You get an A!:
Teaching Students to Process Archival Collections in the Classroom

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Museums & Archives Certificate Program at the University of Akron

• Introduction to museums & archives.
• Provides undergraduate students with basic skills.
• Prepares them for work in museum & archives professions and for graduate study in these areas.

• Foundations of Museums & Archives I (3 credits)
• Foundations of Museums & Archives II (3 credits)
• Capstone Experience (3 credits)
• Specialization Electives (9 credits)
Foundations of Museums & Archives I

Week 1: Museums intro
Week 2-3: Museums: types, visitors, work, tasks, staff
Week 4: Archives intro
Week 5: Archives: types & contents
Week 6: Archives work, tasks, staff. Arrangement.
Week 7: Midterm

Week 8: Metadata
Week 9: Accessioning & appraisal
Week 10: Finding aids, storage, preservation
Week 11-12: Digitization
Week 13: Policies, donors, public relations
Week 14-15: Final project
Final project

• Process an archival collection (50%)
  • Group processing
  • 6-8 records storage boxes per group
• Blog post (25%)
• Summative reflection (25%)
Summative reflections

When I first opened the boxes and saw no organization I was overwhelmed.

I think it is very exciting to see all the materials and objects from history and actually handle them.

Creating an arrangement also proved somewhat difficult...I wonder if in the future I will become better at familiarizing myself with collections before processing them, or if this is the kind of problems that all archivists have to deal with.

I would simply be excited to be working in a place where you get to encounter pieces of history every day.

By the end of this process, I am completely confident that archival work is something that I would love doing.

If I worked in an archive I think I would be involved in digitization.

Personally, in reality, this is not what I would do for a job, either in Archives or Museums.
Is it worth it?

Processed
8 collections
housed in
130 document cases
described by
8 finding aids
during
4 semesters
by
32 students
Public History Concentration,
Master of Arts in History, Wright State University

• Graduate students interested in archival administration or museum management careers
  • Undergrad backgrounds in history, anthropology, religion, others
• Both theoretical and practical training from working professionals
• Full graduate degree program (38 credit hours)
• Required courses include:
  • Academic core history courses (12 credits)
  • Intro’s to: Public History (3), Archives (3), Museums (3)
  • Internship (1 credit) and capstone project (1 credit)
  • Advanced public history courses & electives (15 credits), including:
    • HST 7800: Advanced Archives (3 credits)
HST 7800: Advanced Problems in Archival Work aka Advanced Archives aka “The Processing Class”

- Arrangement schemes
- Processing plans
- Privacy and restrictions
- Preservation
- Challenging formats
- Finding aid elements (DACS)
- Electronic records processing
- Additions processing
- EAD and MARC

- Controlled access headings
- Archives Space
- Backlogs and Reappraisal
- Prioritization
- MPLP
- Extensible Processing
- Post-processing tasks, such as
  - Dissemination
  - Donor relations
HST 7800
Assignments

• Processing plan and supply estimate (10%)
• Preliminary finding aid (10%)
• Electronic records processing (15%)
• Completed collection and finding aid (50%)
  • Typically 4-6 record center boxes per student (depending on year)
• Blog post visual aids (5%) & optional extra credit text
• Participation (10%) including
  • In-class discussions and hands-on processing work
  • Archives Space data entry (in-class activity)
  • Discards summary
# Processing in a Classroom Setting: Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Archivists</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Volunteers, Student Asst’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>Appropriately processed collections ready for access</td>
<td>Learning, experience, grades</td>
<td>Genuine caring, meaningful work, paycheck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest</strong></td>
<td>High! Eager to provide access</td>
<td>Varies: career goals, reasons for taking course (topic, schedule, coercion?), collection topic</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill</strong></td>
<td>High! We do this a lot</td>
<td>Varies: natural ability, interest</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Grad school training (+exp)</td>
<td>(Some) grad school training</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervision</strong></td>
<td>Depends: we do this with varying degrees of oversight</td>
<td>Much-needed, check often</td>
<td>Usually much-needed, check often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collections</strong></td>
<td>No need to do same size, type, or complexity</td>
<td>Should all have about the same difficulty/work</td>
<td>No need to do same size, type, or complexity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What We Accomplished

• 2x teaching the course
• 11 students

• 16 collections processed
  • 16 finding aids written
  • (17 counting the e-records exercise)
• Over 50 linear feet of new materials available

• Lots of learning (hopefully!)
Processing in the Classroom: Give a Fish vs. Teaching to Fish

- Goal: Obtain a fish
  - Get collections processed
- Goal: Teach fishing
  - Teach students to process

- We want the “fish,” but we also want to teach the fishermen.
  - Everybody wins
Thank you!

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