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# Teaching an Introduction to Archives Course to Undergraduates: A New Experience for the Archivist and the Students

Julia Stringfellow

## ABSTRACT

This article explores a new Introduction to Archives class taught to undergraduates through a Library and Information Science Minor Program offered by the James E. Brooks Library at Central Washington University (CWU). The course is taught by the University Archivist. The challenges of recruiting students, promotion of the course, and teaching an upper level course to undergraduates from different disciplines is described, as well as the benefits of offering this type of course at the undergraduate level. A review of the literature on the benefits of educating undergraduates on archives and archival research is also included.

## Introduction

Introduction to Archives classes are generally taught at the graduate level through a Master's program in Library and Information Science, Archives and Records Management, or History. Undergraduate classes on this subject are usually offered through History departments. These undergraduate classes are taught by History department faculty, special collections librarians, and university archivists. There are a few instances in the United States where these undergraduate courses are taught through a library minor program by a special collections librarian or university archivist. One such example is the Introduction to Archives class at Central Washington University (CWU) that was created as part of the Library and Information Science (LIS) Minor curriculum in the James E. Brooks Library in 2014. The in-person course was first offered for Spring Quarter 2016 and then in 2017, but was not taught again until Spring 2018 due to low enrollment numbers. The intent in creating the course was that the instructor would be the University Archivist which was the case in Spring 2018. The course had 15 students at the start of the term (with one student dropping the course) and ran over the 10-week quarter period.

CWU's introductory archives course also served as an introduction to the

instructor who had previously not taught a credit-bearing course. While she had over fifteen years of experience providing archives orientations and information literacy sessions on archives to undergraduates, teaching a credit-bearing course was completely new. Selecting course readings, preparing lectures, grading, and advising were all part of the new experience. As academic archivists who already have a wide range of duties to juggle, is adding teaching an introductory archives course to undergraduates a worthwhile use of time? Should archives courses even be offered to undergraduates or just provided at the degree-earning Master's level? What will undergraduates who aren't planning to become archivists even get out of taking the class? This article will explore how this type of course does offer tremendous benefits for both the instructing archivist and for the undergraduates interested in learning about archives.

## Literature Review

A review of the literature over the past ten years on university archives and their work with undergraduates, whether visiting an archives the first time for an instruction session, an orientation, or taking a class, is abundant. The literature also strongly supports the idea that educating undergraduates on archives in a classroom setting or bringing them into the archives is worthwhile and helps develop research skills they will use beyond the undergraduate experience. The 2007 article "Archives, Documents, and Hidden History: A Course to Teach Undergraduates the Thrill of Historical Discovery Real and Virtual" describes the "hidden collections" in archives that students often miss when they confine their research to the Internet. The article also describes how teaching a course on archives provides the opportunity to educate students on doing archival research and learning from these less discoverable collections.<sup>1</sup> The author shares the benefits of training undergraduates on how to do research in archives and shares how the traditional role of archivists from merely being the link between patron and collection has evolved since the 1970s. The Baruch College of the City University of New York began offering library courses in 1973 which expanded into an Information Studies Minor Program in 2005.<sup>2</sup> In helping students develop information literacy skills through this minor, Sandra Roff developed the course "Archives, Documents, and Hidden History" and first offered it in 2005. The course enabled students to learn the difference between primary and secondary sources and conducting research in an archives. Readings, presentations, writings, and field trips were all part of the course.<sup>3</sup> Roff points out that archivists have been slow in developing such courses and must take a more active role than before in educating students on archival research. Students leave the course with a

1. Sandra Roff, "Archives, Documents, and Hidden History: A Course to Teach Undergraduates the Thrill of Historical Discovery Real and Virtual," *History Teacher* 40, no. 4 (2007): 551.
2. Ibid, 554.
3. Ibid, 555.

different perception of archives than prior to it. They are now aware of the wealth of information and how it can benefit their research.<sup>4</sup>

The 2008 article “Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact” explores the usefulness of orientations to develop undergraduates’ archival literacy skills.<sup>5</sup> “Full-term courses that involve research training and promote critical thinking skills” were shared as one way university archivists educate students.<sup>6</sup> Duff and Cherry’s article describes in detail the impact of four orientation sessions given by an archivist at Yale University to classes where students were required to use primary sources for class assignments. These sessions increased students’ confidence in doing this research. The impact of the orientations on the students was of particular interest to the archivists as they believed helping undergraduates develop “archival literacy” was a vital part of their job.<sup>7</sup> The impact factor was determined by students and faculty who attended the orientation sessions and completed questionnaires on what they learned, how it improved their archival research skills, their experiences using primary and secondary sources, and their expectations of the orientation sessions. The students overall considered the orientation sessions to be successful and benefitted their research in an archives and using primary sources. Feedback from the professors included the suggestion of adding a hands-on activity for future orientation sessions.

The 2010 article “‘It Makes History Alive for Them’: The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates” describes how archivists view themselves as educators through the resources they use in instructing undergraduates. This was achieved from interviews the author conducted with twelve academic archivists and special collections librarians.<sup>8</sup> The study resulted in conveying that the archivists and librarians are being called upon to provide instruction of the archives to undergraduates at an increasing level. It also revealed that many of those surveyed did not learn to teach in their coursework and had no formal training in teaching. While students shared that instruction from archivists helps with learning about archives and doing archival research, more studies need to be conducted regarding their perceptions of archivists as educators.<sup>9</sup>

The 2013 article “Uncovering Impact: The Influence of Archives on Student Learning” authored by Daniels and Yakel describes a survey conducted of over 452

4. Ibid, 557.

5. Wendy Duff and Joan Cherry, “Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact,” *The American Archivist* 71, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2008): 501.

6. Ibid, 502.

7. Ibid, 501.

8. Magia G. Krause, “‘It Makes History Alive for Them’: The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36, no. 5 (2010): 401.

9. Ibid, 409.

students regarding the impact of using the archives for their course projects. These students had a formal orientation in the archives as part of their coursework. Providing instruction of the archives and its resources was done in a variety of ways including presentations, one-shot information literacy sessions, and overseeing research projects in the archives that lasted an entire term. The impact on student learning is part of the value of archives.<sup>10</sup> Student responses to the survey question on what was the most important thing they learned about doing archival research was commonly “How to use the archives generally”.<sup>11</sup> Nearly all the students surveyed said they would return to the archives if another project arose where they could use the collection. The survey results clearly indicated that the orientation sessions enabled the archives to have an impact on student learning.

Christy Fic’s 2018 article “Working as an Embedded Archivist in an Undergraduate Course: Transforming Students into Scholars through an Archival Workshop Series” describes how the university archivist at Shippensburg University taught students to conduct research projects through a six-week series of workshops. The students in this American Environmental History 300 level course had previously not conducted historical research. The benefits of providing this “embedded archival instruction” are described in the article.<sup>12</sup> Providing a listing of archival materials related to research topics, preparing a prospectus, and guidelines for evaluating primary and secondary sources was included in the instruction sessions that met each week in the university archives. The author notes that as an embedded archivist, she was able to get to know the students and their research topics and to provide guidance on doing archival research at a deeper level. She has followed these students since the workshops as they engage in more intensive work in other courses. “Embedded archivists have the potential to greatly enhance the learning and success of undergraduate students.”<sup>13</sup>

A final article to note is the 2018 “Milestone, Not Millstone: Archivists Teaching First-Year Seminars” in which author Leslie Waggener describes a first-year seminar class at the University of Wyoming that was taught in-house at the American Heritage Center (AHC), and the benefits for archivists and archives in teaching such a course. With other AHC teaching faculty already busy with credit-bearing courses such as book history and research methodology, the planning of the new course fell to less experienced AHC teaching faculty. The student-centered course first occurred

10. Morgan Daniels and Elizabeth Yakel, “Uncovering Impact: The Influence of Archives on Student Learning,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 39, no. 5 (2013): 414.

11. Ibid, 418.

12. Christy Fic, “Working as an Embedded Archivist in an Undergraduate Course: Transforming Students into Scholars through an Archival Workshop Series,” *The American Archivist* 81, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2018): 290.

13. Ibid, 300.

in 2015 over 15 weeks of the fall semester.<sup>14</sup> The class assignments ranged from the students writing an introductory letter about themselves and what they hoped to get out of the course to choosing a topic within the AHC collections for their final project.<sup>15</sup> Waggener notes that many of the students shared that the class benefitted them by improving their writing, research, and presentation skills, as well as increased their interest in history.<sup>16</sup>

## History of the Course and the Library and information Science Minor at Central Washington University

The James E. Brooks Library is located at Central Washington University (CWU), a medium-sized, public, regional, comprehensive university in Ellensburg, Washington with an enrollment of over 12,000 students. The 15 librarians have faculty status and several of them teach credit-bearing courses as part of the Library and Information Science (LIS) Minor offered by the Library. The LIS Minor program was established in 2014 “to provide students with an understanding of the methods and means of gathering, organizing, and disseminating information.”<sup>17</sup> The program requires 29-32 credits to complete and one of the elective courses created for it was the three-credit upper level Introduction to Archives course. Its prerequisites were the courses LIS 110 Research Fundamentals and LIS 201 Foundations of Library and Information Science, or by receiving permission of the instructor to take the course.<sup>18</sup> Upper level courses in the LIS Minor Program have enrollment ranging from two to 30 students.<sup>19</sup>

While all the other LIS courses were online, the CWU Archives course would be taught in-person during Spring Quarter by the University Archivist in the Library. The University Archivist believed it would be more effective to teach students about archives and provide hands-on activities by offering the course in person. The course description and learning outcomes were designed by the University Archivist: “This

14. Leslie Waggener, “Milestone, Not Millstone: Archivists Teaching First-Year Seminars,” *The American Archivist* 81, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2018): 170-171.

15. Ibid, 177.

16. Ibid, 183.

17. “Minor in Library Information Science (LIS),” Central Washington University, <http://www.lib.cwu.edu/Minor-Library-Information-Science> (accessed October 2019).

18. “Catalog Search: Archives,” Central Washington University, [http://catalog.acalog.cwu.edu/search\\_advanced.php?cur\\_cat\\_oid=44&search\\_database=Search&search\\_db=Search&cpage=1&ecpage=1&ppage=1&spage=1&tpage=1&location=33&filter%5Bkeyword%5D=archives&filter%5Bexact\\_match%5D=1](http://catalog.acalog.cwu.edu/search_advanced.php?cur_cat_oid=44&search_database=Search&search_db=Search&cpage=1&ecpage=1&ppage=1&spage=1&tpage=1&location=33&filter%5Bkeyword%5D=archives&filter%5Bexact_match%5D=1) (accessed October 2019).

19. Elizabeth Brown, “Curriculum Committee Annual Report, Central Washington University Brooks Library,” Ellensburg, WA: 2016.

course provides an introduction to the profession of archival studies. In addition to the history, development, and nature of work in the profession, the basics of collections management and development, intellectual control, preservation, conservation, and technological applications will be presented.”<sup>20</sup> The learner outcomes for the class included:

- Apply basic archival theory, principles and methods.
- Synthesize the history and development of the archives profession, both nationally and internationally.
- Manage archival activities.
- Evaluate the impact of technologies on core archival functions.<sup>21</sup>

The inaugural teaching of the course was planned for Spring 2015. This didn’t happen due to the University Archivist leaving CWU. When the position was filled in July of that year, the new University Archivist began planning the course that would be offered the following spring.

As with many archivists, the instructor (University Archivist) did not learn how to teach as part of her coursework in graduate school nor had formal teaching training. The first of many learning experiences for the instructor regarding the course was creating a syllabus which she had never done before. The syllabus came together by looking at sample syllabi of other introductory archives courses taught nationwide. Comparing those class layouts, readings, and how frequently they were offered was a great benefit. Reviewing the current literature of the archives field and staying current on archives issues and trends was also helpful in developing the syllabus and deciding what content to cover in the course. The instructor also looked back through the syllabi of the courses she had taken as a MLIS graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. She reviewed these as well as class notes, handouts, and assignments, and was able to revisit what she had found most useful and interesting in those courses to incorporate into her own. She decided to use the “Archives in the News” assignment (described later in this article) in her own class, which had been very popular in a class she took prior taught by renowned archivist Timothy L. Ericson.

The CWU instructor chose Gregory S. Hunter’s book *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual (How-To-Do-It Manuals for Libraries), Second Edition* for the class to read a chapter from for nearly each class session. Despite its age (published in 2003), the book is very reader-friendly and provides straightforward information on running an archives. The book had also been used in

20. Central Washington University, “Minor in Information Library Science (LIS).”

21. Central Washington University James E. Brooks Library, “Library and Information Science Minor LIS 411 Introduction to Archives Course Learner Outcome and Assessment Form,” Ellensburg, WA: 2015.



other introductory archives courses offered to undergraduates that the instructor researched. Its practical rather than theoretical language was a good fit for an undergraduate course. This was also a text the instructor referred to frequently in her early career as an archivist. The book was supplemented with articles from major archives publications such as *The American Archivist* that had been written in the past decade. Given that this was an introductory course that spanned only ten weeks, the instructor felt providing more recent content on the archives field was a priority rather than also including historic content on the main topics to be covered in the course. She also wanted to provide content that would help make archives relevant to the undergraduate audience. URLs to all the articles were provided in the syllabus and freely accessible so students could read the articles online or print them.

Early enrollment for the LIS Minor and Type B Certificate was seven students, growing to the current enrollment of 20 students.<sup>22</sup> With many CWU students taking online courses because they didn't live in the area, having enough students enroll in the Introduction to Archives class was a challenge. The course was offered in two 50-minute sessions per week for the ten week quarter. The instructor wanted a minimum of five students for the class due to the workload in prepping a first-time class and to generate Student Evaluations of Instruction (SEIs) that are only done when a minimum of five students are in a class. With only a couple of LIS students enrolled in the course, it was cancelled for Spring 2016. Cancellation due to low enrollment also occurred in Spring 2017.

The instructor decided in Winter 2018 to open the class to any CWU student wishing to take it regardless of major and waive the pre-requisites in an effort to finally teach the course. Through the instructor communicating with the Museum Studies Minor advisor and professors in the History and Anthropology departments about the course, students across several different disciplines enrolled in it. The class size had been capped at ten to provide more effective class discussions, but with students wanting to take the course, the cap was increased to 15 students.

Promotion of the course through social media did not seem as effective as communicating directly with the Museum Studies, Anthropology, and History professors and asking them to share the course with their students. Several posts promoting the course were shared on Facebook through the Brooks Library and the CWU Archives Facebook pages (see Fig. 1).

22. Brown, "Curriculum Committee Annual Report."

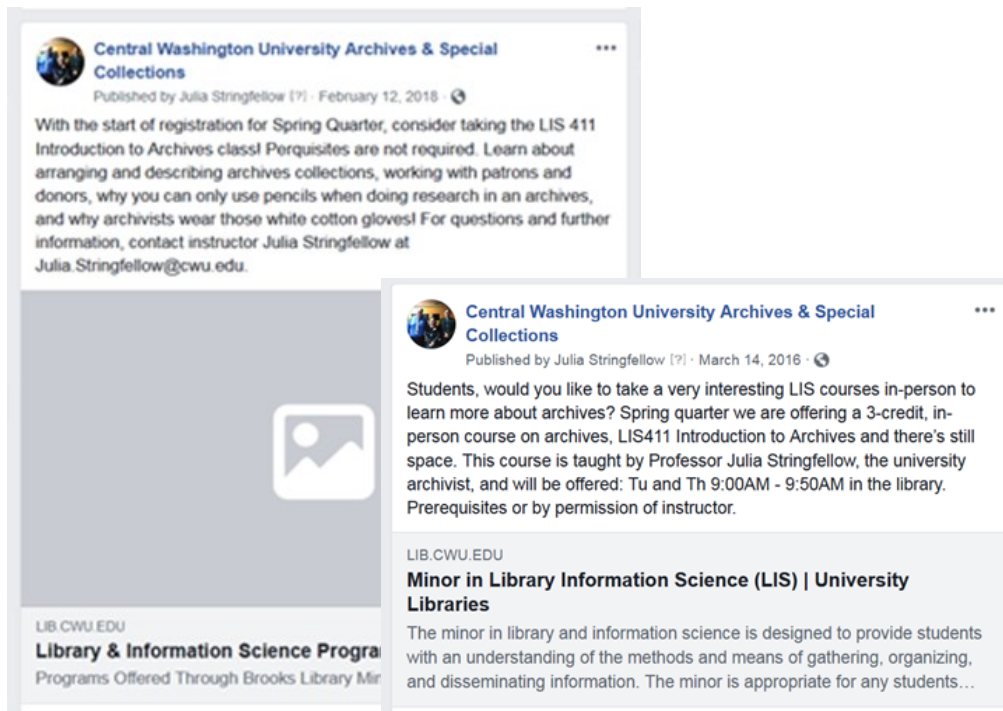


Figure 1. February 12 and March 14, 2016 Central Washington University Archives and Special Collections Facebook post.

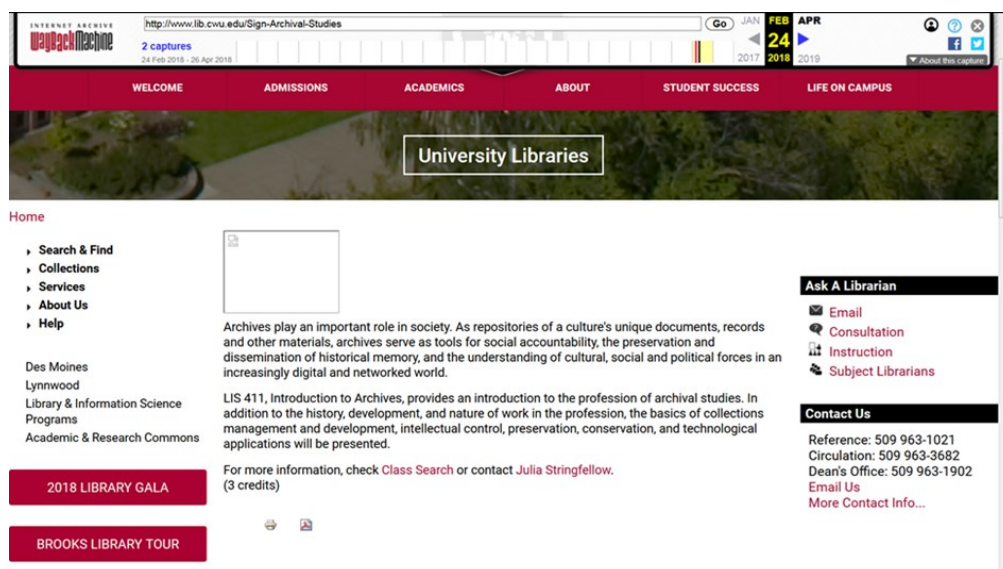


Figure 2. March 2018 *What's Happening* banner on the James E. Brooks Library website.

Another way of promoting the course online was through the library's *What's Happening* banner on its homepage (see Fig. 2). That did result in a few students emailing the instructor to ask about the course and its content.

Emails were sent to the students in the LIS Minor Program publicizing the course. Classes that came to the CWU Archives and Special Collections for one-session instruction were also notified of the upcoming course. An email was also sent to the local archives and numerous organizations asking them to share news of the course in case community members might wish to audit it. This communication resulted in the librarian of the Ellensburg Public Library Archives and the librarian and director of the Kittitas County Genealogical Society auditing the course.

### Progression of Class

The course took place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00-9:50 a.m. in a classroom on the same floor of the Library as the CWU Archives and Special Collections due to lack of meeting space in the Archives. The class lasted ten weeks since the University's academic year is on a quarter system and was held in the morning so as not to conflict with reading room hours in the CWU Archives that the instructor needed to assist with. The initial plan was to bring the class into the Archives for some hands-on activities throughout the quarter. However, this plan didn't happen due to the Archives staff preparing to move to a new physical space in the Library and packing up books and collections throughout the quarter thus decreasing the space in the Archives. When this course is taught in the future, the class will meet in the Archives as it now has sufficient meeting room.

The first day of class included introductions and going over the syllabus. To encourage participation and becoming more comfortable speaking in class, the instructor moved tables and chairs into a large square so everyone was facing each other. A percentage of the overall class grade was based on participation. The importance of the students doing the readings and being prepared to discuss them in class and ask questions was stressed. A beginning questionnaire was also distributed to gauge the students' knowledge and interest in archives. The questions included:

1. *Why are you taking this class?*
2. *Have you worked in an archives (paid or volunteer) before?*
3. *Define the term "archives".*
4. *Name two differences between archives and museums.*
5. *What are the differences between primary value and secondary value.*
6. *In archival terms, what is the meaning of "impartiality"?*

7. *What is the meaning of “life cycle of records”?*
8. *Name three types of archives that American archivists generally work in.*
9. *What twentieth century historical event caused archivists to begin thinking more seriously about the need to preserve and make accessible records of permanent value?*
10. *What are the principles of “provenance” and “original order” and why are they so important?*
11. *What two words are most frequently used by archivists to describe how they approach their work?*
12. *What do you hope to learn from this class?*

Throughout the quarter, one component of the overall grade was for each student to bring in two articles covering “Archives in the News”. The news articles could come from a current online or print news source and discuss the role archives played in that event. The students were hesitant at first in finding a news article and thought it would take a long time to find a current news story that featured an archive. Once a few brave students did this activity and shared aloud what they had learned from the article and how it was relatively easy to find, students enjoyed this activity and learned from other news stories their classmates shared. It also enabled them to see how archives are vital in today's world. Topics covered in the “Archives in the News” articles included archiving the soundtrack of 1970s feminism, an archives exhibit that honored Betty Ford, treasures unearthed from the New York Philharmonic Archives, and a theft in an archive.

The format of the class consisted of announcements, a weekly quiz on the readings for that day, “Archives in the News”, and review and discussion of the readings interspersed with a lecture by the instructor. As with upper level classes in History and Anthropology, there was substantial readings, about 50 pages for each class. Students from these departments expected this level of readings having taken other upper level courses, but there were a few complaints from students who felt the readings were too much.

The midterm project consisted of selecting an archive to visit from a list of suggested repositories provided by the instructor or choosing one not on the list with the ability to visit it in person. The archive visited could not be one they had worked or volunteered at previously. For students without access to a car, preference was given to an archive in the town. The visit to the archive also included interviewing the archivist or director and gathering information for a paper. Each student then briefly shared in class their visit experience, what they learned, and what surprised them. In advance of distributing the assignment, the instructor contacted each repository on the list and confirmed with them that it was acceptable for a student to contact them and set up a time to visit and conduct an interview. Nearly all of the repositories were very gracious in assisting with the project and the students reported

on how generous they were with providing a tour and interview. Visiting an archive also helped the students feel more comfortable being in an archival setting.

Popular sessions of the class included visiting the central regional branch of the Washington State Archives located across the street from the University. Learning about another archivist's background, touring the reading room and storage area, and learning about current projects and challenges was of interest to the students. Learning of internship opportunities at the archives resulted in a couple of the students pursuing and conducting internships with them. Another popular class session included a local professional book binder and repairer visiting the class and lecturing on the construction and preservation of books as well as the history of paper. Bringing in books hundreds of years old from around the world that he was in the process of repairing, and sharing his career background, was interesting to the students and provided a nice break from the usual class format in the middle of the term.

The last day of the CWU course before the final focused on the archives profession and recommendations for becoming an archivist and finding a job in the field. Joining the Society of American Archivists as a student and becoming involved in the profession through SAA was highly recommended. The instructor asked the students if the class was useful and what they found most helpful. From their responses, learning about preservation and book care and repair, understanding the differences between archives and museums, working with patrons in an archive, doing research in an archive, and using primary sources had been the most helpful things they learned. A few students noted the chapter on preservation in the Hunter book was the most useful and they had referred to it when working with family members to preserve their family's history. A few students commented that the class should be longer the next time it is offered to provide more time for discussion. Instead of having two 50-minute sessions per week, a student suggested having two 90-minute sessions per week. Students also shared their dislikes of the course which included the abundance of readings and having a quiz each week. The final reading for the students was "The Archival Edge" by F. Gerald Ham. The instructor selected this reading as a way to convey to students the consistent themes and concerns of archivists over time. The article notes the lack of concern about passivity in collecting and preserving history and the need for stronger and more comprehensive collecting guiltiness.<sup>23</sup> Ham's urging that archivists be in a more exposed and vulnerable position than before, and how to achieve this, is as relevant today as it was when he wrote it in 1975.<sup>24</sup>

For the final of the class, rather than have a comprehensive exam that the students would study for and then likely forget upon completing the test, the

23. F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *The American Archivist* 38, no. 1 (January 1975): 5.

24. Ibid, 13.

instructor chose to have them write a final research paper. Earlier in the semester, each student chose a topic related to archives and submitted it to the instructor for approval. The instructor encouraged the students to think of the following questions in selecting their topic: What have you always wanted to learn more about in regards to archives? What topic covered in class has sparked your interest and want to explore it further? If you are considering going into archives, what do you want to learn more about to prepare you for that job?

In addition to completing a paper (ten pages-minimum, double-spaced) using at least two primary sources, each student gave a presentation on their paper's topic to the class on the day of the final. Topics included the role of social media in archives, theft and security in archives, an analysis of connections among archives and museums, and how archives are portrayed in movies.

Student evaluations completed at the end of the quarter provided positive feedback. Nine of the 14 students completed the Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEOI) form. For the question *What aspects of the teaching or content in this course do you feel were especially good?*, comments included:

- “The assignments, midterm, and final were very manageable. I really liked this course and I found that some information is very similar to museum studies but some was not. I was able to apply lot of the information I learned, into my internships and museum classes.”
- “The reading was helpful to my learning experience. I like how we talked about issues of today in archives.”
- “The activities, guest lecturers, and examples used during class were helpful to understand the content.”
- “I thought it was relevant information and Julia presented it in a good order.”
- “Very well organized!”

For the question *What changes could be made to improve learning in this course?*, comments included:

- “Quizzes could be given after reading and reviewing in class to ensure understanding of material. But not necessary.”
- “Nothing.”
- “Since it was the first time this class was taught I think the syllabus was a little ambitious.”
- “I wish the class was longer or having class for an hour on more than just 2 days a week and maybe even having class in the archives so that we can get a

better understanding of what we are doing. I found it a little difficult to just learn from the readings.”<sup>25</sup>

## After the Class: Interviews with Other Archivists

In looking ahead to the next time this course is taught, the CWU instructor interviewed two archivists in the country’s inter-mountain region who had also taught in-person introductory archives courses at the undergraduate level. Talking with these archivists enabled the CWU instructor to think of ways to update her syllabus, new activities to try, and how to cover so many topics in ten weeks.

Sarah Singh, the Head of Special Collections at Weber State University, was preparing to teach an introductory archives course and requested a copy of the CWU instructor’s syllabus in Winter 2018. Sharing the course syllabus, and lessons learned from teaching it, with Singh proved beneficial to the CWU instructor. Singh also shared her experience teaching her own course when the instructor interviewed her via telephone in January 2019.

Singh first co-taught the undergraduate archives course in Fall 2018 with the Weber State University Archivist. The three-credit course HIST 3550—Archives: Principles, Practices & Preservation was offered through the History Department. The course, described on the Weber State University website, “provides an introduction to archival management, in which the students learn how archival institutions obtain, process and manage a variety of archival formats, and how this information is made available to the public generally and to historians in particular.”<sup>26</sup> There were seven students in the inaugural class. Singh shared that this number was optimal as she wanted to keep the enrollment to 15 and this class size enabled greater in-depth discussion. The students were all undergraduates with one sophomore and the others being juniors and seniors. The class met weekly for three hours over a semester, providing 16 weeks of information.

The class met in the events room next to Special Collections and toured the repository the first day of class. Being next to Special Collections also enabled the students to see what happened there with patrons conducting research and other departmental activities. Singh provided a variety of assignments, including the popular “Soak a Book” activity. Students soaked a book in water for five minutes and then tracked its condition for two weeks by taking pictures of it daily and writing an entry in their observation journal each day. The students saw firsthand how different types of paper respond after being in water. The students turned in their observation journals at the end of the two weeks and explained what happened to the book.

25. Central Washington University, “Student Evaluation of Instruction for LIS411 Introduction to Archives,” Ellensburg, WA: 2018.

26. “Upper-Division & Specialty Courses,” Weber State University, <https://www.weber.edu/History/upperdivisioncourses.html> (accessed October 2019).

During this time they also looked at salvage and preservation standards, including those from the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

Another assignment involved processing negatives, conducting research, and creating metadata. For the portion of the class on oral history, the students conducted oral history interviews with each other to learn how the process was done. Singh also included “Archives in the News” each week and was amazed at what stories the students found and how archives are relevant to current news. The students began following the social media of various museums as well as the National Archives and Records Administration; Singh also learned from their discoveries and began following some of these as well. The class had two to three readings per week though some students complained about the amount of reading material. For the final class of the semester, the students turned in their final paper and discussed what worked and what didn't in the class.

Singh found the teaching experience to be very worthwhile as she was able to educate undergraduates on basic archives knowledge and skills. She found the hands-on activities the student conducted very useful in building their understanding of archives. Her knowledge has grown in learning of other repositories, ways of sharing current news items about archives, and the range of social media options in sharing about an archives through teaching the course. Student feedback on the course indicates they found the content interesting and specifically enjoyed the hands-on activities. The success of the course has resulted in it continuing to be offered each semester. It has also been useful by serving as a prerequisite for a student wanting to do an internship in the Special Collections or University Archives at Weber State University. There have been three students so far who have interned after taking the course.

Clint Pumphrey, Manuscript Curator in the Special Collections and Archives at Utah State University, was another archivist in the inter-mountain region interviewed by the CWU instructor. He shared his experience teaching an introductory archives course during a phone interview with the CWU instructor in September 2019. The course HIST 4945—Archives Management/Archives Internship, designed to provide basic archives knowledge to students interested in learning more about archives and even pursuing a career in it, “examines archival practices in the real world and discusses how archival institutions interact with the public in general and with historians in particular. The instructor uses materials held in USU Special Collections and Archives to teach this course. Additional work is required for those enrolled in the graduate-level course.”<sup>27</sup>

Pumphrey first taught the two-credit course in 2012 after beginning his position at Utah State University. The course was already in place and was taught previously

27. “HIST 4945—Archives Management/Archives Internship,” Utah State University, [https://catalog.usu.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=12&coid=90040](https://catalog.usu.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=12&coid=90040) (accessed October 2019).



by another member of Special Collections before he began teaching it. The upper level course was taught annually during the fall semester (14 weeks) with one 2.5 hour session weekly for a class size ranging from five to 15 students, with the usual size being less than ten, comprised of both undergraduate and graduate students. The Special Collections staff co-taught the course with one member advising the undergraduates and the other advising the graduate students. With no prerequisites, the class meets in the seminar room of the Special Collections department and is a mixture of lectures and activities. Marketing for the course was done in the spring semester with librarians sharing it in their instruction sessions and encouraging students interested in archives to enroll in it. The range of grades in the class was overall As and Bs with the lowest grade typically a C+. The course shifted in the past year with it now being taught as a “Skills” course in the Public History program, spanning seven weeks instead of 14 and going from two credits to one. The teaching workload is now shared among the Special Collections department with a different staff member teaching it each fall semester.

Regarding student feedback, student evaluations of the course are not done if there are fewer than ten students in the course. Students did share with Pumphrey that they really liked the hands-on activities and the field trips the class took to the Salt Lake County Archives and to the Latter Day Saints (LDS) Church History Library and Archives in Salt Lake City. Visiting two repositories that vary greatly in numbers of staff and space and collection scope enabled the class to see the differences in archives. The class also benefitted from several Utah State University alumni who provided a behind-the-scenes tour as staff at the LDS Church History Library.

As Pumphrey continues to develop the course, he has made changes in the amount of readings. At first the reading was minimal but as the course has developed, the readings are now 60-100 pages per week, typical of an upper level course. He also plans to incorporate more born-digital content into future class offerings. There is currently one day focused on both born-digital and physical formats of collections. How to best integrate more born-digital content is an aspect of the course Pumphrey hopes to develop.

When asked what he learned in teaching the class, Pumphrey replied that how well the class goes depends on its students and their level of engagement. If students are quiet, class discussions can be challenging. Students that are engaged produce lively discussions, but given the constraints of time for the course and fitting all the information into seven weeks, the topic of the lively discussion may need to be concluded by the instructor in order to move on to the next topic.

The greatest surprise Pumphrey experienced in teaching the course was how much he learned and how it made him a stronger archivist. In selecting the readings for the students and creating lectures, he learned from these and thought about how they could be applied to his daily work. One example is covering copyright in the course and how archivists work with copyrighted materials and their access. Showing the class an item and asking if they would provide copies of it to a patron was a way to engage the students in that discussion and think actively about the topic. From

teaching the course, Pumphrey realized that as a practitioner in the field there is still much he has to learn as an archivist. The day-to-day work of an archivist generally entails the same set of skills, and teaching the class enabled him to expand his skills and knowledge as an archivist.

## Lessons Learned and Benefits

The major lesson learned by the CWU instructor in teaching a credit-bearing course was that it was far more time-intensive than initially thought. The introductory archives course was offered during a quarter when the CWU Archives and Special Collections was prepping to move to a new physical space within the Library as well as planning the design of the new space. The class did not tour the Archives nor participate in hands-on activities there during the quarter. Looking back, this was a disadvantage to the students and prevented them from gaining practical experience with archives. Fortunately the CWU Archives is in its new space and the next time this course is taught, the class will meet there and have hands-on activities as part of the course.

The instructor serves as the library department chair to 15 faculty in addition to being the university archivist. With the course quarter already busy with writing faculty evaluations and handling personnel issues, the instructor realized early on that working on the course would need to be done outside of the usual work hours. Prepping for class and grading was generally done in the morning before starting work. There were often 4:00 a.m. mornings of reading and class prep. Office hours for the course immediately followed the classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Students made use of the office hours, meeting with the instructor to discuss the repository visit project and research topics. This was another enjoyable aspect of the class for the CWU instructor as it provided additional time to communicate with the students and learn on an individual basis why they were taking the class.

As one of the students shared in their evaluation, the first-time instructor did have an overly ambitious syllabus. Having two 50-minute sessions each week over ten weeks wasn't enough time to cover all the topics she wished to. Often a topic would take two sessions to discuss and answer student questions. The syllabus was revised during the quarter with a few topics not addressed due to lack of time. The syllabus will be revised before the course is taught again.

As with not having enough time to cover all the syllabus topics, the learning outcomes for the course (listed above) were not all met. "Apply basic archival theory, principles and methods" was covered throughout the course, as was "Manage archival activities". More time needed to be spent to "Synthesize the history and development of the archives profession, both nationally and internationally" as well as "Evaluate the impact of technologies on core archival functions". The learning outcomes, like the syllabus, will be evaluated and revised before the class is taught again.

Having strong collaborative relationships with local repositories benefitted the

course. The CWU instructor was comfortable reaching out to area repositories and asking the librarian, archivist, or director about the students visiting the repository and interviewing them. This helped the midterm project go smoothly and enabled the students to learn about a specific archives. The local repositories were very supportive of the class and shared it on their own social media and with their community patrons. Having two local librarians audit the course was very helpful in that they each provided practical examples of cases in their own archives that correlated with class session topics. It also strengthened the professional relationships with the instructor and enabled her to become more familiar with their repositories. After taking the class, both librarians shared publicly how useful it was and encouraged others to take it.

A final lesson learned was what actually worked in promoting the class and getting students to enroll in it. Advertising the class on social media and through the CWU Library's website only resulted in a few students contacting the instructor and expressing interest in the course. What actually worked in getting students in the class was talking to the professors in the History, Anthropology, and Museum Studies programs and asking them to share the class with their students. Reminding them a second and third time both in-person and via email also worked. Sharing about the class when doing instruction sessions in the CWU Archives also resulted in students taking the course. Having students actually see the Archives and talk to the instructor in person about the class seemed to encourage them to take the course and learn about archives.

The students who took the class benefited from it in many ways. They became familiar with visiting an archive, following its patron procedures, and doing research with primary sources and unique materials. They became comfortable actively participating in class discussions and asking questions which will benefit them as they take future seminar-style classes at the undergraduate and graduate level. The abundance of readings prepares them for future advanced courses that will have even more. Students who had taken the course to learn the differences between being a museum curator and an archivist and then went on to pursue a career in archives or other museum positions, now having a better understanding of what an archivist does in their work.

A few of the students went on to pursue internships locally and outside the area, and the instructor has provided references and advice for seeking these opportunities. One student became the CWU Archives student assistant and stayed in this position for over a year before graduating. Students who took the class have also gone on to graduate school pursuing advanced degrees in History, Anthropology, Museum Studies, and Library and Information Science with a specialization in Archives. The instructor has written recommendation letters and provided advice for this next stage in their academic career. Some students have invited the instructor to "like" or "follow" them on social media and this has been a good opportunity to follow their careers and note the progress they are making in their fields.

## Conclusion

While teaching the course was an exhausting process and was something the instructor had not done previously, it was also invigorating and served as her creative outlet for the quarter. Teaching the course enabled her to become reacquainted with archives theories and practices that don't come up on a daily basis in her position. It helped further solidify her belief that she had chosen the right field as a career and she finds it just as fascinating now as when she was a graduate student. It is worth the time and energy for an academic archivist to also take on teaching this type of course. Despite all the numerous other tasks archivists have in their work and how it is a never-ending juggling act, teaching a class is worthwhile because it enables the archivist to learn new things and improve their skillset as an archivist that will in turn help the patrons they work with. Witnessing the students in the class being new to archives and showing excitement in the work keeps the job fresh and interesting for the instructing archivist.

Finally, one last student and instructor benefit that was particularly meaningful is worth sharing. One of the students in the class who was strong throughout it and earned an A applied for internships in Washington, DC following the course, and the instructor was happy to serve as a reference for her on several occasions. At the time that the student walked in CWU's Commencement in June 2019, she was interning at a national museum in Washington, DC and planning to pursue an advanced degree in Anthropology. The instructor asked if she had time to visit the CWU Archives while she was in Ellensburg and so she stopped by. The instructor learned about what she had been doing in her internship and her plans for the future and encouraged her to stay in touch and keep her posted on how she was doing. The student thanked the instructor and said that taking the Introduction to Archives class changed what she wanted to do for a career and made her realize how important research and preserving history is. Hearing that made all those 4:00 a.m. mornings of class prep completely worth it.

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