

# Archival literacy in action: Exploring information literacy capabilities in the Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine collection.



Shelley Blundell, Ph.D. candidate in Communication and Information, Kent State University

## The Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine Collection

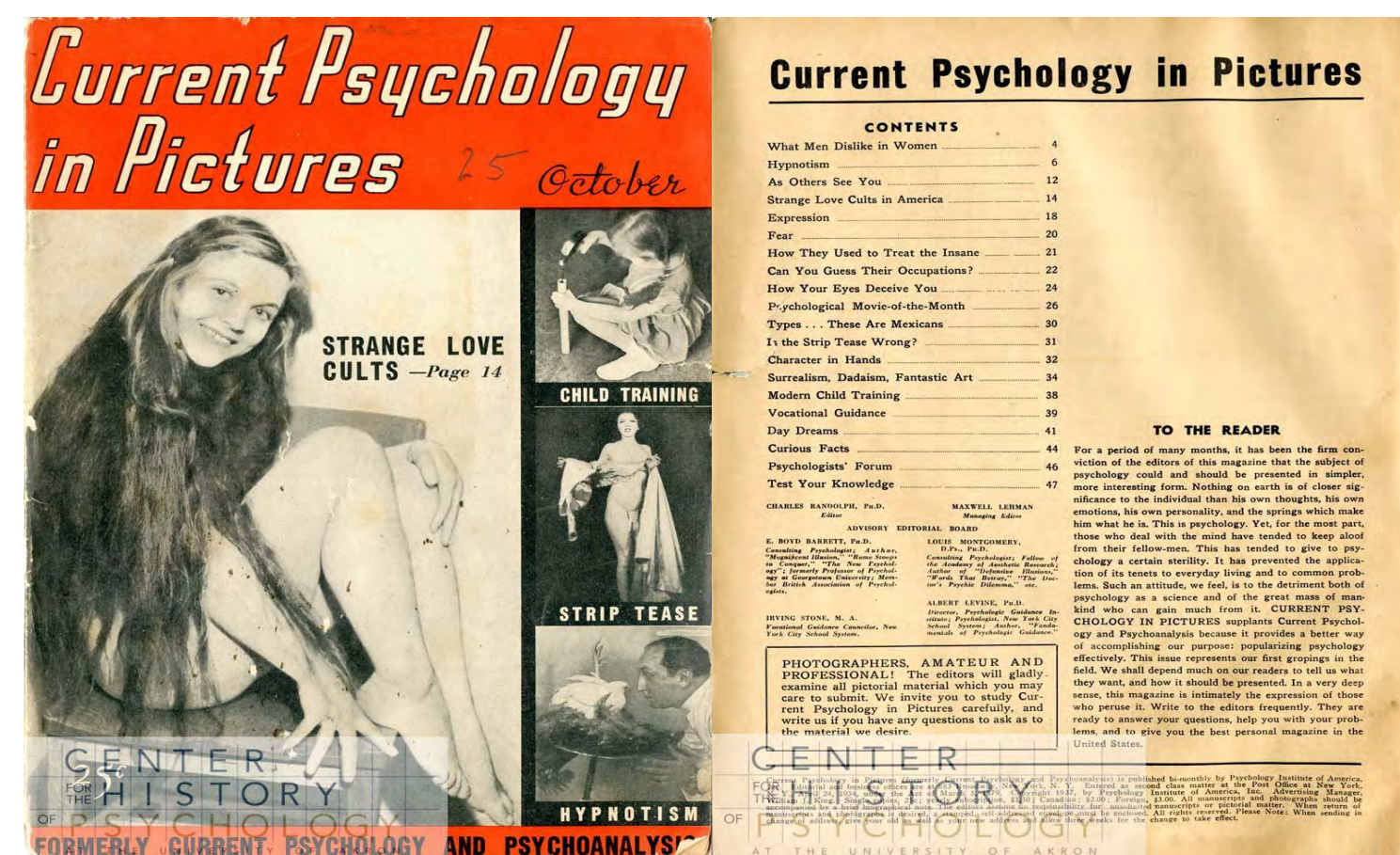
### Abstract

During the Fall 2012 semester, Kent State University doctoral student Shelley Blundell worked with Dr. Jodi Kearns at the Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron to explore information literacy as it applies to archival collections. Blundell worked with the recently donated Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine collection to practice “archival literacy,” an emerging term that describes the intersection of information literacy tasks and archival practice.

Blundell created an information resource guide on adolescence for the collection, as well as a manual for continued preservation and information literacy activities for the collection at the conclusion of her investigation. The collection contains more than 1,500 popular psychology magazines which span a great deal of the late 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

During an interview with Benjamin, he stated that the enduring historical and preservation-worthy value of the collection lies in the “cultural snapshot” these magazines provide of U.S. social history over the previous century. The poster will include images taken from the collection (e.g. magazine covers) and ideas for potential archival literacy activities based on subjects covered in the collection.

### Facts and images from the collection



Current Psychology in Pictures, October issue, 1937

### Benjamin: “I’m a collector.”

Dr. Benjamin began “accidentally” collecting popular psychology magazines in the 1970s.

Starting with only a handful of magazines, the collection currently stands at 1,590 items (with more coming as Dr. Benjamin continues to collect any popular psychology magazines he finds).

Three centuries are represented in this collection – Some items in the collection date as far back as the late 1890s, and some were published as recently as last year.



### Collection donor Dr. Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.

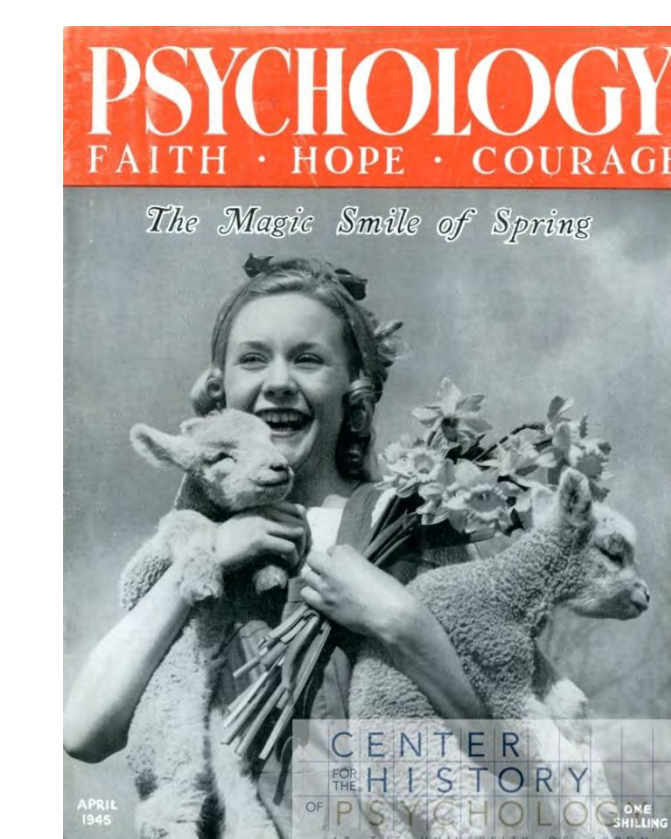
Dr. Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.’s numerous monumental contributions to the field of psychology through his research, scholarship, and teaching, are matched in fervor by his unwavering commitment to and support of and for the Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron. Dr. Benjamin is considered a true friend to the CHP, and the recent donation of his popular psychology collection further cements his commitment to ensuring the growth of the CHP to the benefit of all those conducting research in the dynamic and exciting field of psychology. To read about his work with this amazing collection, visit the CHP blog entry “Thursdays with Ben” at <http://centerhistorypsychology.wordpress.com/2013/01/>. To read more about Dr. Benjamin himself, visit his website at <http://people.tamu.edu/~lbenjamin/>.



Adult, Volume 1, Issues 1 and 5, 1953

Benjamin: “Instead of seven titles, there were really closer to 70.”

In the 1980s, Dr. Benjamin believed there were only about seven popular psychology titles. When eBay launched, he realized he was incorrect. He soon established relationships (and bidding wars) with other collectors to create as robust a collection as possible.



Psychology: Faith, Hope, Courage, April 1945



Human Behavior, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 1979

Benjamin: “[These magazines] offered secrets to success, to greater financial security, to happiness, to health.”

Dr. Benjamin believes as much as “Honey Boo Boo” provides a glimpse into modern-day culture and society, so too do these magazines represent “a cultural snapshot” of America’s social history, particularly those magazines from the 1920s and 1930s.

Some of the more interesting subjects covered in the collection: Clairvoyance, facial symmetry, hermaphrodites, lying, miracles, voyeurism, smiling, witch-craft, and wolf-children.



## Archival literacy in action

### Defining archival literacy

•Archival literacy is defined here as a combination of the basic “find, use, incorporate” model of information literacy, and the navigation and specialized instruction experienced in an archive/special collection.

•No “finite” definition of archival literacy has been reached, however, many researchers in the library and information science field, particularly archivists, have contributed greatly to the understanding here of what good archival literacy should be (and indeed, what good archival literacy instruction should be, as well). See “selected references.”

### Differences between information literacy and archival literacy

•Key differences are acknowledged in the following two areas:

1. In archival literacy, particular importance is placed on the finding, usage, and understanding/analysis of primary source documents, and
2. Those providing archival literacy instruction provide the patron with opportunities to extend the archives or special collection into a number of areas in the user’s life, and indeed, beyond the physical archive or special collection (such as into the digital realm).

### Archival literacy instruction with a special collection

•A theoretical lesson plan is provided on page 2 of the handout as an example of how one might incorporate information literacy standards into the exploration of a special collection, enacting “archival literacy.”

•The information resource guide presented below is a part of the collection manual developed at the culmination of the project.

•A rubric for creating further guides on other subjects explored within the collection was also provided in the manual, extending archival literacy possibilities with this collection beyond the initial project.

### Information resource guide example

#### Information Resource Guide: Adolescence

(Coverage of subject in the Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine Collection)

#### Magazines (organized alphabetically, and chronologically within each title)

Adult – Dec-Jan 1953, Vol. 1, No.4, p. 56: parenting (processed); March-April 1954, Vol. 1, No. 5, p. 110: medical care (processed)

Current Psychology and Psychoanalysis – October 1935, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 65: When youth breaks down (processed)

Current Psychology and Successful Living - Sept. 1935, p. 8 (processed)

Personal Psychology – July 1957, p. 64 (unprocessed)

Psychology – December 1939, p. 22 (unprocessed)

Psychology Digest – June 1938, p. 68 (unprocessed); August 1938, p. 66 (unprocessed)

Psychology: Faith, Hope, and Courage – November 1946, p. 20 (unprocessed)

Psychology: Health, Happiness, and Success - May 1931, p. 26 (unprocessed); May 1937, p. 45: sex (unprocessed)

The Psychologist Magazine – May 1974, p. 12 (unprocessed)

Why – August 1952, p. 99: boys, teenagers (unprocessed); June 1954, p. 98: sex (unprocessed)

(Resource guide continued in next column)

You, Including Popular Psychology – August 1952, p.5: love (unprocessed); March 1955, p. 52; April 1956, p. 79: drugs, parenting

Your Life: The Popular Guide to Desirable Living – April 1954, p. 44

Psychology: Faith, Hope, and Courage – November 1946, p. 20 (unprocessed)

Psychology: Health, Happiness, and Success - May 1931, p. 26 (unprocessed); May 1937, p. 45: sex (unprocessed)

The Psychologist Magazine – May 1974, p. 12 (unprocessed)

Why – August 1952, p. 99: boys, teenagers (unprocessed); June 1954, p. 98: sex (unprocessed)

You, Including Popular Psychology – August 1952, p.5: love (unprocessed); March 1955, p. 52; April 1956, p. 79: drugs, parenting

Your Life: The Popular Guide to Desirable Living – April 1954, p. 44

### Selected references

Benjamin, L. T. (1986). Why don't they understand us? A history of psychology's public image. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 941-946.

Fansler, C., & Yun, A. (2011). Inside the Box: Incorporating Archival Material into Undergraduate Information Literacy Instruction. [Poster presentation]. Retrieved Oct. 26, 2012, from <http://wakespace.lib.wfu.edu/xmlui/handle/10339/31856>

Harris, V. A., & Weller, A. C. (2012). Use of special collections as an opportunity for outreach in the academic library. *Journal of Library Administration*, 52, 294-303. doi: 10.1080/01930826.2012.684508

Krause, M. G. (2010). Undergraduates in the archives: Using an assessment rubric to measure learning. *American Archivist*, 73(2), 507-534.

Makala, J., & Gettys, R. (2006). Making exhibits out of nothing at all: Special collections, information literacy, and a curious incident in the library. *College & research libraries news*, 67, 681-683. Retrieved Oct. 26, 2012, from <http://crln.acrl.org/content/67/11/681.full.pdf>

Manning, M., & Silva, J. (2012). Dual archivist/librarians: Balancing the benefits and challenges of diverse responsibilities. *College and Research Libraries*, 73, 164-181.

Nimer, C. L., & Daines III, J. G. (2012). Teaching undergraduates to think archivally. *Journal of Archival Organization*, 10, 4-44. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15332748.2012.680418>

O'Toole, J. (1995). Toward a usable archival past: Recent studies in the history of literacy. *American Archivist*, 58, 86-99.

Rekrut, A. (2003). Material literacy: Reading records as material culture. Proceedings from I-CHORA: *First International Conference on the History of Records and Archives*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto. 11-29.

Reynolds, M. C. (2012). Lay of the land: The state of bibliographic instruction efforts in ARL special collections libraries. *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, 13-26. Retrieved from Library and Information Science Full-text Database.

Tomberlin, J., & Turi, M. (2012). Supporting student work: Some thoughts about special collections instruction. *Journal of Library Administration*, 52, 304-312. DOI: 10.1080/01930826.2012.684512

Yakel, E. (2004). Information literacy for primary sources: Creating a new paradigm for archival researcher education. *OCLC Systems & Services*, 20(2), 61-64.

### Contact information

Shelley Blundell: [sblundel@kent.edu](mailto:sblundel@kent.edu)  
[www.linkedin.com/in/shelleyblundell](http://www.linkedin.com/in/shelleyblundell)