

Teaching the Teacher: Primary Source Instruction in American and Canadian Archives Graduate Programs

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the degree to which archival graduate programs are preparing students to teach with primary sources. We designed and distributed a survey to archival graduate program administrators listed in the Society of American Archivists (SAA)'s *Directory of Archival Education Programs*, as well as to archival graduate programs accredited by the American Librarian Association (ALA). The survey was sent to forty archives graduate programs in 2015 and to thirteen additional programs in 2016. In addition to the survey, we examined course descriptions on the websites of the surveyed graduate programs to determine what types of pedagogical training classes were offered.

The survey found little pedagogical training in graduate programs for future archivists. While some coursework exists, syllabi or assignments often vary by instructors and teaching with primary sources is not a required content area for archives-track students. Archivists-in-training may be able to develop pedagogical skills by taking courses outside of the archives track, but most teaching with primary sources training comes from practical experience outside of coursework. Given the recent professional scholarship in the area of teaching with primary sources and the increase in job postings requiring archivists to teach with primary sources, we hope the results of this survey will inform curriculum development for graduate programs, continuing education offerings, and professional development opportunities.

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KEY WORDS

Archival education, LIS graduate programs, Survey, Instruction,
Teaching with primary sources, Curriculum development

In the United States and Canada, the field of archival studies is still emerging as an independent realm of scholarship, distinct from the more established professions of library science and history. While the American Library Association (ALA), the accrediting body for most U.S. and Canadian library and archives programs, was founded in 1876¹ and the American Historical Association (AHA) was founded in 1884,² the Society of American Archivists (SAA) was not founded until 1936.³ Due to the comparatively shorter history of archival education in North America, graduate programs often end up within either library science or history departments, rather than as independent archives schools or departments. Although “American archivists have been debating the best educational preparation for the field since at least 1910,” SAA did not issue any formal guidelines for educational programs until 1977.⁴ Since the development of these first guidelines, archival education evolved from a curriculum that only emphasized practical skills to one that sought to integrate archival theory and practice. An examination of the SAA guidelines from 1977 to 2001 revealed

Several trends and developments. . . . First, each successive iteration of the guidelines has been more detailed and complex than its predecessors. Second, the guidelines have gradually shifted from an emphasis on practice to a focus on theory. The archival curriculum has broadened from teaching basic functions and practical how-to knowledge to more theoretical concepts, ways of thinking, and incorporation of knowledge from related disciplines.⁵

By the 2000s, it was recognized that archival education could not be all theoretical or all practical, but that both ways of thinking needed to be incorporated into the curriculum. A growing number of archivists argued that archives graduate programs needed to offer practice in reference and outreach just as much as they needed to elucidate the theoretical underpinnings of these practices.⁶ And, furthermore, that the theory and practice of archival reference and outreach are distinct from library reference and outreach, and thereby deserving of dedicated courses in archives programs.⁷ In the last five years, studies have found that one way to integrate archival theory and the kinds of practical skills an archivist might learn on the job is through courses focused on project-based learning. As Donghee Sinn stated,

Learning through practice can be an effective pedagogical method for advancing professional education. This method can provide an opportunity for students to apply theory to practice in real-life experiences. A well-planned and -managed project in both venues can create the best synergy for professional education. We should aim to integrate two different kinds of learning (academic and practical) to enhance the quality of archival education.⁸

Much like these earlier initiatives to incorporate theory and practice for reference and outreach into archives curricula, the initiative to provide archivists

with the theory and practice of teaching with primary sources is currently gathering momentum.⁹ While *instruction* is listed, along with outreach and advocacy, in section 1.f. of the SAA *Graduate Program in Archival Studies (GPAS)* curriculum guidelines, there is no specific language about training archivists how to *teach*. The need for education in teaching with primary sources is evidenced not only in the professional literature, but also by the recent increase in archives job postings that require instructional experience. This professional demand should be addressed by updating archives graduate program curricula, which include teaching with primary sources as a core component of the course content.

Literature Review

In a seminal 2004 article, archivist Elizabeth Yakel challenged the archives profession to reconsider how patrons are educated to use archives. She insisted that

... the current paradigm for archival user education cries out for change. . . . In the 1990s, the library world shifted to an informational literacy paradigm. This redirected the scope of library user education to one that assisted patrons in finding information anywhere in any format, and aided them in developing their own searching techniques to enhance their knowledge. A parallel change is required in the archival community.¹⁰

In the intervening years, the professional literature has described countless class assignments, successful archivist/instructor collaborations, and archives reference interactions as opportunities for teaching with primary sources.¹¹

A strong connection exists between instruction and archival outreach. Archival instruction is vital to the reputation and outreach efforts of the repository, as it can leave a positive impression on the instructors and students who visit the archives. As Magia Krause noted, "Above all, instructors are instrumental in introducing students to the repository. Professors and teachers who assign students to use . . . primary sources act as a powerful external motivator to students."¹² The goal of archival instruction sessions is that they not only meet the immediate goals of researchers brought into the archives, which are often related to a single assignment or project, but also that researchers come back to the archives for subsequent information needs. Ciaran Trace emphasized effective user interactions between patrons and archivists, noting that "the concepts of reciprocity and confidence are factors that help establish a successful and effective relationship between an archivist and researcher during the reference process."¹³ In addition to developing confident future researchers, archivists also view instruction as a way to impart excitement about primary sources and empowerment through learning to conduct research.¹⁴ The SAA

GPAS curriculum guidelines group the topics of outreach, instruction, and advocacy within an archivist's core knowledge of archival materials and functions.¹⁵ This suggests that successful instruction provides an opportunity to engage with the public in a way that not only cultivates future researchers, but also future advocates for archives. Furthermore, SAA has recommended that "a fully developed graduate program in archival studies must establish a curriculum that . . . prepares students to teach classes and workshops in archival literacy and the uses of archival resources" to provide archivists with the skills needed to successfully teach with primary sources.¹⁶

In addition to building life-long researchers, archivists who introduce K-12 or university students to primary sources enhance course themes and critical thinking skills.¹⁷ As Peter Carini stated,

To be fully information-literate, students must be able to find, access, interpret, and utilize all forms of information. Primary source materials come with special and unique challenges, particularly in an era when young people are increasingly electronically literate but have less and less interaction with physical documents. In addition, primary sources come with many physical characteristics, contextual complexities, and restrictions that make them difficult to access and interpret.¹⁸

To successfully utilize primary sources to meet class learning objectives, archivists must have adequate training in how to teach. Learning goals will be different whether the archivist is engaging with K-12, undergraduate, or graduate students or with faculty or seasoned researchers.¹⁹ Although archivists are increasingly involved in teaching with primary sources, they are often not teaching faculty and may have never received pedagogical training. Teaching styles and learning objectives should also vary depending on the kind of interaction. A one-on-one teaching session calls for a different kind of lesson than a class session, just as visiting the classroom once calls for a different kind of lesson than the long-term approach of an embedded archivist.²⁰ Anne Badhe, while working with an instructor at Oregon State University to identify the skills that students need to produce quality final papers, pinpointed the ability to "identify the basic features of a primary source; observe and describe creator, type of source, date created, place created, physical details," as well as "evaluate a primary source to detect bias and to engage with issues of authority, authenticity, ambiguity, contradiction, and tone . . . locate and select relevant primary sources . . . and recognize links and relationships between primary sources and/or secondary sources."²¹ While this list was developed in the context of a university course instructional session, the skills included in it can be broadly applied to several instructional roles in which archivists may find themselves. In addition to the skills listed by Bahde, archivists in a variety of instructional settings must be able to translate their knowledge of primary sources, and how to locate

them, into terms and language approachable by researchers who may be deeply unfamiliar with archives. Doing so may be facilitated by a familiarity with pedagogical theories such as inquiry-based learning²² and the use of document-based questions.²³ Since archivists teach in a variety of ways, integrating teaching with primary sources into the archives curriculum benefits not only those who work in the classroom to support the “pedagogical aims of their institutions,” but also archivists who provide one-on-one instruction in the use, care, and content of archives during reference interactions with patrons.²⁴ Integrating learning theory and instructional skills into archives graduate courses

will enable archivists to be more agile in designing exercises, modules, or entire curricula focusing on primary sources. . . . Greater expertise in teaching and learning will also enable archivists to more easily enter into conversation with other faculty, teachers, school administrators, and librarians to work together on shared goals.²⁵

While there is a history of archivists as educators, both in the reading room and in the classroom, teaching has not always been acknowledged as a core skill to the profession. In her 2008 study, Magia Krause concluded that “Given the amount of instruction that archivists and curators engage in, it is striking that the respondents to this survey mostly learned how to teach on their own through individual study or other teaching experiences. There is a need for some pedagogical training in archival education programs.”²⁶ The call for formal training persists in the 2016 publication *Teaching with Primary Sources*, in which Elizabeth Yakel and Doris Malkmus state, “Learning theory and instructional skills are not part of either graduate education or the continuing education of archivists. This has to change if archivists want to become effective teachers.”²⁷ Archivists who lack formal training in instruction may miss out on an opportunity to engage in positive interactions with their communities through teaching with primary sources. Or, if these archivists do provide instructional sessions, they may not know the best pedagogical techniques to help students, faculty, and other patrons to conduct primary source research. If potential researchers emerge from archival instruction sessions confused about the nature of archives and primary sources, they may be less likely to consider archives as a source of information in the future. With the instructional theory and skills Yakel and Malkmus recommended added to graduate education, archivists will arguably be in a better position to not only successfully teach patrons basic access and use policies, but also instill a sense of purpose and meaning in archival research with the aim of fostering a community of repeat archives users who are confident in conducting primary source research.

Despite nearly ten years of literature arguing for courses on teaching with primary sources in archives graduate programs, not much has changed. In the introduction to the 2014 handbook, *Using Primary Sources: Hands-On Instruction*

Exercises, editors Anne Bahde, Heather Smedberg, and Mattie Taormina wrote that

Library schools . . . offer elective classes on information literacy instruction, with some programs specializing in instruction or outreach. A scan of the programs offering special collection and archives courses or certificate programs, however, shows no specific course focused on providing instruction with rare, special, or unique materials . . . this means that many who end up teaching in special collections and archives may have no formal education on how to teach and assess their efforts, leaving a noticeable deficiency in the education of the profession.²⁸

The desire for archivists to be trained in teaching with primary sources is found not only in the professional literature, but in the job market as well. A review of archives job postings demonstrated the increased demand for instruction skills in professional archivists. The job site Archives Gig included 140 archival job postings with a “Teaching” tag between February 17, 2014, the earliest date to use this tag, and May 11, 2017.²⁹ From 2014 to 2015, the number of jobs posted with the “Teaching” tag increased by 93%, from 28 to 54. Throughout 2016 and the first half of 2017, the number of postings with the “Teaching” tag remained consistently higher than in 2014, showing that demand in this area remains strong. Additionally, the percentage of entry-level jobs that require teaching is high. In 2016, 60% of jobs tagged with “Teaching” were also tagged with “0–2 years of experience.” In the first half of 2017, the number of jobs with both tags grew to 78%. This implies that employers are expecting entry-level archivists to join the workforce with teaching skills, rather than learning to teach on the job.

Archival literature and job postings alike demonstrate the demand for archivists with pedagogical skills. In the absence of formal graduate training, various resources and workshops for working professionals have appeared to fill the gap. While there are some ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the need for education in teaching with primary sources, most of these professional opportunities exist as day-long or half-day workshops, rather than full courses. Ongoing efforts in this arena include the work of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS)³⁰ Committee, the TPS Exchange, an information exchange/resource bank website,³¹ and the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on Primary Source Literacy.³² Guidelines from this task force are expected in 2017. Recent workshops on teaching with primary sources for K–12 students include the Archivists Roundtable of Metropolitan New York’s annual “K–12 Archives Education Institute” (2010–2016)³³ and the “Engaging Students and Teachers: Integrating Primary Sources in K–16 Curricula” symposium of the Midwest Archives Conference (2012).³⁴ Additional workshops about teaching with primary sources for archivists include the Rare Books and Manuscript Section

(RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) preconference workshops on instruction: “Beyond Show and Tell: Teaching Strategies for Special Collections Professionals” in 2009, “Designing an Effective Instruction Program” in 2014, and “Active Learning with Challenging Objects” in 2015;³⁵ the half-day Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL)–sponsored workshop “Teaching with the Good Stuff” in 2014;³⁶ the annual day-long “TPS Unconference” (2015–2017);³⁷ and the “Librarians Active Learning Institute—Archives and Special Collections,” a three-day program at Dartmouth College Library (2016–2017).³⁸

These workshops further demonstrate the need for archival education in this area; however, if teaching with primary sources is a job requirement for many archivists, one-time workshops are neither sufficient nor sustainable. Nor, despite the efforts of archivists focused on offering training in TPS skills, are they particularly common; a review of the continuing education workshops offered by the Society of American Archivists lists one workshop specifically focused on TPS skills, as compared to the thirty-five related to digital archives and the twenty-one focused on arrangement and description.³⁹ This fact stretches the plausibility that if archivists do not receive TPS training as a part of their archival education they will have ample opportunity to do so in the future. This is in opposition to the cornucopia of professional development opportunities related to digital archives afforded to archivists, the development of which has been spurred on by the increase in demand for archivists with digital archives skills. If teaching with primary sources is a core competency, rather than a “special skill” for archivists, then a dedicated effort must be made to include it in the archives graduate curriculum in the first place. Typical graduate courses expose students to forty-five hours of lecture time over the course of a semester with additional time spent on course readings and assignments. An archivist would need to attend more than forty-five hours in workshops to reach the equivalent education of a focused graduate course. As Jeanette Bastian and Elizabeth Yakel explained in their 2005 survey, “archival practica, field experiences and internships [are] not considered core knowledge. While we view experiential training as an essential component of professional education, these are primarily opportunities for the application of knowledge, not the knowledge itself.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, if training essential to becoming a professional archivist is optional or exists outside of archives courses, one must question whether an archives program is actually “education that might benefit an archivist rather than archival education in its purest sense.”⁴¹ To understand the true educational landscape of teaching with primary sources, it is important to continually revisit and review the structure and offerings of archival programs. This article focuses on survey data and online course descriptions to analyze

the ways in which American and Canadian archival graduate programs train students to teach with primary sources.

Methodology

This study was conducted by the Teaching with Primary Sources subcommittee, part of the Reference, Access, and Outreach Section of the Society of American Archivists.⁴² Our methodology was influenced by the methodologies of Elizabeth Yakel (2000),⁴³ Jeanette Bastian and Elizabeth Yakel (2005),⁴⁴ and Ciaran Trace and Carlos Ovalle (2012).⁴⁵ We devised and distributed a survey to 53 archives graduate programs in the United States and Canada. Additionally, we examined publicly available course information from the websites of the 53 archives programs.

In September and October 2014, we brainstormed potential survey questions that would indicate whether or not primary source pedagogy skills are being taught in library and archives graduate programs. The goal was to create a short survey that would not be onerous for respondents to complete. With this in mind, initial ideas were edited down to a six-question survey. To give respondents an opportunity to explain their institution's work, the survey included a mix of yes/no and open-ended questions (see the full survey in Appendix A).

We debated various distribution models and opted to send the survey to targeted faculty and administrators in archives graduate programs. Programs and contacts were identified using the SAA "Directory of Archives Education" (2015)⁴⁶ and the SAA Awards Committee PR Distribution List (2015).⁴⁷ These lists include accredited institutions in the United States and Canada. We also researched these listings to confirm or update contact information, and the survey email asked recipients to forward the survey to a more appropriate contact person, if necessary (see the distribution list in Appendix B).

In an attempt to increase response rates, we used Gmail's mail merge feature to send each identified contact person a personalized email (see email text in Appendix C). On February 18, 2015, contacts from 40 archives graduate programs received an email with a link to the survey. In a reminder email sent on April 21, 2015, recipients were asked to respond by May 31, 2015.

In 2015, we noted that some accredited archival graduate programs in the United States and Canada were missing on the original distribution list, which was based on the list of SAA-accredited archives graduate programs. After reviewing the American Librarian Association's full list of accredited graduate programs, we identified an additional 13 programs that offer archives-related coursework or certificates. We reissued the survey to contacts at these 13 programs on February 9, 2016.

In the spring of 2015, we examined the websites of all 40 surveyed archives graduate programs to determine what types of courses offered pedagogical training. During the 2016 reissue of the survey, this process was repeated with the 13 additional survey recipients. The definition of pedagogical training was left intentionally broad to encompass courses that do not specifically address primary source instruction but could plausibly include such training, for example, a class on outreach and advocacy that teaches student to develop educational programming.

Limitations

The survey was distributed twice, nearly a year apart. The recipients of the 2016 reissue were all institutions that had not received the 2015 survey invitation. Institutions that did receive the 2015 invitation were not invited to take the survey again. Therefore, it must be noted that the situation at any of the 2015 recipients could have changed by the later date. Additionally, the survey invitation was sent to one contact person at each institution. While that individual was encouraged to forward the email if appropriate, we should note that in many cases, individual professors determine pedagogical content of courses, and the survey was not designed to capture the input of every individual who might teach within each archives program. Another limitation of the survey is that due to the anonymity of participants, we cannot segment out responses from archival graduate programs situated within LIS programs or within other programs such as history or public history. Understanding the influence of the overall school or department within which the archives program is situated would be useful information when thinking about curriculum development and requirements.

The review of the course descriptions depended highly on the accuracy and completeness of the information on program websites. Indeed, one survey respondent mentioned a specific archives instruction course that did not appear on the institution's website. This indicates that websites may be out of date or lack robust course descriptions. Therefore, we do not consider the evaluation of the online course descriptions as authoritative; rather, we view the information as a helpful supplement to the survey.

Results

Fifteen respondents completed the 2015 survey, for a response rate of 37.5% (15/40). Responses to the emails ranged from February 18, 2015, the first day the survey was issued, to May 21, 2015, ten days before the stated deadline. Three additional respondents completed the identical 2016 reissue of the

survey, for a response rate of 23% (3/13). Recipients were asked to respond by March 9, 2016. The deadline was extended to April 4, 2016, due to an initial response rate of zero by the March 9 deadline. The combined response rate across both years was 34% (18/53). See Appendix D for a full list of survey respondents.

The survey contained yes/no, multiple choice, and free text questions. These varied question types allowed for quantitative and qualitative responses about the degree to which ALA-accredited archives programs currently prepare graduate students to teach with primary sources.

The first survey question asked, “Does your graduate program prepare students to teach with primary sources by offering instruction concentrations, certificates, or other specializations?” Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they did not offer any formal training to their graduate students about how to teach with archives. However, many respondents gave examples of efforts outside of the curriculum, such as partnering with other programs to give their students relevant experience.

When asked more broadly about whether the graduate program provided any type of course focused on instruction or pedagogy, the percentage of “yes” answers went up to 50% ($n = 9$). However, of those who answered in the affirmative, only 2 offered courses within the archives curriculum. The majority of these courses were offered outside of the archives curriculum, such as within the school media concentration and library science courses on instruction and pedagogy. When asked if any of these instruction and pedagogy courses were required for an archives concentration, certificate, or specialization, only 1 respondent answered yes.

Next we asked if any of the program’s archives-focused courses include units or assignments on teaching with primary sources. More than half (56%) of the respondents indicated at least one assignment within a course that focused on teaching with primary sources. Many respondents qualified their yes/no responses and provided insights into required versus nonrequired courses and optional assignments. For 3 out of the 10 institutions that responded “yes,” such courses are required for students pursuing an archives concentration, certificate,

Responses to Question 1: Does your graduate program prepare students to teach with primary sources by offering instruction concentrations, certificates, or other specializations?

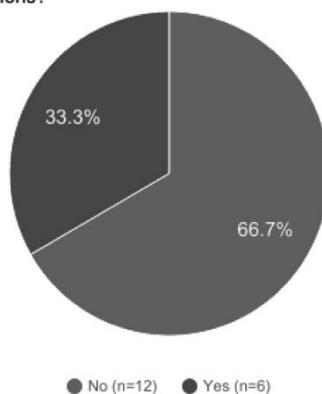


FIGURE 1. The first question on the survey, asking about concentrations, certificates, and specializations

or specialization. At one school, the inclusion of teaching with primary sources content is standardized across the curriculum; however, at the majority of schools (8 respondents), individual instructors determine the inclusion of this content. When given the opportunity to further describe such units or assignments, 5 respondents pointed to specific courses, 1 respondent indicated that internships and capstone projects provide additional opportunities, and 1 respondent mentioned a course offered through an outside partner. One respondent, who answered in the negative, added, “No, but it is an assignment option.”

Twelve respondents (67%) indicated that their programs provide practical opportunities for students to practice instruction through experiences like shadowing, mock instruction, or internships. Two schools indicated that such opportunities are required for students pursuing an archives concentration, certificate, or specialization. In one such case, free text elaboration indicated that the required internship “may involve [practicing instruction] if it helps meet student learning objectives.”

When asked to further describe opportunities for teaching with primary sources, respondents listed the following: internships or practicum ($n = 4$), having students prepare lesson plans ($n = 4$), courses within the archives curriculum ($n = 2$), courses outside the archives curriculum ($n = 2$), outside partnerships ($n = 2$), shadowing opportunities ($n = 2$), and independent study ($n = 1$).

Finally, the survey asked whether the respondent’s institution planned to add any courses, requirements, or certifications in teaching with primary sources. Three respondents answered yes, indicating that their institutions had plans to expand course offerings to address this topic, with 1 respondent explicitly noting the institution’s awareness of the importance and value of teaching with primary sources. One respondent noted that while there has been talk at the institution of creating a certificate that would include teaching with primary sources, at this time there are no formal plans to develop the idea. However, the majority of respondents (67%) indicated that their institutions did not have any such plans, citing reasons such as the topic of teaching with primary sources

Responses to Question 4: Does your program offer any practical opportunities for students to practice instruction (shadowing, mock instruction, etc.)?

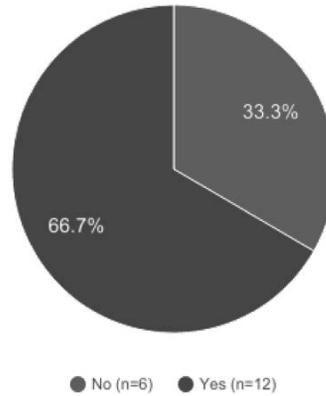


FIGURE 2. The fourth question, asking about practical opportunities for students

is currently covered by courses in other departments, that it does not fit within the scope of their program’s curriculum, or that it can be addressed through informal instruction like internships and practica, or volunteer experiences.

To analyze the open-ended survey questions (question 1, parts b and c of question 2, parts a and b of question 3, question 4, question 5, and question 6), we used inductive qualitative coding. Each question was coded by one author

and then codes were peer-reviewed by another author. After coding and review, a total of 29 codes were created to describe the content of these free response questions (see Appendix E). The method of inductive coding allowed key themes to be captured from the data as they emerged. The peer-review process ensured a higher level of interrater reliability.

One of the 29 codes was a “no response” code. This code was used if the respondent left the question blank, or if the respondent answered the first yes/no part of the question, but did not elaborate in the free response section. “No response” was by far the most frequent code, used 43 times. A “didn’t answer the question” code was also assigned to some responses. This, as opposed to the “no response” code, was used when the respondent provided a text answer, but the answer did not relate to the question posed. “Yes,” “no,” and “maybe” codes were used to describe the content of text-based answers. These are distinct from yes/no survey questions.

Some of the most frequent codes include “courses—within archives curriculum” (9), “courses—outside archives curriculum” (8), “individual instructors” (7), “outside partners” (6), and “no requirement” (6). These codes indicate an almost even split of respondents who described courses within and outside of the archives curriculum in their answers. The other top qualitative codes support the yes/no response trend that instruction, or teaching with primary sources, is not a required part of the archives curriculum, and it is up to individual instructors or outside partners to elect to cover these topics in a student’s education. By comparison, the code “standardized across the curriculum” was only used once, and the code “required” was used 3 times.

Responses to Question 5: Does your institution plan to add any courses, requirements, or certifications in teaching with primary sources in the future?

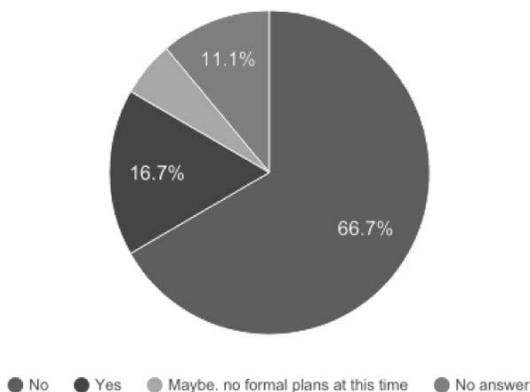


FIGURE 3. The fifth question, asking about plans to add courses

When respondents were asked how students gain practical skills in teaching through their graduate programs, the top coded skill was “prepare lesson plans” (5). “Internships” (4), “course work” (3), “capstone projects” (2), “shadowing” (2), and “independent study” (1) were all mentioned as ways in which students gain practical experience in instruction or teaching with primary sources. Again, most of these responses indicate optional experiences outside of the classroom rather than as a part of the structure or required curriculum.

In addition to the survey, we examined the course descriptions of 53 ALA-accredited archives program websites. Of those 53, 9 institutions offered some type of class that could plausibly include training in primary source instruction:

- Emporia State University
- Simmons College
- University at Albany, State University of New York
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of Maryland
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
- Western Washington University

Across these 9 programs, 13 courses were available. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign deserves recognition for offering 3 distinct classes aimed at archives and/or information literacy instruction. Course titles that include some aspect of teaching with primary sources include

- Introduction to Archives (Emporia State University)
- Archives and Cultural Heritage Outreach (Simmons College)
- Information Literacy Instruction: Theory and Techniques (University at Albany, State University of New York)
- Information Literacy Instruction: Theory and Technique (University of California, Los Angeles)
- Administration and Use of Archival Materials (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
- Instruction and Assistance Systems (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
- Advanced Information Literacy and Instruction (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
- Archival Principles, Practices, and Programs (University of Maryland)
- Information Literacy and Instruction (University of Oklahoma)
- Information Literacy Instruction (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee)
- Reference, Access and Outreach (Western Washington University)

The 13 courses fell into 2 general categories: archives coursework that includes a module on public programming and outreach, and academic library coursework focused on the theory and practice of information literacy instruction.

The information literacy instruction classes surveyed were listed as electives, while the archives courses that mentioned instruction or public programming were general introduction courses and therefore required for the archives concentration or emphasis.

Discussion

The results of our 2015–2016 survey and our review of available online course descriptions show that most archives graduate programs in the United States and Canada do not have concentrations or certifications that include teaching with primary sources as part of the curriculum. While some coursework about library instruction and information literacy exists, it is usually not required for archives-track students, and syllabi and assignments often vary by instructor. However, as archivists are increasingly required to teach as part of their job descriptions and teaching is gaining recognition as a core competency to the profession, some archives programs have added courses about teaching with archives to their curricula. The survey revealed four such courses, which were mentioned by respondents:

- Archival Outreach and Advocacy (Simmons College). Includes one session on teaching with primary sources. “Students work in groups to create two class instruction sessions.”
- Projects in Digital Archives (Pratt Institute). Includes a week devoted to “Archivist as Educator” where “students look at some methods for using primary sources to enhance history learning.”
- Reference, Access and Outreach (Western Washington University). Includes one session facilitated by outside professional staff on “a primary source analysis activity that simulates one component of [the library’s] instruction program.”
- Information Literacy Instruction (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee). Three-credit course on “Concepts and principles involved in teaching information literacy; emphasis on organizing and developing courses and individual sessions.”

If these courses are not required core archives courses, archivists-in-training may be able to seek out these skills by taking courses outside of the archives track. Respondents explained that courses in school media, academic librarianship, public history, museum studies, and schools of education cover

teaching with primary sources. This trend is not surprising, as the professional literature agrees that our librarian colleagues are far ahead of archivists in training graduate students to teach information literacy skills. With the lack of required instruction courses in archives programs, most opportunities for archives graduate students to learn how to teach with primary sources come from practical experience outside of coursework. As one survey respondent noted, “We offer students the opportunity to go out to classrooms in local schools with professional archivists who do this for the Special Collections and Archives Department. They work with the archivists to prepare lesson plans and hands on activities and then go out as a team to do it.”

The majority of respondents surveyed reported that their graduate programs are not interested in developing skills in teaching with primary sources. Our analysis of available online course descriptions also shows a lack of instruction in this area; however, it is difficult to tell from current online postings whether institutions have plans to restructure their curricula or add new courses. Some respondents noted that they would like to add courses in teaching with primary sources, but report constraints in their ability to do so. For example, one respondent explained that adding courses would impact retention: “We can’t add courses without affecting enrollment and lengthening the time it will take for our students to graduate. It is very difficult to increase course offerings and maintain enrollment,” while another respondent felt hemmed in by the number of credits available, stating that “You can only do so much within the context of a fixed curriculum with a finite number of credits.”

Conclusion

The combined methods of survey and course description analysis used in this study found few opportunities for future archivists to gain any pedagogical training, especially skills in teaching with primary sources. Most archives graduate programs do not have formal programs such as concentrations or certifications. In many graduate programs, syllabi or assignments often vary by instructor. We found evidence of consistent teaching with primary sources content at ten graduate programs, but these courses are rarely required for archives-track students.

While some graduate programs indicated plans for or at least an interest in adding coursework to develop these skills, very few graduate students have the opportunity to learn to teach with primary sources in their archives graduate programs. A self-directed student at certain schools would be able to seek out courses in other tracks or departments. At most schools, they would only be able to acquire these skills through practical experience such as practica or volunteer and employment opportunities.

Recommendations and Future Research

This study is just one aspect of the landscape of teaching with primary sources in the archives profession. Now that a list of United States and Canadian archival graduate programs has been compiled and surveyed once, this study could serve as a baseline for follow-up surveys with these programs. Beyond continuing to track archival graduate programs, it would be prudent to follow up this study with a survey of recent graduates and/or professionals at all stages of their careers to understand how often they are called upon to teach with primary sources and how well prepared they feel to teach with primary sources. In addition to self-reporting surveys, assessments of the effectiveness of teaching with primary sources—related graduate coursework, continuing education, and/or professional development opportunities should be conducted in the future.

Ideal education in teaching with primary sources should include training at several strategic points in an archivist's career. Archivists should be exposed to teaching with primary sources in their graduate programs so they may explore ideas and practice techniques under the guidance of an instructor over an extended period of time. Once archivists have launched their careers, cost-effective continuing education opportunities are essential to maintain skills and keep abreast of new learning theories and standards. Creating an environment in which archivists have access to all of these opportunities requires action by the Society of American Archivists, by graduate programs, and by the grassroots efforts of interested archivists.

Our first recommendation is for archival graduate programs in the United States and Canada to consider updating the curriculum to include teaching with primary sources as a core competency for archivists. Individual graduate programs should strive to include some form of required instruction or pedagogy content, whether in the form of class assignments or full courses. Rather than assuming students might seek out teaching experience through internships or other supplemental sources, the inclusion of teaching with primary sources in the curriculum will ensure archivists-in-training are exposed to skills they will likely need in their careers. It is also advisable to create elective courses, or units within courses, on teaching with primary sources. Elective courses do not bear the same burden as required courses and may be a way for individual graduate programs to judge interest and engagement among their particular cohort before completely revising the core curriculum. For archives graduate programs that already include some form of pedagogical training, it may make sense to develop a deeper concentration or certificate in teaching with primary sources.

Second, we call upon the Education Committee of the Society of American Archivists to address this professional need by updating the *Guidelines for a*

Graduate Programs in Archives Studies, where “Outreach, Instruction, and Advocacy” are currently grouped together as one component within “Knowledge of Archival Material and Functions.” While these three areas can be related, pedagogical theory and practice are different from outreach and advocacy. The inclusion of “instruction” in the guidelines is an important step forward, but there could still be more emphasis on how archives graduate programs train students to teach with primary sources.

There is a real need for archivists already in the field to be able to receive training in teaching with primary sources through continuing education. This is an important and viable path for those already in the field—particularly because, as previously discussed, many archivists who have already achieved a degree may not have been able to benefit from anything crossing the fields of instruction and archives. Likewise, another viable avenue for practicing archivists to gain knowledge on primary source instruction would be through professional development opportunities, such as workshops and sessions at conferences—whether at the national, regional, or state level. Learning how to “teach the teacher” with knowledge on just how archivists can connect with students and have them learn through primary sources can be achieved by already-practicing professionals, and, luckily, it need not entail taking on an additional degree (or associated debt).

While our survey revealed that learning to teach with primary sources is not currently a core component of archival graduate programs in North America, we also are aware of a community of archivists who are dedicated to teaching with primary sources, an increased number of TPS professional development opportunities, and an increased demand in the job market for archivists with teaching experience. Future research will show whether these trends lead to the creation of teaching with primary sources coursework within the archives graduate curriculum or whether practicing archivists must continue to seek postgraduate opportunities to hone their teaching skills.

Appendix A: The Survey

Survey: Teaching Archives Graduate Students to Teach with Primary Sources

Welcome! The Teaching with Primary Sources Committee of the Society of American Archivists's Reference, Access, and Outreach section is conducting a survey to understand how graduate schools prepare archivists to teach with primary sources. We ask archives program administrators and directors to complete this survey for their institution.

1. Please identify the school for which you are responding (Optional):

2. 1) Does your graduate program prepare students to teach with primary sources by offering instruction concentrations, certificates, or other specializations?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

3. If yes, please describe. Please provide links when available.

Skip to question 2.

4. 2) Does your graduate program prepare students to teach with primary sources by offering courses focused on instruction / pedagogy?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No *After the last question in this section, skip to question 11.*

5. If yes, please describe. Please provide links to course descriptions and/or online syllabi when available. You may also list specific instructors and their contact information.

6. 2a) What areas of library and information science do these courses focus on? (Please check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- Archives
 Special Collections
 Libraries (including school libraries)
 General library and information science
 Other: _____

7. 2b) Are any of these courses required for an archives concentration, certificate, or specialization?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

8. If yes, please indicate the required course(s) and the concentration/certificate/specialization:

9. 2c) Are any of these courses required for any other concentrations, certificates, or specializations?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

10. If yes, please indicate the required course(s) and the concentration/certificate/specialization:

11. 3) Do any of your program's archives-focused courses include units or assignments on teaching with primary sources?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No After the last question in this section, skip to question 16.

12. If yes, please describe. Please provide links to course descriptions and/or online syllabi when available.

13. 3a) Are any such courses required for students pursuing an archives concentration, certificate, or specialization?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

14. 3b) Who determines the inclusion of units or assignments about teaching with primary sources in archives-focused courses – individual instructors, or is it consistent across the curriculum?

Mark only one oval.

- Individual instructors
- Standardized across the curriculum

15. Any elaboration to your responses to 3a and/or 3b:

Downloaded from http://meridian.allenpress.com/american-archivist/article-pdf/81/1/188/2056277/0360-9081-81_1_188.pdf by guest on 03 October 2022

16. 4) Does your program offer any practical opportunities for students to practice instruction (shadowing, mock instruction, etc.)?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No After the last question in this section, skip to question 19.

17. If yes, please describe (e.g. shadowing, mock instruction, preparing tutorials using primary sources, creating lesson plans, creating traditional and/or online courses, evaluating student work, etc.):

18. 4a) Are such opportunities required for students pursuing an archives concentration, certificate, or specialization?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

19. 5) Does your institution plan to add any courses, requirements, or certifications in teaching with primary sources in the future?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

20. Why or why not?

21. 6) Is there anything else we should know about how your program prepares students to teach with primary sources?

Appendix B: Survey Distribution List

1. Auburn University
2. The Catholic University of America
3. Clarion University of Pennsylvania*
4. Clayton State University
5. Dominican University
6. Drexel University
7. East Tennessee State University
8. Emporia State University*
9. Indiana University Bloomington
10. Johns Hopkins University*
11. Kent State University
12. Long Island University
13. Louisiana State University
14. Loyola University Chicago
15. McGill University*
16. Middle Tennessee State University–Murfreesboro
17. New York University
18. North Carolina State University
19. Pratt Institute
20. Queens College, City University of New York
21. St. John's University
22. San José State University
23. Simmons College
24. Temple University
25. Université de Montréal
26. University of Alabama*
27. University at Albany, State University of New York
28. University of Arizona
29. University of British Columbia
30. University of California, Los Angeles
31. University of California, Riverside
32. University of Denver*
33. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*
34. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
35. University of Maryland
36. University of Massachusetts Boston
37. University of Michigan
38. University of North Texas*
39. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
40. University of Oklahoma
41. University of Pittsburgh
42. University of South Carolina
43. University of South Florida*
44. University of Southern Mississippi*
45. University of Texas at Austin
46. University of Tennessee*
47. University of Toronto*
48. University of Wisconsin–Madison
49. University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
50. Wayne State University
51. Western University (University of Western Ontario)*
52. Western Washington University
53. Wright State University

*Schools with an asterisk were sent the survey as part of the 2016 reissue. For more on this, please see the Survey Methodology section of the article.

Appendix C: Sample Email

Subject: Survey on Instruction Courses in your Graduate Program

Dear [Name],

As archivists are increasingly called upon to provide collections-based instruction, the [redacted] seeks evidence of how archives graduate students are being prepared to fulfill this important function.

This survey is intended to gather information about the ways your program prepares archivists to teach, including: certificates or specializations, courses dedicated to instruction/pedagogy, courses that include relevant units or assignments, or any other methods used to prepare archivists to teach with primary sources.

If someone else at your institution could better answer these questions, please respond to this email with your colleague's name and email so we may distribute the survey to him or her. Data gathered by this survey will be shared with the [redacted] and participating institutions. We hope that your institution will assist us in this effort.

Survey: Teaching Archives Graduate Students to Teach with Primary Sources

Sincerely,

Appendix D: Survey Respondents

The following schools responded to the survey:

1. anonymous
2. anonymous
3. anonymous
4. Kent State University
5. Louisiana State University
6. New York University
7. Pratt Institute
8. Queens College, City University of New York
9. Simmons College
10. University of Arizona
11. University of California, Los Angeles
12. University of Denver*
13. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*
14. University of Pittsburgh
15. University of Southern Mississippi*
16. University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
17. Western Washington University
18. Wright State University

*Schools with an asterisk responded to the survey as part of the 2016 reissue. For more on this, please see the Survey Methodology section of the article.

Appendix E: Qualitative Codes

Code number	Code	Number of Responses	Question number(s)	Notes
1	No response	43	Q2b, Q2c, Q3a, Q3b	Question was left blank, or the respondent answered yes/no, but didn't elaborate.
2	Didn't answer the question	4	Q1, Q6	Respondent wrote a text answer, but didn't answer the question.
3	Yes	5	Q3, Q5	
4	No	15	Q3, Q5, Q6	
5	Maybe	2	Q5	
6	Courses—within archives curriculum	9	Q2, Q3, Q4	
7	Courses—outside archives curriculum	8	Q2, Q4, Q5	
8	Library instruction course—not primary sources	2	Q2, Q2b	
9	Specific course	1	Q1	
10	Elective course—nonrequired	1	Q2b	
11	Individual instructors	7	Q3b	
12	Standardized across the curriculum	1	Q3b	
13	Difficult to fit in curriculum	3	Q5	
14	Valuable skill	1	Q5	
15	No concentration	1	Q1	
16	Outside partners	6	Q1, Q3, Q4	
17	Internships	4	Q1, Q3, Q4	
18	Prepare lesson plans	5	Q1, Q4	
19	Capstone projects	2	Q1, Q3	
20	Shadowing	2	Q4	
21	Independent study	1	Q4	
22	Course work	3	Q3	
23	TPS as outreach	1	Q1	
24	Public history	1	Q2c	
25	School library media	3	Q2c	
26	Required	3	Q3a	
27	No requirement	6	Q3a	
28	Informal encouragement of instruction	2	Q5	
29	Explanatory/contact for more info	4	Q6	

NOTES

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- ¹⁶ Society of American Archivists, "GPAS Curriculum."
- ¹⁷ Shan Sutton and Lorrie Knight, "Beyond the Reading Room: Integrating Primary and Secondary Sources in the Library Classroom," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 32, no. 3 (2006): 320–25, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2006.03.001>; Michelle McCoy, "The Manuscript as Question: Teaching Primary Sources in the Archives—The China Missions Project," *College & Research Libraries* 71, no. 1 (2010): 49–62; Barbara Rockenbach, "Archives, Undergraduates, and Inquiry-Based Learning: Case Studies from Yale University Library," *The American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 297–311; Anne Bahde, "The History Labs: Integrating Primary Source Literacy Skills into a History Survey Course," *Journal of Archival Organization* 11, no. 3–4 (2013): 175–204.
- ¹⁸ Peter Carini, "Information Literacy for Archives and Special Collections: Defining Outcomes," *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 16, no. 1 (2016): 193.
- ¹⁹ Elizabeth Yakel and Doris Malkmus, "Contextualizing Archival Literacy," in *Teaching with Primary Sources* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2016), 8.
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