



# University of Pittsburgh

## Teaching with Primary Sources at the University of Pittsburgh *Summary Report of Local Findings | August 2020*

**Diana Dill**

(dmd787@pitt.edu)

*Instructional Designer*

*University of Pittsburgh Library System*

**Carrie Donovan**

(cdonovan@pitt.edu)

*Head of Public Services, Hillman Library*

*University of Pittsburgh Library System*

**Jeanann Haas**

(jeanann@pitt.edu)

*Coordinator of Special Collections*

*University of Pittsburgh Library System*

**Berenika Webster**

(bwebster@pitt.edu)

*Director of Assessment and Quality Assurance*

*University of Pittsburgh Library System*

**Clare Withers**

(cwithers@pitt.edu)

*Curator of the Elizabeth Nesbitt Collection*

*Librarian for Children's Literature, Cultural Studies, and Medieval and Renaissance Studies*

*University of Pittsburgh Library System*

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## Introduction

In Summer 2019, Ithaka S+R invited the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), together with another 24 US and UK-based research libraries to participate in a research project aimed at gaining a better understanding of how to support instructors who use primary sources in undergraduate teaching and learning. The ultimate goal of the study is the development of a capstone report which will provide an analysis of data collected by participating institutions to inform academic libraries' strategies and approaches to supporting and partnering with instructors in teaching with primary resources. Locally, the goal is to inform our practices to best meet the needs of Pitt instructors.

### **Teaching with Primary Sources at the University of Pittsburgh**

The Ithaka S+R survey emerged at an opportune time. Starting in 2012, Pitt experienced a steady increase of scheduled class visits for students to engage with primary sources and was involved in planning for a newly renovated space. The Ithaka study, library renovations, in-person instruction, and all other library activity were brought to a stunning halt by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced academia to regroup and investigate how these activities might resume or operate under a new norm. Simultaneously, the country responded to calls for social justice and actionable changes in society. Ironically, these life events feed into our analysis of the data from the Ithaka S+R survey and one may wonder how the survey instrument and instructor responses might have been different if this research were designed considering these circumstances.

Prior to this research, librarians and archivists at Pitt were already working closely with instructors from a variety of disciplines, offering opportunities for students and community members to interact with primary sources and distinctive collections. We regularly collaborate with instructors on class visits, create learning outcomes for class sessions, assess instructor and student satisfaction and revise our work based on these results. Class visits have not only increased in the past five years, but our relationships with instructors have expanded in other ways such as an instructor contacting us earlier, often when their syllabus is under development, to assist in integrating primary sources into their coursework. We are increasingly involved in the creation of learning objectives and some instructors are integrating our instructional services into their courses by scheduling multiple visits and requiring students to return on their own time, outside of the class visit, to complete an assignment. Finally, librarians and specialists in the Archives & Special Collections (A&SC) Department of the University Library System at Pitt are collaborating with colleagues in other Pitt libraries and departments such as the Center for American Music, Theodore M. Finney Music Library, and the Frick Fine Arts Library (Distinctive Collection Partners) as these libraries also curate primary sources and distinctive collection materials.

### **Enhanced Learning Spaces – Physical and Virtual**

The University of Pittsburgh announced a multi-year reconstruction of Hillman Library, the main undergraduate library that houses A&SC, beginning in August 2017. Recognizing the increasing value of interdisciplinary research and that the greatest potential for an enhanced teaching and learning space extended beyond A&SC, we called upon our Distinctive Collection Partners to join us in the planning process. This group advocated for a space to accommodate a variety of primary source formats alongside digital media, which was driven by a philosophy stating, "As librarians and archivists who work with distinctive collections, we have an opportunity to provide access to and contextualize a range of material experiences to students, instructors, and researchers. We can deepen and extend the

classroom and research experiences by facilitating the explorations of images, texts, objects, sound, and electronic records in all their material forms.”<sup>1</sup> The group lobbied for spaces that were not only technology-enabled but also supported hands-on, multi-faceted learning experiences where students could carefully examine and draw inspiration from primary sources. The University approved and executed the construction of a new instruction and program space designed with flexible furniture to support a variety of setups, as well as technological platforms to provide audio/visual playback and display of digital content and collections alongside original and physical primary sources. In addition, the renovation called for an exhibit space containing museum-quality vitrines and a Digital Interactive Wall to showcase creative works and scholarship motivated by our distinctive collections. The Text & conText Lab, a maker-space environment for creating, manipulating, and disassembling of text, was developed as a partnership between the University Library System (ULS) and the University’s Center for Creativity (C4C).

The knowledge gained from our participation in the Ithaca S+R project will add to our understanding of current practice of instructors, identify gaps in support, and consider our role in bridging them. We know this collaborative work begins with dialogue. For some of the participating instructors in the study, the interview was a first conversation about teaching with primary sources while, for others, it was one piece of an ongoing discussion. In addition to our organizational context that is now particularly well-poised for instructional partnerships, we are also part of a larger effort at the University that prioritizes teaching complex research concepts to undergraduates across disciplines and within the School of Arts & Sciences and the Honors College where our outreach has been well-received. The findings will allow us to take another look at our new spaces and environments to further consider new approaches and priorities for programming, outreach, instruction, and research support. Ultimately, we are hoping that the findings from this project, together with new spaces allowing for new engagement practices will re-shape the nature of collaborations between librarians and instructors teaching with primary sources at Pitt.

## Methodology

The approach to data collection was designed by Ithaca S+R and all participants used the same semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A). This approach was selected to, on the one hand, ensure consistency across all interviews, and, on the other, to allow for tailoring of conversations that focus on the unique experiences of each respondent. At Pitt, we conducted 14 interviews with instructors in humanities and social sciences who use primary sources in their undergraduate courses. Unfortunately, one interview was unusable due to equipment malfunction, so only 13 interviews were included in our analyses.

To select our sample of respondents we reviewed Pitt’s list of undergraduate courses for mention of use of primary sources, reviewed all classes that used our resources in the last few years and sought input from our liaison librarians who may have had additional information about relevant courses. This review provided us with a list of 63 instructors who taught at least one class using primary sources in the

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<sup>1</sup> This is an internal report written by the ULS Distinctive Collections Coordinating Group to offer recommendations about the Hillman Library renovation. The group combined expertise as well as shared common concerns and goals affecting all units that house rare and unique materials. This group envisioned new spaces in the renovated Hillman Library and how this new space could better serve researchers. Rubin, Benjamin, et al, *ULS Distinctive Collections Proposal*, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh, 2017 (pg. 9).

previous academic year. The list was further refined for eligibility criteria as defined by Ithaka S+R and, in the end, we distributed 27 invitations to participate. 14 instructors responded positively and were subsequently interviewed for the project. All of them were the instructor of record from Pitt's Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences and were affiliated with the following programs: English (5), History (2), History of Art and Architecture (2), Religious Studies (1), French and Italian (1), History of Philosophy of Science (1) and Gender, Sexuality, and Women Studies (1). Our respondents included 6 assistant professors, 4 associate professors, one instructor and 2 graduate students.

All interviews were conducted in person in the Fall of 2019. All were digitally recorded and transcribed using a commercial transcription service approved by Pitt's IRB. All transcripts were stripped of any identifying information and coded using a data-driven approach. In the first step, all team members analyzed the same transcript independently by assigning tags to the text to mark possible themes, and they then reviewed the tags to reach a consensus around emerging themes (Appendix B). The rest of the transcripts were coded based on the agreed-upon themes by team members and again reconciled for consistency. The themes and accompanying quotes from the transcript interviews were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet which was used for the final analyses. Through the coding process the team identified the following interconnected areas of interest that will constitute the findings section of the report. These include:

- Learning to teach with primary sources,
- Approaching curation of both physical and digital materials,
- Navigating the overwhelming,
- Fostering development of critical analysis skills in students

This report will describe findings related to the three topics identified above and provide recommendations for actions that our library organization can take to better support instructors' teaching with primary resources. The recommendations will focus on opportunities for developing collaborations across campus, developing new services enabled by new physical and virtual spaces, and opportunities and challenges afforded by COVID-19 disruptions and renewed calls for all of us to address burning issues of social justice. We recognize that the interviews revealed many interconnected topics, themes, challenges, and opportunities prompting us to identify strategic areas of discourse from which we could offer recommendations for future action.

## Findings

### Learning to Teach with Primary Sources

*"I don't have any formal instructional resources that I use, nor have I created them. It's something that I have adapted over the years. That is something that I think would be really wonderful is a kind of guide for working with primary sources for students."*

In terms of any consistent, formal pedagogical training for PhD candidates, our findings indicate it is next to non-existent. In academia, deep disciplinary expertise and the creation of new knowledge is prioritized, and this greatly impacts the educational process, in many ways. Instead, instructors learn best practices for the classroom from modelling by other instructors and engaging in experimentation with their teaching over time. The ways in which instructors teach the research process, particularly as it

involves primary sources, is influenced more by their own educational experiences, research processes, and practical experience than any pedagogical training.

Many participants reported that there was one influential instructor or course that modeled exemplary teaching with primary sources and represented a pivotal point in situating the self from the position of student to teacher. When asked about the factors influencing teaching with primary sources, most participants responded that they teach in a way that mirrors their own research process and through observation of their own instructors or mentors, many of whom incorporated primary sources into the classroom. As one interviewee observed: "That slowing down of the discourse and really getting engrossed in the text, for me in my graduate school experience, that was the standard operating procedure for the seminars I was taking. So, that cultivated in me an appreciation for the primary source material..." These seminal experiences ranged from undergraduate to graduate education, with the majority happening within the participant's own selected discipline either as a student or a teaching assistant. One participant illustrated this shared experience, saying "you're seeing modeled before you how a course could be structured around a series of primary texts, and you're seeing how a syllabus could be built in such a way and how a classroom discussion can be framed around a particular document or a particular source. That also was really instrumental in teaching me how to introduce these things to students."

Interviewees teaching practices were shaped early through a scholar's own research and learning. When primary sources were involved, these approaches were developed out of trial and error, as well as through experimentation. Participants in our study ranged from veteran educators having taught for many years to novice instructors, but their experiences of learning how to teach did not differ much. Some interviewees described a mix of teacher training opportunities during their graduate study. Others attended a formal pedagogy course on best practices for teachers, although it was suggested that these opportunities for theory without practice did not necessarily "stick" and when it came to instruction-related development they were "woefully inadequate." In most cases, however, instructors expressed the process by which they learned to teach with primary sources as something that progressed organically, rather than through any intentional or conscious approach. A participant described this kind of experimentation as "throwing spaghetti against the wall; just doing it and seeing what worked."

Most participants described their professional identity through the lens of a discipline, saying they were trained, for example, as a scholar of the 18th century, an historian, or an archaeologist. None of the respondents indicated a primary sense of professional purpose centering around a strictly educational role. Rather, the role of research in shaping identity and influencing practice was strong. "I suppose a lot of those processes that I suggest for students come from my own cobbled together research practice," shared one participant. Within disciplines that are built on a foundation of primary source materials - English, History, Art - scholars experienced primary sources as part of their own learning, but rarely was it made explicit to them the process by which their own professors were teaching or designing assignments around primary source engagement. These classroom experiences that sparked a passion for primary sources early on in their education stayed with these instructors, many of whom highly value teaching with primary sources but did not espouse an intentional process for incorporating primary sources into student learning.

## Approaching Curation of Both Physical and Digital Materials

*“Organizing my information is always, that’s like cleaning out your closet. It’s always that thing you know you need to do and want to do, but It’s always the last thing you actually have time for.”*

For instructors, the conundrum of curation was that it was understood as crucial, but scoping content, offering mediated forays into archives and primary source collections, and formulating meaningful assignments was difficult. Participants all devoted time and energy to amassing content. In general, time to identify, select, and arrange content competed with other equally crucial elements of course preparation. Time constraints, increasingly larger class enrollments, varying student skill levels, availability and access to materials were other significant barriers to curating primary sources for classroom teaching and learning. While participants talked at length about the need to scope content for ease of student use, interviews revealed evidence that the potential support available from the librarian or archivist was not well understood.

The interviews were not limited to discussing primary sources owned by Pitt, but instead sought to understand most fully the resources instructors were gathering and using, often on their own, including databases, websites, personal physical collections, images, scanned collections, gatherings of links, digital surrogates, and more. In the interviews many participants professed a preference for physical format and grappled with benefits versus drawbacks of digital content. Commonly, instructors were influenced by their own research and drew from the content they had already gathered to plan their courses and assignments.

Accessibility was often cited as an issue, with digital content having fewer barriers than physical items. The role of digital surrogates was commented on often, with convenience driving their popularity. The necessity of creating simple access such as links to an item was a common practice. One big disadvantage of this easy access that was noted was that it divorced the content from the overall context of where the item was housed, how it was arranged, who maintained it, and other significant details. Additionally, one instructor shared a concern about skewed perceptions based on the items selected for digitization, “...there's a real push in terms of digitizing, but there's also a real limitation in terms of what gets digitized. And I worry that as we go toward everything digital that we bring with us, all these kinds of assumptions that we can't see, and that will limit then what we imagine worth collecting and telling.”

Instructors collected their own physical format items, built their own digital repositories of primary sources by downloading files to desktops and flash drives and collected links to articles, databases, and websites. Some took pictures of objects in physical archives that would not otherwise be available. One commented on amassing content “not consciously, I guess it builds up ...but it’s not like I have a set ready to go.” A few instructors relied on edited collections of primary source texts which are convenient for students. One instructor described spending time supplementing what was available in these published monographs, to the extent that her changes and recommendations were subsequently added to these editions.

Perception of the role of the librarian or archivist in curation ranged from non-existent to worthy of accolades. There were acknowledgements and expressions of gratitude throughout the interviews for the educational interventions of librarians and archivists in the form of class visits, with one interviewee

sharing, “I lean heavily on librarians and archivists to come in and lead those sessions.” Some participants shared examples of working collaboratively with a librarian or archivist, other instructors, TAs, or colleagues to curate content. While many instructors relied on us to identify content of potential interest and often valued librarians and archivists as co-curators in helping to select “out of the rich cornucopia of stuff that is here,” there was also evidence that this potential role was not fully understood. As one instructor phrased it, “I felt like it was an imposition on the librarians' time to ask you to do work for my courses, to gather materials. Somehow it felt like that was supposed to be my responsibility and that it was imposing.”

### **Navigating the Overwhelming**

*“You can curate the selection, but don’t curate what you want them to discover or find, ... I think, [is] a really important part of that.”*

Interviewees spoke about navigating primary sources as a high-impact learning experience, one that sparked an understanding of the research process and revealed that there was not necessarily “the right answer.” Instructors experienced a tension between the desire for their students to be intellectually challenged and the pragmatic limitations of time, competing course priorities, and content coverage.

Often, when a decision must be made, class time was prioritized around other aspects of engagement such as close reading, critical evaluation, considerations of materiality, secondary readings or instructor lectures. As one instructor conceded, “I usually narrow it down. I kind of lead them by the nose a little bit. I point them to online databases for the most part or published texts, and I'm like, ‘Okay here are repositories you can use. These are approved repositories,’ because there's also issues of you have [sic] to ensure the students understand what a primary source is, and when you coach them through it, sometimes the definition could be fuzzy.” Students could become overwhelmed when asked to find primary sources without direction or curation.

Ambivalence about navigating primary sources was apparent, as one instructor conceded “I’m less focused on having students find their own primary sources even though I’m doing that more and more just because I think that that’s a real life skill and that I’m not getting a sense that students come equipped with...I mean, they’re not hard wired to handle the insane amounts of material they have access to through internet, or online.” Alternatively, when the material had been scoped, the student did not have an opportunity to expand on their research to identify best sources, gaps in information, or alternative research hypotheses. As one instructor commented: “We make it a little bit too easy for them, then that process of, if they ever want to do independent research, they may not know where to start, because we've already curated it for them.”

Participants noted the challenge of designing an assignment that transcended staged busywork and instead provided the opportunity for students to engage in authentic research. Experiences might have differed greatly from student to student, depending on collection searched, interest, and other factors. One opined the difficulty in students learning that there was no formula for earning an A grade and that putting in the time might or might not yield expected results: “Archives always have gaps, and you’re always having to do that work of historical reconstruction around whatever sources you find. That can be scary for undergraduates, because usually what they want is the formula by which they will succeed.”

In the delicate process of scoping, assembling materials, and setting up the assignment, the distinction between spoon feeding and open discovery became more apparent. One participant cited cognitive overload as a key consideration for experiential learning with primary sources in terms of the potential for building confidence and resilience, sharing “It’s important to realize that part of the process is actually being overwhelmed by material, and how do you find it?” The opportunity to go painstakingly through boxes, folders, digital scans, could instill an understanding of the impact of access on use.

Though all instructors selected, organized, and arranged access to primary source content for ease of student use, there was still a concern about developing student skills to discover and interpret on their own. “Wading through the information is the real challenge. So, the balance between helping students understand the wide range of resources that are available without making them feel overwhelmed and like they don’t know how to navigate.” Brief demonstrations of how to use a finding aid were a starting point, but the process of sifting through physical or online boxes and folders required diligence and time.

### **Fostering Development of Critical Analysis Skills in Students**

*“Are the youth of today losing their ability to think critically about things?”*

The instructors we interviewed considered teaching with primary sources an important component in the development of undergraduate analytical skills, which were transferable to other areas of study and life. Some mentioned the close reading required to understand primary sources that were written in a different language, for example old English, or for a different time and audience made students exercise their analytical skills. In particular, instructors structured their primary source engagement and assignments around helping students develop the following:

1. Read a primary source
2. Evaluate and interpret the information presented
3. Formulate arguments based on evidentiary inquiry, including context and materiality
4. Identify gaps or silences in the historical record
5. Recognize bias in evaluating primary sources
6. Use additional sources to provide context in which the primary source originated

Development of critical thinking skills helped the student understand how to engage in deep inquiry in a variety of contexts by asking informed questions and identifying relevant and credible sources that might be used to create new knowledge or develop new ways of thinking.

*“It’s more and more important now, I think, to critically evaluate what you’re reading and what you’re hearing because there’s no filter at all, so you kind of have to increasingly have these critical thinking skills to interpret what you’re seeing and hearing.”*

Data gathered from the 13 interviews confirmed that skills, such as close reading, were important for meaningful engagement with primary sources. Research with primary sources required students to parse slowly and carefully for many reasons, such as language differences found between translations or modern American English and earlier versions of English. Instructors also chose primary sources that discussed difficult concepts or presented multiple viewpoints. Developing close reading skills created a mental framework for the student to transfer to other courses or apply to other areas of study. As one instructor stated: “...if you manage to parse a really hard primary source, you can probably parse any ...

That's going to give you a particular kind of reading skill that's going to be really useful for reading any kind of text.”

Instructors encouraged the students to find evidence to support their argument, an important analytical skill that could be applied to any situation, research, or assignment. Not only were students encouraged to identify primary sources that represented different perspectives, but they also were required to treat these sources as evidence to support or counter an argument. As one instructor said:

“If you're going to form this opinion or form this argument, you have to find the evidence that supports it, and you have to consider all the evidence. ... they can find evidence supports them, and they can at least explain why they don't believe the other evidence.”

The importance of student engagement with physical format permeated many of the interviews. Instructors emphasized the materiality of primary sources to trigger a sense of awe in students hoping that physical features and elements would power up their curiosity and encourage them to ask questions, make observations, and connect the dots to associate one idea with another. An instructor explained that one of their course goals when working with print artifacts was to, “...give students a sense of almost wow and this is amazing, and modeling excitement and curiosity and kind of wonder for them is very important to me, ...” The interviews showed the ways in which instructors deemed the materiality of primary sources as significant for shedding light on the creative process and the ways in which a person, “...at a certain point of time has written it, has designed it, has painted it, has sculpted it, has built it...” Other instructors admitted that they themselves were curious about the physicality of primary sources and wished to explore the “Sitz em Leben” of some of these sources and discover what information could be gleaned by studying the material status of an object.

The interviews indicated that engaging with the physical object allowed for some context building that was not as easily accomplished when perusing digital objects. An instructor described why handling an original newspaper was a consequential experience for their students stating, “The thing that is so important to me about the *Black Panther* newspaper is that it's not just a re-published account of the past, but that it is the actual original thing that was produced in that moment in time. There's a materiality inherent in the encounter with the thing that is also tremendously important for the learning experience.” Another interviewee described the ways in which students struggled with content that was different or unfamiliar to them and further revealed that the sensory experience of handling material objects encouraged students to approach the content differently to better understand the past.

Not only did instructors wish that students considered different viewpoints, but they also wanted them to think about how the primary sources represented the people of that time. Instructors encouraged students to evaluate the primary sources to determine if certain voices were absent from the conversation. Instructors found productive discussion important in analyzing gaps and identifying any lack of representation. As one instructor stated: “Because it's asking them to think about how it's representing people and especially different groups, whether they've been marginalized, disenfranchised, so that's certainly an important aspect to my classes whenever we're looking at these texts.” Participants discussed the value in explorations of provenance such as the formation, maintenance, and discovery of archives; who decided what was included, how the content was arranged, what terminology was used when describing a collection or object, and what access was provided were all questions worthy of attention.

Instructors raised concerns about students' ability to contextualize difficult topics and formulate arguments based on evidence. Some discussed instances where students were more successful when engaging with narratives and history that were more familiar to them. Instructors often reframed cultural events, names, and people who were not as well known or recognized by students. Instructors helped students further develop their critical analysis skills by recognizing their own bias and how it influenced their engagement and understanding of the primary source. One instructor observed:

“Sometimes they can have really strong reactions, because of what they call dated language or dated politics. Conversely, sometimes they're very surprised that it's progressive. Yeah, it's mostly just making sure that they're working with the text, that their claims can be supported by the text, and trying to leave opinion out of that space, or reaction, if that makes sense.”

Many instructors viewed secondary sources, such as assigned course readings, as important in providing context, such as historical, cultural, and socio-political. When students put supplemental materials in conversation with primary sources, they developed a deeper awareness of a topic through a variety of lenses, thereby enriching their understanding. Instructors appreciated this process because it allowed students to express their own original thoughts as opposed to regurgitating information. As one interviewee stated: “I think often the only research that they're exposed to is reading what other scholars or literary critics say about a literary work, which is not unhelpful or unuseful, but they often end up just repeating what other people have said.”

The interviews provided evidence that instructors were interested in their students' process, in addition to product. In many cases, they believed this kind of metacognition could be enhanced through using primary sources. One participant commented:

“Sometimes it's better to sacrifice the breadth so that you can get some depth and slow down a little bit and teach them about a certain way of thinking, a certain approach, and make sure you're getting that point across. I think working with primary sources can teach that lesson, that sometimes quality is more important than quantity in the classroom.”

## Discussion and Recommendations

The complicated interplay between virtual and physical modalities underpins much of the discussion related to teaching with primary sources; all interviewees commented on one or more aspects of those engagements. New insights into instructors' thoughts and practices, anecdotal evidence, and current events all inform the University of Pittsburgh's call to action to continue to thoughtfully enhance our learning environments and better support pedagogical use of primary sources in classroom teaching and learning.

In-class visits to archives and special collections are on an upward trajectory, and librarians and archivists are increasingly involved in assisting instructors. As such, this trend of the traditional in-person visit may exceed departmental capacity in terms of staffing, workload, and physical space, thus requiring investigation of new methodologies. Although librarians and archivists have been investigating how to expand their audience reach, the COVID-19 restrictions forced libraries to evolve their teaching strategies to transition the primary source encounter to a virtual environment. Simultaneously, the University of Pittsburgh implemented the Flex@Pitt model for instruction beginning in fall 2020.

Flex@Pitt structures the classroom experience to include a combination of in-person, online, and blended learning activities using video conferencing technology to support an adaptable and changing learning environment. The overall renovated space for Archives & Special Collections, including the Text and conText lab, museum gallery, interactive digital wall, and instruction space, are designed to help bridge the physical materiality with the context in which the item was created, affording considerations of time, place, circumstance, and creators. The new A&SC instruction space is outfitted for interactive online and in-person instruction (synchronous and asynchronous), offering a flexible learning environment. Large screens and laptops capture content and audience participation, while allowing for feedback from the online community.

Based on the above discussion and findings, these are our recommendations:

### **Collaboration and support**

The interviews pointed to areas for expansion of the role of the library in supporting and collaborating with instructors in teaching and learning. This will require reviewing our current practices to address logistical and capacity constraints to design efficiencies to assist instructors and best utilize our resources.

Instructors commented on the challenges associated with navigating online and physical collections. They indicated that it is burdensome for students to navigate on their own and is also time consuming for the instructor. Therefore, we recommend that we improve communication and marketing about the availability of our services, including augmenting our primary sources available online, curating, co-curating, and supporting students in learning to navigate collections.

With the move to Flex@Pitt, we have the opportunity to broaden our audience and explore how to offer primary source engagement in multiple modalities. In order to scale our services and craft the most robust presence possible, we will further facilitate engagement with subject and functional experts within the library on using primary sources for student experiential learning. For example, subject librarians can offer instructional expertise in finding secondary sources to support primary source research while our functional experts can help explore ways to incorporate DH tools and share course-related outputs.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Work with our subject and functional experts to create templates and best practices for primary source engagement throughout the research life cycle.
- Develop a communication strategy targeted to instructors and accomplished through open houses, guides incorporated into student courses, presentations at departmental meetings, and showcases of examples of collaborations with instructors.

### **Community of Practice**

Instructors described how they received very little training on teaching with primary sources. Instructors found mentors or fellow instructors to be the sole source of information on pedagogy. While many continue to experiment with incorporating primary sources into their curriculum, no formalized educational opportunity is available to them. Instructors also commented on the challenges around making students recognize their own bias and the gaps and silences in the historical record. We see this

as an opportunity to launch a community of practice initiative to explore the use of primary sources in student teaching and learning.

The community of practice will focus on the development of methods that foster examination of materials and thoughtful consideration of implications of format to accessibility, discoverability, and engagement/interaction. The community will also assist in contextualizing primary sources and facilitating discussion around crucial conversations or sensitive topics. This group will serve as a forum for professional development to effectively offer primary source engagements that align with the instructor's learning objectives, seamlessly in multiple modalities. To incentivize creative partnerships around primary sources, this group can identify University or external grant funds to further support their work.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Establish a community of practice, consisting of librarians, archivists, instructors, local cultural heritage professionals, and other University instructional support units (such as the Center for Teaching & Learning, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Office of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, & Creative Activity, the Center 4 Creativity).

**Assessment**

We learned through the interviews that although instructors value teaching with primary sources, the impact on student learning is not clear. Instructors articulated that the use of primary sources help in achieving their teaching objectives as opposed to the value inherent in the primary source itself. As librarians and archivists, we recognize the challenge in creating measurable student learning experiences with primary sources. We can assist instructors by creating measurable activities that align with course objectives and provide evidence for us of the importance of primary source engagement.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Evaluate the impact of student engagement with primary sources, including multiple modalities, based on current guidelines, including RBMS / SAA Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy and the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy.

**Conclusions**

As participants in a high-profile Ithaca S + R study, we are very excited to have our findings represented in an emerging national dialogue about use of primary sources in teaching and learning. Just as with everything we do in libraries, this project is only possible through collaborative efforts, on our own campus and beyond, and we hope what we have learned through the project will enhance our collaborations with instructors and foster greater stakeholder awareness of primary sources for teaching and learning going forward.

Participation in this study established an inquiry-based mindset for us with regard to how we approach our educational role at the University and has given us a solid foundation to build on. Through regular touchpoints with instructors and interactions with students, we anticipate further opportunities to assess our instructional impact on student learning at Pitt.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview Instrument

#### 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?

## Appendix B: Themes and Codes

- **Draft (April 2020)**

<u>Original Code</u>	<u>Recommended Action</u>	<u>Other Possible Codes to Use</u>
Alignment with Primary Sources	Eliminate	Value of Primary Sources
Scholarly Identity	Eliminate	Experience in Teaching
Challenges	Code in multiple places	All
Definition of Primary Source	Eliminate	Primary Source Format Primary Source Context Value of Primary Sources
Motivation for Use of Primary Source	Eliminate	Primary Source Format Primary Source Context Value of Primary Sources Assignment Teaching
Out of Scope	Eliminate	Don't code
Teaching Support	Eliminate	Experience in Teaching or multiple others
Acknowledgement of ULS Librarian	Code in multiple places	Collaboration or multiple others

- **Final (May 2020)**

- Accessibility
- Acknowledgement of ULS librarian expertise
- Assignment
- Challenges
- Collaboration
- Curation
- Digital surrogate
- Experience in teaching
- Online searching and discovery
- Primary source context
- Primary source format
- Teaching
- Value of primary sources