods they might employ in the digital age to find these sources. Because it is unlikely that all of the cited primary sources are available online, this exercise can also lead to a discussion of what's available (or not) and why that might be.

Of course, students aren't the only researchers beset by inefficiency in the paradoxical and constantly expanding realm of digitized primary sources. Librarians and faculty can also struggle to keep up as new collections and research tools come online—and sometimes a Google search really will reveal a fantastic trove of primary sources. For example, a researcher interested in Iranian oral histories will be much better served by a keyword search that leads to the Harvard University Iranian Oral History Project than by fruitless searching in a subscription database. Using the outreach methods proposed in section two of this paper, the librarian might work with the professor ahead of time to discuss assignments that align with available primary sources, either in the library's databases or in freely available digitized collections, to save students the inefficiency of searching and allow them more time for thoughtful engagement with the primary source materials.

**Our aim: Evaluate collections of digitized primary sources in order to gain a deeper understanding of how these collections and sources fit with an individual research need.**

Information Literacy Standard Three: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

Second performance indicator: The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

**Strategy: Evaluating and comparing free websites and subscription databases.**

Many librarians impress upon students the importance of evaluating websites and thinking critically about who produced the website, the audience for which it is intended, the veracity of claims made on the site, and so forth. This critical eye can be turned not just to Internet sites but to library databases as well. In this activity, envisioned as a collaboration between a librarian and an archivist, the librarian and archivist act as guides—not just to demonstrate search strategies in a primary source database like Empire Online (Adam Matthew) or Archives Unbound (Gale) but to encourage students to investigate the provenance of these selected primary documents and the completeness of the collection's scope. The librarian and archivist might ask:

- Where did the documents in this collection come from? Are they all from a single archive, or pieced together from many institutions?
- What can you tell about the completeness of this collection? Is it the entire run of a periodical, or just several years? Is it the entirety of an individual's papers, or only a few pieces of correspondence? (Students might look at *Ulrich's* for more information about a periodical, or at WorldCat or ArchiveGrid for more information about an individual's papers.)
- Does the database provide details that can help you contextualize these documents, e.g., explanatory essays, chronologies, or suggestions for further reading?
- Does this database meet your needs for primary source research, or will you need to consult other resources, e.g., other databases or online collections, other types of digitized materials like historical newspapers or oral histories, or physical collections in local archives?

This guided discussion gives students an opportunity to become more familiar with digitized primary source collections while thinking carefully about what is included in these collections and how these documents might shape their own research. This exercise might also offer students the opportunity to compare a free resource to a similar subscription resource (e.g., US congressional documents in THOMAS or FDsys versus ProQuest Congressional), and to consider differences in available content, years of coverage, and ease of use.

**Our aim: In a hybrid research environment, identify and use the most efficient format of a source, based on the research need.**

Information Literacy Standard Four: The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Visual Literacy Standard Four: The visually literate student evaluates images and their sources.

**Strategy: Using both the physical source and its digital surrogate.**

In today's hybrid research landscape, it can be useful to show students both the physical and digital versions of objects, if available. For example, history students might be drawn in by examining a print copy of the *Illustrated London News*. In a small seminar, the students and professor might gather around the bound periodical and discuss particular articles and advertisements of interest to the class while turning pages together. In a history class, examining the physical, material object can be especially important if students are studying the production of material culture. In such cases, examining the physical object can enable students to better understand its context. In the case of *The Illustrated London News*, for example, students can gain a sense of the way that reporters at the time prioritized various news stories.

Another reason to engage students with the print object is that, in some cases, it might either be more difficult or easier to use than its digital surrogate; this gives students the opportunity to determine the information they need from a particular source and how best to obtain it. For example, the *Foreign Relations*

*of the United States* series is accessible online through multiple free sources, but leafing through the print version, instead of beginning with a keyword search online, often gives students a better sense of the types of documents included in the series. Once this context has been established, many students who are captivated by the print object will still tend to use the digital version when it's time to do research. As is the case when choosing between a print book and an e-book, students want what they want, in the format they want it in, when they want it. When the library is closed and students are writing in their dorm rooms, the digitized source is the more practical choice—especially when the print object is rare or non-circulating. It's not simply a luxury of choice, however, although it is fortunate when students are able to choose between a print and digital resource. The utility of the format often depends upon the student's research question.

**Our aim: Understand the socio-economic and legal issues that relate to the availability and use of digitized primary sources.**

Information Literacy Standard Five: The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

First performance indicator: The information literate student understands many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology.

Outcome b: Identifies and discusses issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information.

**Strategy: Discuss the "seamlessness of access."**

It can be challenging to emphasize to students that not everything is free and that not all of the primary sources they might desire have been digitized. In some ways, the seamlessness of library resources might encourage these misunderstandings. For many students, it is only when they are off campus—or after they graduate—that they realize that the information that once seemed free is actually behind a pay wall. Similarly, digitized collections of primary sources, whether free or fee-based, might create the illusion of

abundance, when in fact these collections are rarely comprehensive. Free collections, presented as online exhibits or as part of an institutional repository, provide a snapshot of an archive's collections; few institutions have the financial and staff resources to digitize all of their assets. Databases of primary sources that are licensed or purchased by libraries are typically assembled from materials found in many different collections, and often centered on a particular time period, geography, or theme. Both of these methods of creating digitized collections, while providing greater access to rare or unique sources, can create the illusion of completeness and elide the sense of the scope and complexity of archival holdings.

Classroom collaboration between librarians and archivists can reintroduce complexity while helping students to understand why not everything is digitized and not everything is free. Even if students are expected to use digitized primary sources without availing themselves of local archives, a visit from an archivist, or a trip to the archives or special collections reading room, can begin to address the realities of digitization. The archivist can explain how digitization priorities are established in archives and the ramifications of copyright law for these projects; if digitization is handled on-site, students can take a tour of these operations to get a glimpse of the process. The librarian can build on this foundation with an explanation of how primary source databases are produced and the economics of subscribing to these collections. Few students will have had occasion to reflect on primary source databases in this way, and might be surprised to learn that not only are these resources selective, but that what gets selected for digitization is often tied to vendors' ideas of what constitutes a marketable collection to sell to libraries. This behind-the-scenes view of how primary sources move from archives to digital space will better equip students to understand the contemporary research landscape and the sources they encounter online and through the library's databases.

### **Conclusion: Literacies without Standards; Sources without Boundaries**

A set of primary source literacies is difficult to imagine, in part because of the diversity of formats and methods for finding and using digital and archival primary sources, the myriad definitions of and approaches to primary sources across disciplines, and the variability of contexts we face as librarians. Some

might see this variability as a reason to forge ahead and create additional sets of discipline-specific standards. As the ACRL Visual Literacy Standard Two indicates, "Individual disciplines may choose to articulate additional discipline-specific visual literacy learning outcomes."<sup>23</sup> Yet, there is an incredible amount of variety, both across disciplines and within them, in terms of faculty visual literacy outcomes; the same is true with respect to primary sources. One historian at a small, liberal arts college was overjoyed to discover that the Martin Luther King Jr. papers had been digitized and declared that no one should have to travel to an archive in the twenty-first century; it should all be online. Another historian, in the same department at the same small, liberal arts college, prefers her students to look for published primary sources by browsing the shelves, without consulting the library's OPAC. How can librarians and archivists successfully work with both approaches and with all the shades of difference in between? Instead of developing another set of standards or primary-source-specific literacies, we have examined the standards that already exist in order to create meaningful pedagogical strategies. These standards and strategies can guide us in our support of faculty teaching aims and student research practices.

In this paper, we focused on building relationships with faculty and archivists to promote the effective use of digitized primary sources, but we have not commented on an emerging trend that has the potential to give students, even at the undergraduate level, deeper exposure to primary sources. Digital humanities projects, in which faculty and students might work together to bring collections out of the archives and into digital space, will surely allow students a richer, more complex view of how sources are created, how scholars describe and contextualize these sources, and how technology can facilitate engagement with these materials in previously unimagined ways. These endeavors, along with other primary-source-based assignments that encourage students to create new knowledge to share with other researchers outside the classroom, can benefit from many of the aims and strategies we have highlighted. A thorough grounding in primary source research practices in the archives and beyond will prepare students to assume new roles as scholars and creators.

### **Notes**

1. Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "Using the Finding Aids to Ar-

- chive and Manuscript Collections,” in *Teaching Bibliographic Skills in History: A Sourcebook for Historians and Librarians*, ed. Charles D’Aniello (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1993), 285.
2. The Nuremberg Trials Collection in Yale Law Library’s Avalon Project ([http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/imt.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/imt.asp)) makes many of the World War II War Crimes Trials documents available in full text online.
  3. Michael J Galgano, *Liberal Learning and the History Major* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 2007), <http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/LiberalLearning.htm>.
  4. We have created a public Zotero library to share the resources we have gathered on this topic ([https://www.zotero.org/groups/2013\\_acl\\_primary\\_source\\_literacies](https://www.zotero.org/groups/2013_acl_primary_source_literacies)). During the course of our research (as mentioned in sections two and three of this paper), we observed that while historians and archivists seem to engage with the question of primary source literacies, few librarians have jumped into the conversation. There is certainly room to do so, and the question of teaching faculty and students how to grapple with finding primary sources both within and beyond the physical archive will likely remain an important question.
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