

“The Real ‘Aha!’ Moments”: Teaching Undergraduate Students with Primary Sources

Lisa Duncan

Assistant Librarian/Collections Management Archivist, Special Collections, The University of Arizona Libraries

Mary Feeney

Librarian, Research & Learning Department, The University of Arizona Libraries

Niamh Wallace

Associate Librarian, Research & Learning Department, The University of Arizona Libraries

September 1, 2020

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Acknowledgments

This research study was supported in part by a University of Arizona Libraries Library Faculty Supporting Outstanding Academic Research (SOAR) Grant and the contributions of University of Arizona graduate student Michelle Boyer-Kelly. The authors thank the instructors who participated in this study.

Executive Summary

In 2019-2020, the University of Arizona Libraries (UAL) participated in a research study led by Ithaka S+R that explored the experiences, practices, and challenges of teaching undergraduate students with primary sources. The UAL research team consisted of a Special Collections archivist and two liaison librarians who work with disciplines that make use of primary sources in research and teaching. Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with instructors in five disciplinary areas—English, gender and women’s studies, history, and journalism—and the UA Honors College.

Findings

Findings are organized around three broad themes: Course Design and Planning, Discovery and Use of Primary Sources, and Pedagogy and Practice. Key points include:

Course design and planning

- All of the courses discussed in the interviews—no matter the discipline, topic, or level—center on the critical analysis of primary source materials.
- Course learning goals shared by all interviewees include developing critical reading and writing skills; recognizing the difference between primary and secondary sources; and analyzing sources for validity, authenticity, and bias.
- Instructors use a large range of assignment types that are based on various course learning outcomes and disciplines. Most of the courses are writing-intensive, requiring students to develop and refine critical writing and analytical skills and demonstrate these skills in research papers or other written assignments.

Discovery and use of primary sources

- Instructors use a wide variety of types of primary sources in both physical and digital formats and covering many different time periods.
- Most instructors noted the benefits of having access to digitized sources, whether through commercial vendors, locally digitized, or open access from other institutions, yet almost all commented that there is something lost by not interacting with the physical artifact.
- Interviewees emphasized the pedagogical importance of having access to underrepresented voices but noted an overall lack of diversity represented in primary source collections, even in the digital age.

Pedagogy and practice

- Most of the instructors have their students visit libraries and archives to work with primary sources, either with a class, individually, or through virtual visits.
- Instructors described the time and resources needed for archives to accommodate large classes, requiring multiple class periods and large amounts of archival materials.
- Throughout their courses, instructors reinforce building student skills in finding and using primary sources regardless of the level of the course.

- Instructors commented on the importance of librarians in helping students find sources, and many also collaborate with librarians and archivists in teaching with primary sources.

Recommendations

The research team’s recommendations drawn from these findings center on three areas of action for the UAL and UAL librarians and archivists who work directly with instructors teaching with primary sources: develop collections and services that support teaching with primary sources; improve support for primary sources in a digital environment; and increase collaboration and outreach. Liaison librarians in the Research & Learning Department (Main Library) and archivists and librarians in Special Collections have already been leading some of the work reflected here.

Develop collections and services that support teaching with primary sources

- Further invest in the collection, acquisition, purchase, and digitization of primary sources from diverse communities, whether from our local collections or from commercial vendors.
- Explore how to design “at-scale” activities for working with physical archival materials in Special Collections.
- Develop new LibGuides or revise existing LibGuides that focus on teaching with primary sources.
- Consult with instructors on how to scaffold assignments or archival visits over the course of the semester to build expertise in analyzing primary sources.
- Continue to provide one-on-one research consultations for students seeking and using primary sources.

Improve support for primary sources in a digital environment

- Make the primary sources that the UAL has either digitized or purchased in digital form as clearly accessible and visible as possible, such as through LibGuides and promotion.
- Continue to acquire digitized primary sources from vendors and increase digitization of primary source materials from UAL Special Collections, as needed for the curriculum.
- Ensure that on-demand digitized materials are made available widely through ContentDM.
- Create digital tours or digital demonstrations of Special Collections for use in online courses.
- Continue to recognize the importance of physical collections in an increasingly digital environment.

Increase collaboration and outreach

- Continue to assess needs across campus related to primary sources.
- Continue the cross-departmental work of the research team as a learning community and place for collaborative teaching with primary sources.
- Continue and increase collaboration with instructors who teach with primary sources, such as through digital scholarship and collections as data projects.
- Improve visibility of primary source collections—both locally-owned and licensed materials.

Introduction

In 2019-2020, the University of Arizona Libraries (UAL) participated in the Ithaka S+R “Teaching with Primary Sources” research project, along with twenty-five other public and private research universities and liberal arts colleges in the United States and the United Kingdom. Coordinated by Ithaka S+R, a not-for-profit research and consulting organization that helps the academic, cultural, and publishing communities navigate change, the study investigated instructors’ experiences and challenges when teaching undergraduate students with primary sources.¹ A local team of UAL librarians and archivists conducted interviews with instructors in the humanities and social sciences who teach undergraduate students with primary sources, and produced recommendations for the development of library resources and services to support instruction with primary sources.

At the University of Arizona (UA), a large public research university, faculty and graduate students across a range of disciplines teach undergraduate students with primary sources. UAL includes the Research & Learning Department, a group of liaison librarians who engage with faculty and students across disciplines and provide instructional and research services, and the Special Collections Department that provides instructional services and access to primary research materials chiefly in the fields of literature, the sciences, and Arizona, Southwestern, and Borderlands history.

As Ithaka S+R described in their announcement for the project, “Teaching undergraduates with primary sources promotes student engagement and critical thinking skills and is a key ingredient in the current pedagogical push toward ‘inquiry-based’ or ‘research-led’ learning.”² For this study, Ithaka S+R defined primary sources as “historical or contemporary human artefacts which are direct witnesses to a period, event, person/group, or phenomenon, and which are typically used as evidence in humanities and some social science research.”³

Primary sources have a long history in undergraduate education.⁴ This study comes at a time of increasing interest in the pedagogical value of primary sources in developing “transferrable skills” beyond a disciplinary context.⁵ Recent literature shows a growing effort to embrace the “paradigm shift” that teaching with primary sources offers, no matter the discipline.⁶ This

¹ Danielle Cooper and Rebecca Springer, “Announcing a New Project on Teaching with Primary Sources,” Ithaka S+R, January 16, 2019), <https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/announcing-a-new-project-on-teaching-with-primary-sources/>.

² Cooper and Springer, “Teaching with Primary Sources.”

³ “Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources. Implementation Guide” provided to project teams by Ithaka S+R.

⁴ See, for example, Magia G. Krause, “It Makes History Come Alive for Them”: The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36 (2010): 401-11; and David Pace, “The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,” *The American Historical Review* 109 (October 2004): 1171-92.

⁵ Patricia Garcia, Joseph Lueck, and Elizabeth Yakel, “The Pedagogical Promise of Primary Sources: Research Trends, Persistent Gaps, and New Directions,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 45 (2019): 98.

⁶ Wendy Hayden, “And Gladly Teach: The Archival Turn’s Pedagogical Turn,” *College English* 80 (November 2017): 149. See also Nancy Bartlett, Elizabeth Gadelha, and Cinda Nofziger, *Teaching Undergraduates with Archives* (2019). <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11499242>.

report contributes to this effort by investigating current, local practices in instruction with primary sources. Understanding how instructors teach undergraduate students with primary sources can highlight opportunities for collaboration toward the development of curricular models that integrate primary sources as well as evaluative tools to assess their impact.⁷

The interviews for this study were conducted in fall 2019, before the unprecedented upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If interviews were conducted now with instructors who teach undergraduates with primary sources, it is likely that significant changes and issues would emerge. In the second half of the spring 2020 semester and during summer sessions, UA courses were moved to remote instruction, delivered via Zoom or other teleconferencing means, or were delivered online asynchronously. The UAL, like many libraries, closed its doors and responded to this crisis in different ways, from providing instructional and research services online, to relying on access to content in the print collections using digitized materials through the HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service.⁸ Librarians and archivists are sharing ideas and strategies for how to approach access to and teaching with primary sources in this new environment.⁹ The Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) Project is investigating the handling of museum, library, and archival materials as institutions consider reopening.¹⁰

In the fall 2020 semester, many UA classes are being taught completely online, either synchronously or asynchronously. The UAL has opened up limited study space, following campus safety guidelines, and is now paging materials for pick up from its circulating collections, but the UAL Special Collections will remain closed. Liaison librarians and archivists continue to provide virtual instruction and research consultations, relying on existing digital collections—both licensed and local—and the digitization of additional materials to support curricular needs. Despite the uncertainty, there are opportunities for libraries to continue partnering with and supporting instructors who teach undergraduates with primary sources.

The UAL report contains findings organized around three themes—Course Design and Planning, Discovery and Use of Primary Sources, and Pedagogy and Practice—followed by recommendations for how to address the needs of instructors who use primary sources in

⁷ Garcia, Lueck, and Yakel, “Pedagogical Promise,” 100.

⁸ Christopher Cox, “Changed, Changed Utterly,” *Inside Higher Ed*, June 5, 2020.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/06/05/academic-libraries-will-change-significant-ways-result-pandemic-opinion>; Kimberly D. Lutz and Roger C. Schonfeld, “Leading a Library Today: How Library Directors Are Approaching the Challenges of the Current Moment.” *Ithaka S+R*, April 30, 2020, <https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/leading-a-library-today/>; Jennifer Burke Pierce, “When You Can’t Send Students to the Campus Library.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 14, 2020, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/When-You-Can-t-Send-Students/248784>; and Association of College & Research Libraries, “Pandemic Resources for Academic Libraries: Preparing to Reopen,” Last updated June 30, 2020, <https://acrl.libguides.com/pandemic/reopening>.

⁹ See, for example, “TPS Community Crowdsources for Moving Archival and Special Collections Instruction Online,” Last accessed July 2, 2020, <https://bitly.com/TPSVIRTUAL>.

¹⁰ “Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) Information Hub: A COVID-19 Research Project,” Last accessed July 2, 2020, <https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/COVID-19-research-project.html>.

undergraduate education and how the UAL can further advocate for and support teaching with primary sources across disciplines.

Methodology

The local research team consisted of an archivist in Special Collections and two liaison librarians who work with disciplines like history and English that make use of primary sources in research and teaching. Prior to the start of the study, the research team attended an Ithaka S+R-led training workshop in interviewing, coding, analysis, and report writing.

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process was completed and potential interviewees identified, recruitment emails were sent to twenty instructors whose teaching fell within the project scope, inviting them to participate in the study. Over the course of the fall 2019 semester, the research team conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with thirteen instructors, including both faculty and graduate students, in the following programs: history, English, journalism, music, gender and women's studies, and the Honors College. Interviewees included faculty members at different ranks: Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Adjunct Instructor.

Interviewees signed a consent form and agreed to share a copy of their syllabus with the research team. The survey instrument was provided by Ithaka S+R (see appendix). Interviews were recorded using digital voice recorders and later transcribed by a graduate student assistant. The anonymized transcripts were then coded by the research team using open coding. Themes that emerged from the codes were used as the foundation for the local report.

Findings

Background

Most of the instructors who were interviewed teach a wide variety of undergraduate classes, ranging from larger general education courses to smaller required capstone courses. The majority of interviewees were in the history department, with the others in journalism, English, gender and women's studies, music, and the Honors College.

For most instructors, their teaching related to their current or past research, with many either teaching in areas directly related to their research or integrating their research areas into their courses: "I was teaching based on what I had learned and then I started doing research based on what I'd been teaching. So, my teaching definitely has inspired research projects." Many commented that their research methodologies are also integrated with their teaching: "The methodologies of research that I developed and inherited over the time I have been teaching definitely go into the classroom and that includes [the] use of Special Collections' primary sources." Another noted that teaching with primary sources caused them to "really think through what it is I actually do as a researcher so that I can teach them."

Three broad themes emerged from the coded transcripts: Course Design and Planning, Discovery and Use of Primary Sources, and Pedagogy and Practice.

Course Design and Planning

As instructors plan for courses, some rely on years of teaching and research with primary sources to prepare course content; others look for primary-source-focused syllabi or assignments to adapt in an effort to avoid “reinventing the wheel.” To some extent, course design is dictated by departmental need. In the case of history, for example, courses focused on primary sources are explicitly written into the departmental curriculum. However, all of the courses discussed in the interviews, no matter the discipline, topic, or level, center on the critical analysis of primary source materials. One interviewee’s planning approach is an example of backward design: “I changed the course to be a lot more based on developing skills rather than being content based. I thought about what I want them to be able to do at the end, and that’s analyzing primary sources as well as reading secondary sources the right way.”

Training and teaching experience

Very few instructors had formal training in how to teach with primary sources. Most “learned by doing” or, as one instructor said, “made it up as I went along.” The majority of instructors learned through their own positive experiences as graduate students or through modeling by their peers, advisors, or instructors with whom they taught. Many mentioned that primary sources were a focus of their discussion sections as graduate teaching assistants: “I would walk into the classroom and say ‘this source was written in whatever year and we sort of think this is the guy who wrote it and what do you get out of it?’ and we had the richest conversations in my sections as a result of me teaching like that.” Modeling took place in these sections as well, in which the professor would “hold my hand as we worked through reading the primary sources and getting the students to ask the right kinds of questions.” Most talked with their peers and learned from others while in their degree program. Only two instructors had formal training in teaching with primary sources while in their own degree programs.

In general, instructors do not formally share instructional resources. One reason sharing is limited is because “there aren’t that many people who can teach the same course.” The exceptions are courses such as general education or gateway and capstone classes that may be taught by different instructors, including graduate teaching assistants. One instructor “offered...sets of [primary source] materials” when others take on teaching a course during the summer or when the instructor is on sabbatical, and that “some of those are...graduate students [in] our department [who] would then...take them to other universities as they’ve gone on in the profession after they’ve gotten their PhD.”

Sharing of syllabi and teaching materials not only gives teaching assistants a starting place for teaching a class but, as many instructors mentioned, it also gives graduate students their first experience teaching with primary sources. Most instructors did not share or ask colleagues for

suggestions for primary sources, but instead “just go out and find something that fits the theme that [they] want to talk about.” While there may be no formal mechanism within departments to facilitate the sharing of primary sources, some interviewees observed that there is informal sharing of teaching materials and collections of sources between colleagues.

Instructors also inadvertently gained ideas about sources and class activities from observing or collaborating with other instructors. As one instructor explained, “It kind of gave me some ideas of other ways I could use it in other classes, but it wasn’t like she was trying to teach me that.” Modeling of activities with specific primary sources was another way that instructors learned about instructional resources. Many thought the topic of sharing resources would be “a great conversation to have” within their departments. Others noted that most sharing between colleagues focused on “sharing of pedagogical approaches and assignment design and classroom management but not necessarily using primary sources.”

Course learning goals

Some of the learning goals outlined by interviewees are tied to a departmental or disciplinary framework. For the instructors working in the discipline of history in particular, primary source literacy is a key departmental learning outcome. “Analysis of primary sources just seems like the bread and butter of history education,” said one interviewee; another echoed, “It’s central to our teaching and it’s sort of integrated within our curriculum in very significant ways at every level.”

Disciplinary learning goals tied to primary sources are not just relevant or critical for future history scholars. As one interviewee said:

We historians work with primary sources and our undergrads should know what that means. But not all undergrads will actually become historians in the sense that they go to grad school or anything like that. So, I think that ultimately the point is to make them into citizens who can critically evaluate what is being put before them.

Primary source analysis serves to further course learning goals in other disciplines, as well. An instructor working in the field of music uses primary sources to teach students about their own roles as knowledge creators within a musical institution, while an instructor in journalism teaches students in a reporting class to consult historical primary sources in order to be able “to critically look at what’s happening today and what happened in the past.”

The course learning goals shared by all interviewees include developing critical reading and writing skills; recognizing the difference between primary and secondary sources; and analyzing sources for validity, authenticity, and bias. These can be categorized under the broader label of information literacy—a foundational skill that is particularly urgent in today’s world, according to the interviewees. As one instructor stated, “Things that look scholarly and academic or neutral might very well not be. So, understanding how people are creating their arguments with sources they’re using is extremely important these days.” Another interviewee called

information literacy “absolutely crucial,” commenting that “it’s about being responsible for the source of your information, for being able to say I know why I know what I know, and I can find at least one other source that would either confirm or deny this.”

Learning to critically read and write, and to feel comfortable developing original research questions, is not unique to courses that emphasize primary source analysis, but to interviewees, primary source materials provide fertile ground to develop these skills in undergraduate students in particular. “Getting them comfortable with primary sources early I think is very helpful,” said one interviewee. “Not just...making them listen to lectures and memorize what I’m saying, but actually making judgments on their own and teaching them how to do that I think is the most important thing.” Similarly, one interviewee prioritized the development of critical thinking and analytical skills over mastering content, mentioning that “at the college level there’s still some need for content learning but there’s a greater need for learning how to ask better questions and think critically.” Strengthening writing skills through analysis of primary sources was also mentioned: “Writing is a huge part [of the process]. I want them to learn how to do different types of writing and analysis. That is mainly because history is a writing field but learning how to communicate through writing is an important skill as a college student and as a person.”

Many interviewees also discussed using primary source materials to understand the creation and consumption of knowledge:

Taking primary sources and then looking at historians who use those sources in a secondary way...is really powerful for students. Because they don’t always get how we take information from primary sources and make secondary sources. And that’s an important process to teach...I can get students thinking, “Okay these are the primary sources and how do I then use them to create my own secondary work?”

Another interviewee asserted that, “for anyone in college, I think especially freshmen, it’s a great time to clue them in on how knowledge is created, and it’s not just passed down. I don’t want them to think the secondary sources are supposed to take what they read as truth.”

Course assignments

Not surprisingly, the courses described by the interviewees feature a large range of assignment types that are based on various course learning outcomes and disciplines. Most of the courses are writing-intensive, requiring students to develop and refine critical writing and analytical skills and demonstrate these skills in research papers or other written assignments.

Example assignments range from “document analysis” exercises narrowly focused on one assigned primary source object or text, to original research papers for which students are required to find and analyze primary sources on their own. One instructor described how students learn how to interpret and contextualize a primary source through a series of activities:

The final assignment for that class is for students to find a primary source and then to place it within the context of the history that we've covered within the class. But to develop that process, although there's a series of other exercises with primary sources that lead up to that, in class itself each of the class readings include primary documents on the subject that we're talking about. So, we talk about them within that context.

Scaffolding assignments to increasingly incorporate primary source analysis as students progress through a course, or even disciplinary program, is common. In history, for example, students begin the major with a course that introduces primary and secondary sources, and by 400-level courses, they are expected to develop original research projects that require independent primary source research. As one history instructor stated, "Teaching the capstone, I realized they're going to eventually have to do this huge 25-page paper based on primary research. I can't wait until their senior year to say, 'oh by the way now go do some research.'"

Some assignments are tied to class visits to archives, with students learning how to use finding aids, set up research appointments, and work with archival materials. As a few instructors pointed out, however, accommodating large class visits to archives in a meaningful way can be difficult, and pose a "burden" to archival staff. Interviewees described the time and resources for both instructors and archives staff to accommodate large classes, requiring multiple class periods and large amounts of archival materials.

Many of the instructors also described creative assignments in which students use primary sources to create a primary source project of their own. Examples include designing a musical festival lineup based on historical newspapers from a given year, reenacting the setting of a primary document, recreating a historic photo (repeat photography), and making cooking videos from medieval recipes.

Several instructors teach online classes with primary sources and struggle with adapting in-person teaching strategies to online classes, particularly when designing assignments for digital sources and utilizing digital archives. One instructor was concerned that "you lose a little bit of that excitement of bringing students into the archives and actually feeling the artifacts...I don't think you can understand [sources] unless you can actually pick it up and turn it around and look at the back side and all of those things." This sense of physicality and excitement is not easy to replicate in an online course.

Discovery and Use of Primary Sources

Discovery and selection of primary sources

Throughout the interviews, instructors discussed how they find and select primary sources to use in their undergraduate courses—a process that can require time and effort. Some preferred to use a list of sources curated by themselves, while others assigned primary source readers. As

one instructor stated, “It’s what makes teaching this class a lot of work from the front end...gathering the sources for them can be pretty difficult sometimes.” All emphasized the value in centering primary sources as required reading versus relying only on secondary, academic texts. One instructor acknowledged that relying solely on discrete primary sources can be challenging but rewarding: “It’s easier and more efficient to say ‘here’s the textbook’...Letting go of that is really difficult and it can probably lead to a lot of failure, too. I think I’m going to be frustrated...at times because I think students are going to be frustrated at times, and that’s hard to deal with. That’s part of learning.” Another instructor commented:

I think students have a more positive experience of learning from primary sources than they do from textbooks. Textbooks are great, they give you background information, but the real ‘Aha!’ moments happen with primary sources.

The growth in availability of digital primary source content has made finding materials to teach with much easier. One interviewee reflected on the difficulty in finding primary sources when first teaching and “ended up translating a bunch of stuff myself,” but now the problem is “sorting through all of the primary sources and choosing the best ones rather than being desperate trying to find anything I can.” Another interviewee acknowledged a similar difficulty in selecting the “best” resources to teach with from a mass of content:

I think about how I do history compared to my colleagues that do...ancient history. They have to think of novel ways of interpreting the primary sources. For me as a modern historian, the problem is entirely different. There’s all this stuff, and my problem is how do I select the stuff so that the students get the broadest perception possible?

Interviewees noted a dearth of translated content and an overall lack of diversity in the voices represented in primary source collections, even in the digital age. One instructor who teaches non-U.S. history discussed a particular collection of sources in Germany and noted that “very, very little of it has been translated. And what has been translated is hard to find...or it’s expensive, really expensive.”

Several interviewees discussed the importance of finding and using primary sources from diverse communities and different perspectives, but instructors and students face challenges in doing that:

The biggest challenge is finding people who were not wealthy white men...it’s finding the other voices, working class histories, women are always such a challenge before World War I, it’s so hard to find...Also difficult with written sources for certain populations...especially nineteenth century African American history...[Similarly] with Mexican American sources...It can sometimes be elites that you hear...so when you dive into culture sometimes is where you can get the voices of working-class people a little bit more clearly.

Interviewees emphasized the pedagogical importance of using diverse primary sources: “The hope is that through exposure to archival research they can...explore contributions of underrepresented groups that typically kind of get overshadowed in...overview or introductory classes and also often by textbooks.” Another instructor is “trying to get students out of the idea that history is only made about the people at the top of the socio-economic ladder.” Instructors also discussed the issue of whose voices are being represented in digitized collections: “There’s all this stuff available, but who’s digitizing it, and why are they digitizing it? What’s being left out? So, you can get a really skewed picture of a period in history if only a certain type of document is digitized.” One instructor pointed to a history of library and archives collecting policies that preference the documented voices of those in power:

This is a historical question with libraries, like what kinds of documents are they going to acquire? I think that the library is much better about it now and is trying to include more diverse voices and perspectives in its acquisitions, but...if we’re trying to get historical documents from certain places or certain voices there might be limitations there....It’s like who is in power? Those voices are the ones that generally have been incorporated into history...and then historically in libraries those are the ones that have been acquired.

Formats of primary sources used

Some instructors described using mostly print sources or physical items, while others use mostly digitized sources, and several use a mix of both formats. As one instructor said, students engage with primary sources “every single way.” Their choice of formats often depends on access to materials, but is also sometimes due to preference, ranging from “I’m hoping it’s been digitized” to “I don’t think of the digital platforms first.” When using, or even preferring, digital primary sources, some instructors noted the inherent challenges. For example, when using a source from a digital collection, they want students to see it in context with the rest of the collection, so they will link to the collection and not an individual source.

The use of physical primary sources versus digitized versions of primary sources came up in several interviews. Most instructors acknowledged how beneficial it has been to have access to more digitized sources—whether through commercial vendors, digitized locally, or available open access from other institutions—including saving time, money, and travel. One instructor commented: “In some ways, having access to digital primary sources opens up the archives in a really valuable way.” Another stated that “the opportunities are with digital archives. There’s just so much more available,” pointing out that “it would have been so much more difficult twenty or thirty years ago...some of these sources would literally be in archives that you had to go to find, whereas now, so many things have been digitized.”

Yet almost all interviewees commented that there is something lost by not interacting with the physical artifact. Even when a digitized item includes specifications about the original physical source, instructors felt that students lose a sense of size and scale: “Somebody can tell you that something is only five inches by three inches and you can visualize that, but when you’re holding a book that size in your hand as opposed to seeing it on...a computer monitor, it makes

a difference.” Likewise, one also loses “the tactility [and] the ability to flip it over,” as well as the smell of the materials. One instructor commented: “It’s great that all these digital things exist but...there’s still a place in the world for facsimiles and actual...physical things you can touch and hold because you’re experiencing more of what people in the past did.” Other aspects of physical materials that may not be captured well in digital form are three-dimensional objects that have fronts and backs that need to be viewed, or the back of photographs that may not have been scanned.

Instructors described the “ephemeral experience” and excitement in examining original items—and the challenge of doing that in a digital environment. Working with physical archives also develops critical thinking in students: “Having more exposure to putting these things into context and seeing what the originals looked like and then if they see something online, they’ll say no, that’s not right...Usually when you have that thought, there’s something that’s been altered.”

Types of primary sources

Instructors teach undergraduate students with a wide variety of types of primary sources using many different access points and covering a broad range of time periods and places that varied by discipline or sub-discipline, by course being taught, and by era or place being taught. More than half of the interviewees mentioned museum and library websites, library databases, and other library tools as ways of accessing primary sources.

Published primary sources: Source books, anthologies, readers, edited volumes

Almost three-quarters of the interviewees said they teach with published primary sources: source books, anthologies, readers, or edited volumes of document collections. Instructors may assign a whole reader or give their students excerpts from a source book. Some use a source book “because it pairs primary documents alongside secondary source excerpts,” although another commented that there is challenge for students in understanding which part of a source book is a primary source and which is secondary content. One instructor uses source books but does not assign them as required texts, in part because of the prohibitive cost, an issue echoed by another instructor: “You can put [digitized sources] [in the course management system] and the students can access them that way [but] if it’s a book, they have to buy it and sometimes the primary source collections are really, really expensive.” Some instructors also noted gaps in the content areas covered by published document collections, while others said they were useful for including “a range of different sources.” While many of the interviewees do use source books, some said they instead put together their own collection of sources.

Newspapers

More than half of the interviewees use newspapers as primary sources in their undergraduate courses, with one noting that newspapers and oral histories are the most common primary sources they have had students engage with. Another instructor mentioned that newspapers are still a familiar format to students. Some mentioned specific newspapers or historical

newspaper databases, like a Latin American digital newspaper collection, ProQuest databases, and *Times of London*.

Photographs, images, cartoons

A majority of interviewees engage their students with visual sources. Most talked about using photographs, such as from newspapers, yearbooks, and the “excellent photographic collections” available on campus, with a few mentioning political cartoons and paintings. Some instructors mentioned specific tools for finding images, like the ArtStor database, online archives of photography museums, and Google Images. One instructor observed that “students are more comfortable working with images than text,” while another commented that using images can be difficult because “they need a lot of contextualization.” There is a need to teach students “how to read visually” and “how to look critically” at the context of the image and how to describe it. Importantly, students also need to understand that “photographs exist in a series” and need to “think what was taken before and what was taken after.”

Letters, diaries, first-person narratives, memoirs

About half of the interviewees use letters, diaries, first-person narratives, or memoirs to teach undergraduate students with primary sources. Some use diaries of specific people and some assign all students the same first-person narrative to read. Instructors also use digitized letters, sometimes with accompanying transcripts. The importance of providing written accounts from different points of view was expressed.

Facsimiles, manuscripts

About a third of interviewees teach their students with facsimiles and manuscripts. Some of these are early texts and facsimiles held by the UAL Special Collections. One instructor reflected on how students find it fun and an accomplishment to read fifteenth century English when given the opportunity to view “actual printed medieval facsimiles as opposed to just transcribed English editions.”

Music, music videos, songs, lyrics

A couple of interviewees extensively discussed teaching with music, songs, and lyrics as primary sources, from spirituals and Mexican *corridos*, to videos of twentieth-century rock and roll stars. They mentioned using YouTube and Spotify to access videos and playlists. Instructors have their students watch videos of concerts and performances and examine lyrics of songs. One instructor teaches students with song lyrics: “We sort of unpack the lyrics...That’s the only way we’re going to hear” the voices of some individuals and groups of people throughout history.

Oral histories and interviews

A few instructors talked about using oral histories and interviews in their courses. Some specifically mentioned audio interviews, others video oral histories. Several accessed oral histories that have been made available online. Some of the oral histories included transcripts, as well. One instructor noted the impact of being able to hear them directly: “You see her face, you hear her words...and you’re just not going to get that from the book.”

Other sources

A few instructors mentioned using films and related materials as primary sources, from a digital collection of scripts to documentaries and feature films. Additionally, a couple of instructors have their students engage with printed or digital maps as primary sources, such as Sanborn fire insurance maps. A few interviewees mentioned using government documents like government records, the federal census, and court cases. In addition to this full range of primary sources that instructors use in teaching undergraduates, others included: city directories, field research, speeches, pamphlets, historic recipes, “living” primary sources like a historical demonstration and reenactments, and the drafts and sketches of a musical composition as it is being created.

Keeping and organizing sources

Though many interviewees collected their own primary source materials, few had a specific method of organizing or storing them. Some instructors rely on the campus course management system for storage of their primary and secondary materials associated with a class. Some keep published sources on their own bookshelves, others keep hard copies in files in their offices. One instructor keeps “hordes of...anthologies and books that have excerpts of stuff” to be located and used later. Some keep digital files of scans, PDFs, or photographs of sources in tools like Dropbox, but even then, felt that they were not well organized. Instructors may keep complete sources or collections of sources, while others may take pieces from different source books, or keep individual items like newspaper articles. Some organize the sources they keep by class, some by topic within a class. Notably, one instructor commented that it is “easier to keep track of the physical [sources] than the digital ones.” Instructors may later use the collected sources in a different course or in the same course if they will be teaching it again. Some depend on institutions like libraries to maintain digital copies to be found again later. One instructor said, “I wish I were that organized. It’s more like ‘oh for this class I should have students look at these...sources,’” and added “I should be more methodical in that way. It’s kind of ad hoc or depending on the course rather than keeping a nice collection. I figure that’s what the library does, so I go there.”

Pedagogy and Practice

Engaging students with primary sources

One of the first objectives for many instructors is teaching students about primary sources. To do this, most assume that their students do not know what a primary source is and incorporate primary source literacy into all their courses: “It’s not just a one-time thing. It is a constant reinforcement.” One instructor noted that, regardless of the course level, there is no expectation that students will know what a primary source is, but in higher-level courses they “try to ramp it up more quickly to a more advanced analysis of primary sources.”

Several instructors disliked the term “primary source,” either because they wanted to use terminology familiar to the students, or because they considered everything a primary source in

their field. One instructor mentioned that the terms could become an obstacle if they began a “debate about ‘is it a primary source or is it not a primary source?’ when the question is really ‘what is its value and what are its limitations?’” Some faculty members also talked about differences of opinion within or across disciplines about what constitutes a primary source or “what a legitimate source is.” Regardless, ultimately all the instructors did define for their students what a primary source is. As one instructor mentioned, “primary source is a term of art that will be used in their other classes so I can’t just send them away with the notion it doesn’t mean anything.”

Nearly all the instructors emphasized the need to make learning with primary sources interesting and engaging to the students, either by bringing sources to students in a variety of platforms, integrating them into every class period, or “teach[ing] the source, not the history.” One instructor suggested building primary sources into the culture of the class: “Use them from day one until the very end. Because then they get excited about it. They know what to expect, and it becomes a much easier space for them to process those sources.” One common method of engaging students was bringing mystery and excitement into the classroom through primary sources. The instructors all mentioned the importance of letting the students analyze and discover history from the sources through hands-on activities. For example, “one of the guiding principles is to get them to work intellectually with the documents, not to just say ‘here’s how you interpret this document’ but now you have to try and bring your ideas to it.” Another instructor “shows” students history by incorporating live demonstrations and uses role playing as a primary source in classroom sessions.

Teaching how to find primary sources

The majority of instructors incorporate learning how to find sources into their classes in some way. The variability in students’ skill level, from knowing what a primary source is to finding them and to analyzing them, presented challenges for instructors. For this reason, instructors assumed that students do not have this knowledge at the start of their classes. The course level played a large role in determining how the instructor teaches the students to find sources. Instructors talked equally about teaching students to find digital sources as they did teaching students how to find physical sources.

Half of the instructors provided their students with primary sources, either by hand-curating the sources they want them to use or by referring them to specific databases like Eighteenth Century Collections Online or ProQuest Historical Newspapers from which to choose sources. They also find digitized primary sources using websites of libraries and national archives. Instructors familiarize students with campus resources and course guides created by liaison librarians that include links to digitized primary sources and information about accessing physical materials. A few instructors also mentioned the use—or not—of Google: “I basically say [to the students], don’t really Google.” Students find information online “and they think that they’ve found a primary source...it can be really difficult to get them away from that.” What students find online may be “heavily edited” and “highly problematic,”

...so they need the filter and...I always think the best filter is you go through the library, you look at the databases I tell you about or that [the History Librarian] tells you about, so that they actually start at a point where you don't have to be too afraid that it goes completely wrong.

Other instructors helped students learn to find primary sources but acknowledged that “ultimately in any level class they eventually select the sources themselves.” One instructor gives students “examples and...lots of training on how to find the sources but doesn’t actually give them the sources—they’re to do that.” In lower-level courses, one instructor “built a series of scaffolded exercises throughout the semester, so each week builds on the knowledge you developed in the previous week...the outcome being, you’ll be able to do your own original research...even though it’s a 200-level course, they can do it.” For upper-level courses, instructors accelerated teaching students how to find primary sources and emphasized primary source analysis. One instructor incorporates both by having an evidence day for students to “bring in...a primary source that they found, and they need help thinking through it.”

Several instructors mentioned the challenge for students to find primary sources in a language they can understand or that is available in translation. Some subject areas lack a variety of translated sources or the instructor must translate materials themselves. This can be time consuming, although several mentioned they did do it on occasion. This limits the number of sources that instructors can use in their courses. Those that did use translations mentioned challenges with the translation themselves: “We have to treat it as though the English translation was the original,” which can be problematic when analyzing sources. In addition, finding the best translation of a source can be a problem if students choose poor translations.

Students can also have difficulty in reading handwritten documents, especially for those who cannot read cursive. In addition, some instructors found excerpts problematic. In particular, one instructor “always kind of worr[ies] about the politics of excerpting stuff to meet my agenda...especially when I’m choosing. Because we all do that, right? This is all structured around particular goals for the class and for your learners and so that, the excerpting bothers me.”

Instructors noted the difficulties that students have in using databases, which not only can be difficult to search, but each one is different. Students want searching to be easy and fast, but “research involves so many tools, each of which is different, that [students] can’t remember them all.” The complexity of the research process—using different databases and searching for, accessing, and analyzing sources—can also be a challenge for students, “not only for primary sources but for secondary sources as well. It’s an impediment to most students...They can usually figure out one or two things. I guess that’s the victory.” Students’ proficiency in technology when searching for and accessing materials was also seen as a barrier, along with access to the technology required to view and use digital materials: “To teach students how to intersect with online databases, how to do things digitally, requires them to have access to those materials, and I need to have access to those in the classroom as well, so I can tell my students bring your computers. But not all of them have a computer.”

Instructors commented that many more sources are available online, which is an asset for student research in many ways. However, instructors noted that students often struggle with finding the best sources to use and being able to put them into context if they are pulled from online sources without their accompanying metadata or taken from less reputable websites. As one instructor noted, “It’s great that they can find these sources, but if they don’t understand the context then it’s not very helpful.” Conversely, instructors noted that students may rely solely on online sources when there are many more sources only available in archives. If students are only exposed to the small portion of digitized materials, they may miss out on the wealth of undigitized materials remaining in archives. One instructor worried that students will “use the first Google result that comes up, even though the reason for that isn’t because it’s the best choice,” while another stated that for students, “the idea of doing a deep dive for information might not be as appealing.” Another interviewee commented: “The amount of materials to sort through can become overwhelming. Then the ability to search and use search engines becomes increasingly important.”

Interviewees also discussed the pedagogical challenges of the increasingly digital environment: “I think as universities turn more and more to online teaching, that’s a different way of teaching, and I think integrating primary sources and thinking about digital materials and their relationship to brick and mortar materials, I think that is a bit of a challenge.” Teaching about archival materials means teaching about archives, whether the course or course content is digital or not. As one instructor stated, “Things are online in a way they weren’t before. What I try to emphasize is that 99% of what is in [an archive] isn’t online and then we talk about why not. It’s expensive to digitize.” Another emphasized the merit in engaging with print materials rather than digital: “I guess digitization is helpful, and it can get to more students, but actually getting students to lay hands on [the object] is such a different emotional experience, and that’s valuable. There’s a whole other challenge right there—convincing people it’s valuable.”

One instructor was concerned about the accessibility of sources after working with students requiring accommodations to view and access materials: “We’ve had a number of blind students...for whom access to primary sources is difficult because if they’re handwritten or if they’re not transcribed that’s a barrier to them. It’s also a barrier to them for visual materials. How do you do that?”

Teaching with and using digital tools

There was mixed interest in and use of digital tools to examine, interact with, or present primary sources. Some instructors were “excited about the opportunity for different tools to analyze primary sources” but have not used them in classes yet. Some felt that digital tools are not user-friendly and “expecting students to be able to [use these tools] without any training is impractical.” One instructor has been “trying to think of all the ways that [students] can create stuff on their own,” but given the limited amount of time to “teach them these skills on how to read and analyze primary sources, then to expect them to develop other skills on how to use these digital tools...is just too much.”

Some instructors are hoping to incorporate digital tools in their courses and are actively involved in digital history research projects that they also plan to use as teaching tools, such as working with spatial 3-D images: “I think it would be really interesting to have students engage with spaces they will probably never or only see when they have enough money to travel...” Another instructor is currently collaborating with the library and learning about “some really interesting digital tools” for computational analysis of texts. Examples of digital tools that interviewees have had their students use include virtual tours, interactive features created by institutions like the British Library, and applications like Adobe Spark.

Instructors also had mixed responses about the extent to which these digital tools are pedagogically important to them. One faculty member said, “vital,” while another commented that “in history you can’t really get away from reading the thing.” An instructor who does use digital tools in teaching undergraduates with primary sources reflected:

I think any way you can make history come alive for them, visually, they’re going to love...The minute you can get a student to be engaged and thinks it’s interesting and cool, you’ve got them. So, for me, that’s the great thing about digital everything, everything digital...Anything like that, that can make what we’re reading in the sources... just come all together...It’s super cool. So that’s why, because it makes them really love it.

Collaboration with others who teach with primary sources

Many instructors said they collaborate with librarians and archivists in teaching undergraduate students with primary sources. Instructors described their approach as “collaborative with people who are experts” in the library, some describing long-term collaborations. Several talked about subject liaison librarians who come to class to provide library instruction sessions and workshops. Some instructors partner with librarians and archivists in the early stages of a course, from collaborating on the design and development of a new course, to “picking [their] brain as an archivist on what would work well but also coming up with instructional materials.” Some instructors provide librarians with the syllabus for their course or tell them about a specific assignment in which students are expected to use primary sources. Some instructors ask librarians to do an overview of library resources or ask archivists about bringing students to the archives. Instructors also noted that librarians and archivists design dedicated lessons and activities tailored to course topics and create and maintain course guides and library tutorials. Several instructors said they learn about collections that could be used in classes by meeting with an archivist ahead of time to become more familiar with the collections and by learning about new acquisitions from subject liaison librarians.

The interviewees described what librarians and archivists teach during library instruction sessions, including helping students understand databases and how to conduct research online, teaching students about what primary and secondary sources are, explaining what collections are available, teaching how to find sources for research papers, bringing out books and

manuscripts from the archive for students to view, and explaining the procedural use of archives like wearing gloves and keeping items in order.

When asked how the librarian or archivist's instruction relates to the rest of the course, one instructor commented, "Well, it's fundamental." Another described the librarian as being "indispensable...because [the librarian] knows so much of the online sources available..." Interviewees also talked about the benefit of working together to teach undergraduates with primary sources:

I take full advantage of the expertise of the curator or the archivist, the librarians...I like working as a team with them...[We] work together because in terms of interpreting and using the primary sources...I think [it's] really helpful for students to think about the different ways people think about primary documents, both how an archivist thinks about them versus the way an instructor might think about them...

One instructor's approach to involving librarians and archivists in teaching with primary sources is to "identify what the different roles are...there's some part of the class time that I'm responsible for, there's others that the librarian or archivist or curator will be responsible for, and other parts for [peer teaching]." Some instructors provide instruction themselves in the archives, and one commented that "undergraduates are not born with knowledge of how to behave in a museum or archive. So that's some of what I do, but then I also talk about what you want to look for when you're there."

In addition to librarians and archivists, a few interviewees mentioned that graduate teaching assistants do some portion of teaching, such as providing one-on-one guidance for students, working with smaller class sections, or leading round table discussions on how to analyze primary source documents. Some of those graduate students may be new to their programs and need to learn how to teach with primary sources. One instructor pointed out that when graduate students teach others, it helps them learn, both as instructors and for their own thesis or dissertation research.

Librarians and archivists also work individually with students. The majority of instructors mentioned the importance of librarians in helping students find sources. They saw the library as a place for students to gain equal access to available resources and as a place that is a "filter" to appropriate databases that provide a starting point for students to begin searching for sources. One described how "invaluable" it is for the subject liaison librarian to provide individual research consultations for students and how, "once they've talked to [the history librarian], the students "come back and say 'now I understand how these databases work and I have a much better idea'...This has been really helpful because they do know better then, or they suddenly come across something that works for them..."

Another instructor wants students to have the social interaction with a librarian or archivist in which they explain what they need to find and understand the process of requesting and using

primary sources in an archive. One interviewee commented that how librarians are perceived by students can impact whether the students seek help:

I often think that personality also plays into it because whenever [the librarian has] presented they're like "yes, we're going to see her!" [The librarian] come[s] across as somebody who is approachable. And then they actually also go and see [the librarian] or they feel something has been opened up to them and they can go further with this.

Visiting libraries and archives

Most of the instructors have their students visit libraries and archives to work with primary sources. This is somewhat dependent on the topics or focus of the class and what materials are available in local archives. Sometimes visits involve a tour of UAL Special Collections or other campus archives like the Arizona State Museum, the Arizona Historical Society, and the Poetry Center. Visits may include a library session or workshop with the archivist, curator, or librarian. Some instructors brought their students to the library or archive "partly so they could handle the materials and see some things I'd been talking about but also because I wanted them to understand those resources." As one instructor who is enthusiastic about having students use archives said, "You can't not go!"

Instructors reflected that many students have never been in an archive or exposed to the "incredible wealth of intellectual material" available. Students experience excitement when they do visit archives, such as when an archivist brings out manuscripts and early printed books for students to view: "Students had a blast...flipping through the pages and are like 'wow I'm touching a medieval object.'" Another interviewee described how students "get fascinated" when "putting their hands on documents that are old." Seeing students' enthusiasm when viewing archival materials inspired one instructor: "I realized that I actually wanted them to do a project based on it."

Students also visit archives and libraries on their own outside of class time, whether dropping in or making individual appointments. One interviewee has students visit archives during class and outside of class, "but usually it's more effective to go with them because I can interpret with them and for them. But also because I want to respect the fact that students are busy people and it's hard to get everybody to do something outside of class time." Instructors commented on the "standing relationship" and "partnership" with campus archives that facilitates their class visits. One interviewee who brings a large class to the archives noted that "it's taken a couple of years of working on the logistics to make that work."

Some instructors teaching online courses do not bring their students to archives but they may show students library tutorials about using libraries and archives. Instructors also may not require students to do archival research themselves, so they do not have them visit archives. In some cases, librarians and archivists go to the instructor's classroom to give an introduction to the archives, instead of having the students come into the archives. Another example involved

a librarian and archivist team that went to the class, which met away from campus, “and had sort of a workshop roadshow with the primary documents.”

About half the interviewees noted some challenges that they and their students face in trying to visit archives and museums. Some talked about the difficulty of bringing larger classes to the archives: “We spoke to a couple of your staff members and they were just like there is no way we can do that. If it was half as many students that might have been possible.” The barriers for having large classes visit archives relate to space and staffing. One instructor wanted to “figure out if there’s a way we can...use their archives...without being too much of a burden on them. Twenty or twenty-five students could actually be quite a lot.” An instructor who teaches a very large class would like to have had students look at a few primary source materials in the archives but recognized that was not feasible and “one of the biggest challenges with working with primary sources.” To mitigate these challenges, instructors mentioned: dividing the class into multiple sections and rotating visits to different campus archives; incorporating a museum exhibit in the course; having students sign up for a shift to visit the archives.

Some instructors commented that students are “often very intimidated” by using archives and that there is a “psychological hurdle” to go back to the archives, even when students have been shown something in class by an archivist. Student confidence must be built in order to do research in an archive and prepare them for the intensity of the research process: “Building confidence...and having them understand I’ve been looking at things in archives for a long time, but I look at things and half the stuff I don’t know what to do with it. It takes a lot more time than one semester or one month or one visit. So, they’ll have to understand that.” One instructor said that students are “frustrated that Special Collections isn’t opened at night,” but lets them know that archives typically are not open after certain hours. Another instructor who brings students to the archives commented that “there isn’t a lot of time in a 50-minute class. It’s probably going to be in-and-out.”

A few instructors commented on “virtual” visits to archives, such as visiting the UAL’s online digital collections or visiting other library websites that have virtual tours or interactive features for digitized archival materials:

That’s one of the things I’m particularly grateful for the digital world...you can go and see an archive without having to get [hundreds of students in the archive]. We couldn’t have gone to Special Collections...but we did visit archives digitally...several times so they could get a sense of what that looks like.

For “students who are taking courses all over the world,” an instructor who teaches an online course “encourage[s] them to go to their archives wherever they are, and if it happens to be [in Tucson], I’ll put them in touch with Special Collections.” The instructor continued, “I had a student last year who was in [another country] who went to archives there...So they go out into the field and I encourage them to do that. But again, it just depends on where they are and what they have access to.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through these interviews, the research team learned more about the creative and effective ways that UA faculty and graduate student instructors teach undergraduate students with primary sources. Challenges that instructors and their students face were also revealed. The research team reflected on opportunities to strengthen the UAL's partnerships with and support of instructors who teach with primary sources and recommends three broad areas of action for UAL and the UAL librarians and archivists working directly with instructors who teach with primary sources:

- Develop collections and services to support teaching with primary sources
- Improve support for primary sources in a digital environment
- Increase collaboration and outreach

Liaison librarians in the Research & Learning Department (Main Library) and archivists and librarians in Special Collections already lead and perform some of the work described here, and while this study focuses on the teaching of undergraduates, these recommendations will also benefit faculty and graduate students who use primary sources in both their research and teaching.

Develop collections and services to support teaching with primary sources

Increase diversity of collections

One of the most important themes emerging from the interviews was the need for diversity in archival collections. The UAL is committed to collecting materials from different voices and communities. Examples include physical materials like texts and photographs in the Borderlands Collections, materials digitized by the UAL in the Historic Mexican and Mexican American Press digital collection, and digital collections licensed from commercial publishers such as *American Indian Newspapers*. But there is more to do.

The research team recommends that UAL further invest in the collection, acquisition, purchase, and digitization of primary sources from diverse communities, whether from local collections or from commercial vendors. Part of this commitment also requires an understanding of the specific stewardship needs of diverse communities represented in archival collections and consulting with representatives of these communities on guidelines for appropriate access to and use of potentially sensitive materials, as exemplified by the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*.¹¹ Educating instructors and students about the need for restrictions on digital access, reuse, or even

¹¹ See *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*, Last accessed July 2, 2020, <https://www2.archivists.org/standards/protocols-for-native-american-archival-materials>.

in-person viewing of certain materials will be a vital responsibility for librarians and archivists.

Develop archival class visits and assignments

Several instructors discussed the challenges in bringing their classes to visit archives. For in-person instruction, Special Collections could explore how to design “at-scale” activities for working with physical archival materials. Librarians and archivists could consult with instructors on how to scaffold assignments and/or archival visits over the course of the semester to build expertise in analyzing primary sources. Increasing UAL’s capacity for online instruction through building expertise and creating online lessons will also create opportunities to reach large classes. Online instruction combined with small, targeted in-person sessions would allow Special Collections to reach larger classes that we may not usually be able to accommodate because of space and time limitations.

Develop instructional services and tools

There are pedagogical opportunities to leverage UAL primary source collections. Several instructors noted that the potential of primary sources to develop transferable skills such as information literacy or critical inquiry is equally or more important than their specific content. The research team recommends collaborating with instructors to find opportunities to teach with primary source materials regardless of the course topic or discipline. Digital primary sources and related tutorials could be directly integrated into the Library Tools in the course management system (D2L).

The research team also recommends the development of new guides or revision of existing guides that focus on teaching with primary sources. Liaison librarians have used the Springshare LibGuides platform to create course guides and subject guides in various disciplines and topics, including information and resources related to primary sources. These guides could be more instructional in nature and address the concepts and learning objectives described in the *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy*.¹² Many instructors noted that lack of contextual information, particularly with digital primary sources, hampers students’ ability to critically read and understand sources. Where guides include links to digitized collections of primary sources, additional context and guidance for how to search and use those collections could be provided. One of the authors recently collaborated with the UAL’s LibGuides coordinator to transform information on the UAL’s website about finding primary sources into discrete, instructional “FAQs.”

Additionally, instructors had described using a wide variety of types of primary sources; library guides should also reflect that range of sources available. Tip sheets could be

¹² ACRL RBMS-SAA Joint Task Force on the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy. *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy*. 2018. https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Guidelines%20for%20Primary%20Souce%20Literacy_AsApproved062018_1.pdf.

created for finding primary sources, such as a checklist for thinking about what types of sources would be appropriate for different topics. Librarians and archivists involved in teaching with primary sources could provide online workshops for graduate students and other instructors about finding digital primary sources to incorporate in their teaching. Additionally, they should continue to integrate library instruction about primary sources in targeted courses.

Emphasize research consultations

Another important area is the one-on-one research expertise provided by Special Collections archivists and Research & Learning liaison librarians. Instructors noted the challenges that students have in the research process, from finding sources appropriate for their research to being able to contextualize them. The research team recommends the continued provision of consultations for primary source research and the promotion of that service to faculty who teach with primary sources.

Improve support for primary sources in a digital environment

Highlight digital sources

While many instructors preferred using physical primary source materials, most also saw the benefits of having access to digitized sources. The need for online materials, both primary and secondary, became readily apparent to UAL librarians and archivists in the spring 2020 semester when the UA campus closed due to the pandemic. The research team recommends making as clearly accessible and visible as possible the primary sources that the UAL has digitized or purchased in digital form. This could entail expanding the LibGuides for these resources and highlighting resources in the UAL's news stories and marketing materials. It is also important that libraries continue to follow standards related to accessibility of digitized sources, such as including descriptions with images, transcriptions with text, and thinking inclusively about audience.

Increase access to digital sources

Recognizing that university libraries are facing difficult budget situations, the research team also recommends the continued acquisition of digitized primary sources from vendors, as well as increased digitization of primary source materials from UAL Special Collections, as needed for the curriculum. Special Collections already provides some patron-driven digitization and is enhancing digitization-on-demand for instructors' course use in the fall 2020 semester in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The research team recommends that on-demand digitized content be made available widely through ContentDM, the library's digital collections platform.

Increase online instruction

Another challenge for Special Collections in particular is related to "archival visits" for online courses. While acknowledging that digital visits to archives do not replace the

experience of seeing and touching physical archives in person, the research team recommends the creation of digital tours or digital demonstrations that could be incorporated into online courses. Yet in this increasingly digital environment, many instructors emphasized the importance of using physical primary source materials, and many primary sources are not digitized. The research team recommends continuing to encourage the use of physical primary sources in undergraduate courses and developing course assignments that engage students with physical materials, recognizing the impact that handling physical materials can have on inspiring research questions and engaging students in critical inquiry.

Increase collaboration and outreach

Increase internal collaboration

UAL librarians and archivists already work closely with many of the interviewees in the academic disciplines (English, gender and women's studies, history, journalism, music) and the Honors College who teach undergraduates with primary sources. The research team recognizes that many other instructors in additional disciplines may be teaching with primary sources. It is recommended that liaison librarians and archivists continue to assess primary-source-related needs across campus. This information should be shared back and forth between Special Collections and the liaison librarians in the Research and Learning Department. The research team is already working as a cross-departmental group and plans to continue collaborating informally.

Increase campus collaboration

The research team also recommends continued and increased collaboration with instructors who teach with primary sources. This includes work that is already happening, such as library instructional sessions, assignment design, and visits to archives. Ideally, this collaboration occurs at the outset of course planning. Librarians can work with instructors to scaffold the integration of primary source analysis over the duration of the semester. One of the key aspects of working with physical materials, in particular, are the partnerships through which instructors consult with archives staff on how archivists can support students using physical materials.

While there was mixed interest in the use of digital tools with primary sources, some instructors considered them pedagogically important and are excited to learn more, while also recognizing the challenges of bringing these projects and methods into the undergraduate classroom. Collaboration should also include projects that could be incorporated into undergraduate classrooms. One example of this is the current UAL digital scholarship project, "Using Newspapers as Data for Collaborative Pedagogy: A Multidisciplinary Interrogation of the Borderlands in Undergraduate Classrooms."

Improve visibility of collections

With the wealth of primary sources available through the UAL—both owned locally and licensed materials—another recommendation is improved visibility of these collections. A few instructors mentioned the need to keep up with new resources that are available and discussed the wide range of types of sources they use or want to use. The research team recommends that the liaison librarians for disciplines that use primary sources and archivists in Special Collections collaborate on a plan to regularly highlight different collections through news features on the UAL website, liaison email updates to faculty and students, on monitors in the library buildings, and other ways.

These recommendations are intended to prioritize the University of Arizona Libraries' support for teaching undergraduates with primary sources and to strengthen our collaborations with instructors. As stewards of archival primary source materials, as well as experts in information literacy instruction, librarians and archivists are uniquely positioned to contribute to this trend.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Background

Briefly describe your experience teaching undergraduates. *Examples: how long you've been teaching, what you currently teach, what types of courses (introductory lectures, advanced seminars) you teach*

How does your teaching relate to your current or past research?

Training and Sharing Teaching Materials

How did you learn how to teach undergraduates with primary sources?

Did you receive support or instruction from anyone else in learning to teach with primary sources?

Do you use any ideas, collections of sources, or other instructional resources that you received from others?

Do you make your own ideas, collections of sources, or other instructional resources available to others? If so, how? If not, why not?

Course Design

I'd like you to think of a specific course in which you teach with primary sources that we can discuss in greater detail.

Do you have a syllabus you're willing to show me? I will not share or reproduce this except for research purposes.

Tell me a bit about the course. *Examples: pedagogical aims, why you developed it, how it has evolved over time*

Explain how you incorporate primary sources into this course. *If appropriate, refer to the syllabus*

Why did you decide to incorporate primary sources into this course in this way?

What challenges do you face in incorporating primary sources into this course?

Do you incorporate primary sources into all your courses in a similar way? Why or why not?

In this course, does anyone else provide instruction for your students in working with primary sources? *Examples: co-instructor, archivist, embedded librarian, teaching assistant*

How does their instruction relate to the rest of the course?

How do you communicate with them about what they teach, how they teach it, and what the students learn?

Finding Primary Sources

Returning to think about your undergraduate teaching in general, how do you find the primary sources that you use in your courses? *Examples: Google, databases, own research, library staff*

What challenges do you face in finding appropriate sources to use?

Do you keep a collection of digital or physical sources that you use for teaching?

How do your students find and access primary sources?

Do you specify sources which students must use, or do you expect them to locate and select sources themselves?

If the former, how do you direct students to the correct sources? Do you face any challenges relating to students' abilities to access the sources?

If the latter, do you teach students how to find primary sources and/or select appropriate sources to work with? Do you face any challenges relating to students' abilities to find and/or select appropriate sources?

Working with Primary Sources

How do the ways in which you teach with primary sources relate to goals for student learning in your discipline?

Do you teach your students what a primary source is? If so, how?

To what extent is it important to you that your students develop information literacy or civic engagement through working with primary sources?

In what formats do your students engage with primary sources? *Examples: print editions, digital images on a course management platform, documents in an archive, born-digital material, oral histories*

Do your students visit special collections, archives, or museums, either in class or outside of class? If so, do you or does someone else teach them how to conduct research in these settings?

Do your students use any digital tools to examine, interact with, or present the sources? *Examples: 3D images, zoom and hyperlink features, collaborative annotation platforms, websites, wikis*

To what extent are these formats and tools pedagogically important to you?

Do you encounter any challenges relating to the formats and tools with which your students engage with primary sources?

Wrapping Up

What advice would you give to a colleague who is new to teaching with primary sources?

Looking toward the future, what challenges or opportunities will instructors encounter in teaching undergraduates with primary sources?

Is there anything else that you think is important for me to know?