



Teaching with Primary Sources at Princeton University: A Summary Report

(Draft: Final Report Forthcoming)

Ithaka S+R
Princeton University Library

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Introduction

In 2019, Princeton University Library joined a cohort of 22 academic institutions to participate in an Ithaka S+R study designed to support effective teaching with primary sources. The study presented the opportunity “to conduct a deep dive into their faculty’s needs and experiences when teaching with primary sources, and identify opportunities for ways that libraries, archives and special collections, and other stakeholders can support this work.”

This executive summary provides a local report of the methodology, data, findings, and suggested actions for Princeton University Library’s Special Collections.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions



Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources 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? *Examples: formal training, advice from colleagues or other staff, trial and error*

- » Do you use any syllabi, assignment plans, collections of sources, or other instructional resources that you received from others?
- » Do you make your own syllabi, assignment plans, 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*

- » Do you keep a collection of digital or physical sources that you use for teaching?
- » What challenges do you face in finding appropriate sources to use?

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

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

Is there anything else I should know?