

Recognizing Primary Sources in the Library: Library Instruction Plan

Workshop Professor:

History liaison and / or instruction librarian

Workshop Description:

Has your professor asked you to find and use primary sources? What is a primary source, anyway? In this activity, learn how to locate and select appropriate primary sources for your assignment using library guides (libguides) and the library databases list.

Setting:

E-classroom (or regular classroom if students have laptops) with screen projection of instructor station. Requires one computer / laptop for each 2 or 3 students to work in pairs or small groups.

Course Assignment:

HIST 2000 seminar series in research methodology and historiography. Assignments include a historiographical essay, a primary source analysis, and a formal research proposal.

Learning Outcomes:

After completing the library instruction session, students will be able to:

- Locate, identify, and select relevant online primary source collections (databases)
- Given a facsimile primary source, identify the location of the original, and the format of the facsimile
- Identify metadata provided with the source
- Locate books and articles that will support analysis and research involving the source

Materials:

Activity 1: Task Forms for pairs of students to use (samples provided below).

Activity 2: online form (can be placed in LibGuide; handout format could be substituted).

Activity 2: Handouts of specific primary source facsimiles (printouts from databases or books from collection)

Assessment:

Senior information literacy surveys, history major information literacy surveys, surveys of history faculty

Recognizing Primary Sources in the Library Workshop Outline:

- **Welcome/Introduction (5 min)**
“Where does historical research begin?” And what is the library’s role in that process? Dialogue with faculty and students. Library role: providing starting points such as reference interviews, LibGuides, organization of information (for example, Hathi Trust vs Google Books)
- **Address the outcomes and assignments (these will vary) (10 min)**

For many history assignments, the library role can be expressed as “provides monographs and journal articles; provides interlibrary loan services; provides access to indexes of secondary sources; provides expert guidance in making use of resources (reference interview); provides primary source collections in-house and online; provide access to indexes, finding aids, and directories of archives and special collections.”

- **Active Learning: two activities (30 min)**
 - Activity 1 prepares students to find library-subscribed primary source collections.
 - Hand out Task Forms
 - Have students follow prompt on forms to select topic-specific databases from among library’s complete database list
 - Have student pairs report back and explain choices.
 - Activity 2 heightens student primary source literacy by engaging with metadata and original vs facsimile primary source formats.
 - Distribute primary source examples
 - Have students, in pairs, fill in the questionnaire.
 - Have students report back to describe their source and how they went about analyzing it.

- **Wrap Up (5 min)**
 - Remind the students to make appointments, use get help page, use libguides
 - Encourage them to set up an appointment with the campus writing center if they need help writing their paper or citing in Chicago style

****This lesson plan was adapted from "Establishing and Applying Evaluation Criteria" p. 74 -78 in Teaching Information Literacy Threshold Concepts Lesson Plans for Librarians, edited by Bravender, McClure, and Schaub (2015).****

Updated 10/25/16 MK. Adapted by Alexander Justice, 06/01/19