

**George Mason University**  
**Department of History and Art History**

***History 690: Administration of Archives & Manuscripts***

**Spring, 2012-- Tuesdays, 7:20pm – 10:00pm**  
**Arlington Campus**

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**Course Description**

From catalog online:

*Administration of Archives & Manuscripts introduces principles and practices of managing records and administering archival and manuscript collections, public and private. Designed for graduate students with special interest in historical sources as well as for those specializing in applied history.*

Expanded:

This course provides an overview of both the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of the archives profession. It examines the basic functions that archivists, manuscript curators, and special collections administrators perform in acquiring, preserving, and making accessible primary source materials in various forms. Attention will be given to probing the distinctions and similarities between institutional records repositories and collecting programs. Emphasis will be given to the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technology for the safekeeping and transmission of recorded activity.

This will not, however, be a "how to" course, in any full sense. The entire spectrum of archival responsibilities and skills is much larger than can be covered in one semester. But more importantly, archives is also not a regimented craft. Doing it successfully requires developing a solid familiarity with the reasons archives exist and the role they play in advancing knowledge. Thus, we will be looking at least as much at the "why" of archives as the "how."

Toward that end, the class will consider and analyze the ethical framework that guides archival practice and will look closely at the relationship between archives and their many audiences and consumers. We will also examine the role that records, documents, images, audio-visual resources, and other "evidence" plays in public life and the manner in which this is perceived or interpreted. Students will be introduced to historical and contemporary issues that affect access to and preservation of recorded information and efforts by the archival community to address these. Finally, we will explore some of the ways that archives intersect with the process of social "remembering." How much does our understanding of the past – and the present – hinge upon the evidence we maintain and believe to be authentic?

## Goals

The overarching purpose of the class is to instill and reinforce an awareness of how archives relate to other things in one's life and work, be it historical research, the Web, libraries & museums, education & learning, government accountability & the rights of citizens, policy making & security, personal & societal memory, and more. In short, we will be keeping a focus on connections, not just collections. With that as a guiding framework, students should develop a solid understanding of:

- the history of archives and record keeping in the U.S. and internationally
- the primary functions archivists perform and ways these are applied in actual work environments (including common ethical and resource dilemmas)
- the variety and types of archival and manuscript repositories, in the physical and virtual worlds
- the evolution, character, and concerns of the archives profession... and especially how this is currently changing
- the transformative impact of digital technology in facilitating -- and often complicating -- the archival mission
- how archivists endeavor to make resources accessible – and how researchers can best exploit these opportunities
- how archives and the work of archivists shape the recorded memory of human society and its diverse cultural experiences

## Assignments / Grading

### A. Readings and Discussion 30%

Each week's session will focus on a designated topic, with class discussion comprising the main activity. Studying the assigned pieces for that day is imperative. Readings and/or media items for each week are identified as "required," "supplemental," or "resources;" students are urged to go beyond the required items. Prior to 6:00pm on Monday, students must submit / post on the class website at least two substantive questions stemming from the assigned readings for each week. The questions should reflect, as much as possible, a holistic, integrated perspective on the assigned texts, for example identifying points of comparison or contrast on related issues. The website also enables comments to be made on individual posts, and students may respond to each others' questions in this way. However, I am keenly aware that this is not an online course, so electronic response to questions is not an expectation. For some weeks, I will pose questions for students to consider, perhaps asking you put yourself in the role of heading up an archival program and discussing what you might do in a given scenario.

### B. Website Analysis Project 30%

This assignment will involve an investigation of archives in cyberspace and will serve to demonstrate students' understanding of some of the key functions and characteristics of archival

institutions covered in readings and discussions. Each student will choose three archives/special collection repositories online to study and monitor for several weeks as we consider some of the foundations of archival work. One of these must be an “institutional records” program and one must be from outside the United States.

The product/report for this assignment will be a set of screen captures/illustrations from the three sites, accompanied by analytical captions; PowerPoint might prove to be the easiest application for this purpose, but feel free to use what you prefer. The task will be to assess each site from the perspective of three essential audiences: researchers, donors, and professional colleagues. On week #9, each student will be required to make a very brief summary presentation (no more than 7 minutes) using selected illustrations from the report. Class sessions leading up to this will provide foundational knowledge for this analysis, and more detail on the assignment is provided on the class Website.

The following link provides entrée to an abundance of archival Websites, in the U.S. and abroad. Students should select their sites by week #2.

<http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html>

**C:            Research Paper *or* Practicum Report            40%**

Each student will complete **one** of the following major assignments:

- 1)            Research paper (15-20 pages (double spaced, + endnotes) exploring a particular aspect of archival history, methodology, use, or current concern. Students may choose their own topic of interest, in consultation with the instructor. The paper should include: a clear definition of the research topic/question and its significance; an overview of relevant literature, including an analysis of strengths and gaps; and interpretive observations or responses to questions posed. Topics are due by week #5.
- 2)            Practicum project, blog, and summary report. The purpose of this option is to enable students to receive hands-on experience in an archival/special collections institution and relate this to readings and class discussions. The practicum should be 40-50 hours in duration and must be arranged by the student, in consultation with the instructor. Projects often involve work on a specific set of archival sources but in some cases might include a range of activity undertaken at the host repository. On week #1, the instructor will present a list of area institutions that have agreed to host students, along with possible projects they have identified; students may seek arrangements with other institutions, with instructor approval. The report should include: a description of the host institution/program; an explanation of the work undertaken; and an assessment of the experience in relationship to prescribed methods or approaches encountered in class readings and discussions. Students choosing this option should notify the instructor by week #3; arrangements with hosts should be made by week #4.

On the last day of class (May 1), students will present oral summaries of their research papers or project reports. Final papers/reports are due on May 10 (Finals Week). There will be no final exam.

Papers and reports will be graded on the basis of clarity of expression, completeness of comprehension, and extent of comparative/analytical perspective. In the case of research papers, thoroughness of relevant literature examined will also be important. In the case of practicum projects, the instructor will request brief assessments from host institution supervisors/mentors, which will also be factored into grading.

## Readings

Required and supplemental readings are noted for each week below. The following texts will supply several of the readings for class sessions. Most other items are available electronically as indicated; the instructor will provide reserve copies for anything not in electronic form.

Millar, Laura A., *Archives: Principles and Practices*, (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2010).

Theimer, Kate (ed.), *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections Between Archives and our Users*, (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011).

(These volumes should be available through the GMU bookstore; check with the publishers and online services as well.)

At an early point in the semester, students should go through the following online resource: Cornell University, "[Moving Theory in to Practice: A Digital Imaging Tutorial](#)," 2002/03 This is especially important for those doing practica involving scanning or coping with digital sources

Also, students will be required to monitor or subscribe to the [Archives & Archivists Listserv](#). To subscribe, you will need to create a user profile with the Society of American Archivists – you do not need to join the organization. You also do not need to subscribe to view the list, but doing so is convenient – I recommend using the “digest” mode. Each week, students will be assigned to highlight briefly the issue(s) that generated most conversation during the past week. Several weeks into the course, we will also be exploring and discussing several of the blog sites devoted to archives and records, again with assigned monitors/reporters.

Finally, we will occasionally be reading current news items for class discussion and analysis. In many cases, these will yield questions we can’t answer that week, and assignments may be made to track down further information to complete the picture the following week.

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### Week 1 January 24

**Introduction** (The following are **not required** reading prior to the first class but may assist in providing pre-orientation. Instructor’s presentation will draw significantly from them. They’re also helpful resources in general.)

Society of American Archivists (SAA), "[Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies](#)

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, "[Archivists, Curators, and Museum Technicians](#)"

SAA, "[A Census: Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the United States](#)"

SAA, "[A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology](#)"

SAA, "[A Code of Ethics for Archivists](#)"

Association of College & Research Libraries, "[Competencies for Special Collections Professionals](#)"

Jackie Dooley, "[Taking Our Pulse: The OCLC Research Survey of Special Collections and Archives](#)," OCLC Research Group, 2010

## **Week 2     January 31**

### ***Archives & Archivists: The History, Culture, and Evolution of Recordkeeping***

#### Required:

"[Henry Rollins: The Column! Henry Speaks On His Consciousness-Expanding Trip to the Library of Congress With Ian MacKaye](#)," *LA Weekly Blogs* (September 29, 2011).

Millar, *Archives: Principles & Practices*, pp. 1-21.

James O'Toole & Richard Cox, *Understanding Archives & Manuscripts*, Chapter 2, "The History of Archives and the Archives Profession," pp.45-86.

Mark Greene, "[The Power of Archives: Archivists' Values and Value in the Postmodern Age](#)," *American Archivist*, 72:1, Spring/Summer, 2009, pp.17-41.

Diane Zorich, Gunter Weibel, & Ricky Erway, "[Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives, and Museums](#)," OCLC Research, 2008 (read up to p.35).

#### Supplemental:

Randall C. Jimerson, "Weaving the Life of our Ancestors," *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009), pp. 24-75.

John Fleckner, "[Dear Mary Jane: Some Reflections on Being an Archivist](#)," *American Archivist*, Vol. 54, Winter 1991

Luke J. Gilliland-Swetland, "[The Provenance of a Profession: The Permanence of the Public Archives and Historical Manuscripts Traditions in American Archival History](#)," *American Archivist*, Vol. 54, Spring, 1991.

## **Week 3     February 7 (7:20pm)**

***How Things Get into Archives: Collection Development, Acquisition, & Appraisal***  
**\*\*Meet at GMU Special Collections & Archives Dept., C-201 Fenwick Library, Fairfax Campus\*\***

Guest Presenter, Yvonne Carignan, Director

Required:

Millar, *Archives: Principles & Practices*, pp. 115-43

Timothy Ericson, "[At the Rim of Creative Dissatisfaction](#)," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92)

T. R. Schellenberg, "[The Appraisal of Modern Records](#)," (originally published as National Archives Bulletin 8, 1956)

[Why I'm assigning something published before I was born: because every archives student forever must read at least one thing by Schellenberg....]

Mark Greene. "[The Existential Archivist: Use as a Measure of 'Better' Appraisal](#)," unpublished address, Society of American Archivists, 1999

Deborah Kaplan, "The Afterlife of an Archive," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 26, 2010

Supplemental:

James O'Toole, "[On the Idea of Uniqueness](#)," *American Archivist*, Vol. 57, Fall 1994

National Archives & Records Administration, "[Frequently Asked Questions about Records Management](#)"

(Not necessary to follow every link, but read enough to understand the meaning and purpose of records management, its relationship to archives, and how it operates in federal government)

**Week 4 February 14**

***How Things Get into Archives: Collection Development, Acquisition, & Appraisal (Part II)***

Required:

Sue McKemmish, "[Evidence of Me](#)," *Archives and Manuscripts*, 24 (1) 1996.

Jennifer Snowden Johnson, "[Our Archives, Our Selves: Documentation Strategy and the Re-Appraisal of Professional Identity](#)," *American Archivist* 71, (Spring/Summer 2008): 190-202.

Terry Eastwood, "[Digital Appraisal: Variations on a Theme](#)," keynote address for conference on Appraisal in the Digital World,

Rome Italy, 15-16 November 2007

Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, "The Turn Away from Historical Authority in the Archives," *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.32-49.

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.334-35.

Supplemental:

Frank Boles, "Just a Bunch of Bigots: A Case Study in the Acquisition of Controversial Material," *Archival Issues: (Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference)* 19.1 (1994): 53-65

Julie Herrada, "Letters to the Unabomber: A Case Study and Some Reflections." *Archival Issues* 28.1 (2003-2004): 35-46

**Week 5 February 21**

***The Archivist's Approach to Getting Things in Order: Arrangement & Description***

Required:

Millar, *Archives: Principles & Practices*, pp. 97-103 and 145-81.

Pam Hackbart-Dean and Christine De Catanzaro, "[The Strongest Link: The Management and Processing of Archival Collections](#)," *Archival Issues* 27.2 (2002): 125-136.

Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner, "[More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing](#)" *American Archivist*, 68 Fall/Winter, 2005

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.102-127.

"[Linked Open Data: A Beckoning Paradise](#)," blog post by Bill LeFurgy, The Signal: Digital Preservation, June 22, 2011.

Supplemental:

Daniel Pitti, "[Encoded Archival Description: An Introduction and Overview](#)," D-Lib Magazine, vol. 5, no. 11, November, 1999.

Sonia Yaco, [It's Complicated: Barriers to EAD Implementation](#), *American Archivist*, 71:2, Fall/Winter 2008, 456-75.

Association of Research Libraries, “[Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers: Creating Access to Unprocessed Special Collections Materials in North America’s Research Libraries](#),” June, 2003.

Christopher Prom, “[Description in US College and University Archives: Too Much of a Good Thing?](#)”

*Proceedings of the International Council of Archives/Section on University and Research Institution*, September, 2006.

#### Resources:

[Standards at the Library of Congress](#)

[Encoded Archival Description](#) (EAD Version 2002 Official Site)

[EAD Technology Reports](#) – compilation of information on OASIS (an Online Resource for Markup Language Technologies)

Victoria Walch, Marion Matters, [Standards for Archival Description, A Handbook](#), SAA, 1994

The following are crucial tools for collection management and online presentation of finding aids:

[Archivist's Toolkit](#)

[Archon](#)

They are currently working on merging to develop [ArchivesSpace](#)

Sample Processing blogs:

Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries: [Hidden Collections Processing Project](#)

Independence Seaport Museum: [Seamen's Church Institute Archives Processing Project Blog](#)

Newberry Library: ["Everywhere West" Processing Project](#)

**Week 6                  February 28**

***Dishing up the Goods & Spreading the News: Reference, Access, and Outreach***

#### Required:

Kathleen Marquis, “Not Dragons at the Gate, but Research Partner,” in Francis Blouin & William Rosenberg, *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory* pp. 36-42

Helen Tibbo, "[Learning to Love Our Users: A Challenge to the Profession and a Model for Practice](#)," paper delivered at Midwest Archives Conference, May, 2002.



Timothy L. Ericson "[Preoccupied With Our Own Gardens: Outreach and Archivists](#)," *Archivaria* 31 Winter 1990-91

Merrilee Proffitt and Jennifer Shaffner, [The Impact of Digitizing Special Collections on Teaching and Scholarship: Reflections on a Symposium about Digitization and the Humanities](#), OCLC Programs and Services, 2008.

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.42-53; 139-47; and 180-90.

#### Resources:

ACRL/SAA [Joint Statement on Access to Research Materials in Archives and Special Collections Libraries](#)

National Archives & Records Administration, "[Our Documents](#)" and "[Teaching with Documents](#)"

Library of Congress, "[American Memory](#)"

"[The Fictional World of Archives](#)"

Good examples of using archival methods as a means of outreach:

Nebraska Historical Society, et al, "[Saving Your Treasures](#)"

Minnesota Historical Society, "[Preserve Your Family Treasures](#)"

#### **Week 7                      March 6**

#### ***Keeping Things Safe and Sound: Preservation, Conservation & Reformatting***

#### Required:

Millar, *Archives: Principles & Practices*, pp. 73-96.

James O'Toole, "On the Idea of Permanence," *American Archivist* 52 (Winter 1989), pp. 10-25.

[Digital Preservation: Why Should Institutions Care About it, and What Can They do Today? A Practical Approach and Call to Action](#), Ex Libris Ltd., 2008.

[An Interview with Helen Tibbo](#) (YouTube video, UNC - Chapel Hill, Oct. 12, 2007)

Ricky Erway and Jennifer Schaffner, "[Shifting Gears: Gearing up to Get into the Flow](#)," OCLC Programs and Services, 2007

#### Supplemental:

Heritage Preservation, *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections*, Chapter 4 "[Condition of Collections](#)," 1995

Heritage Health Index Powerpoint [Download](#)

Oya Rieger, "[Preservation in the Age of Large Scale Digitization: A White Paper](#)," Council on Library and Information Resources, 2008

#### Resources:

Northeast Document Conservation Center, [Preservation Leaflets](#)

NARA, "[Preservation and Archives Professionals](#),"  
(Lots of practical guidance and standards for preservation and conservation work)

Library of Congress, "[Caring for Your Collections](#),"

Council of Library and Information Resources, [Library Preservation and Conservation: A Tutorial](#), 2003.

Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation, [Conservation Online \(COOL\)](#)

Council of State Archives, "[Emergency Preparedness Initiative](#)" (with links to several publications for and about government records archivists, including the recent report "Safeguarding a Nation's Identity")

**Week 8                      March 13 NO CLASS - Possible tour (optional) to NARA or LC  
Preservation Labs**

**Week 9                      March 20                      \*\* Student Website analysis "lightning round"  
presentations\*\***

**Week 10                      March 27**

***Open Access, yes, but...: Copyright, Privacy, and Archival Ethics***

**\*\*Class will convene at Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History -- early start time: 7:00pm\*\***

Guest presenter, John Fleckner, Director Emeritus and Past-President, SAA

#### Required:

Millar, *Archives: Principles & Practices*, pp. 45-63.

Marybeth Gaudette, "Playing Fair with the Right to Privacy" *Archival Issues*, 28:1 (2004); 21-34.

Maggie Dickson, "Due Diligence, Futile Effort: Copyright and the Digitization of the Thomas E. Watson Papers," *American Archivist*, 73:2, Fall/Winter, 2010, pp.626-36

Selected case studies....

Resources:

SAA's [Code of Ethics for Archivists](#)

[U.S. Copyright Office Website](#) (basics, reports, studies, etc.)

Peter Hirtle, "[Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the U.S.](#)"

Peter B. Hirtle, Emily Hudson, Andrew T. Kenyon, *Copyright and Cultural Institutions: Guidelines for Digitization for U.S. Libraries, Archives, and Museums*, (Ithaka, NY: Cornell University Library, 2009).

**Week 11                  April 3**

***Archives Electrified: Capturing and Managing Born-Digital Primary Sources***

Required:

Blouin & Rosenberg, "Archival Authorities and New Technologies," *Processing the Past*, pp.50-62

Richard J. Cox, "[The Academic Archives of the Future](#)," *EDUCAUSE Review*, March/April, 2008 (2 pages)

Peter Hirtle, "[Archival Authenticity in a Digital Age](#)," *Authenticity in a Digital Environment*, Council on Library & Information Resources, 2000.

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.75-101

Tyler Walters and Katherine Skinner, [New Roles for New Times: Digital Curation for Preservation](#), March, 2011 (read through p.30). Alternatively, listen to [Webcast](#) from April 27, 2011.

Resources:

[InterPARES2](#), (International research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

National Information Standards Organization (NISO), "[A Framework of Guidance for Building Good Digital Collections](#)," 3rd edition, 2007

Susan Davis and Richard Pearce Moses, "New Skills for a Digital Era," 2007 ([Proceedings](#)) ([PowePoint presentation](#))

**Early April: \*\*Possible Tour (optional) – Archives of the International Monetary Fund\*\***

**Week 12                      April 10**

***A Many Splendored Thing: Photographs, Audiovisual, and other Non-Textual Archives***

Guest Presenter, Laurie Baty, Consultant

Required:

Joan Schwartz, "Records of Simple Truth and Precision," in Francis Blouin & William Rosenberg, *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory* pp. 61-83

Paul Conway, "Modes of Seeing: Digitized Photographic Archives and the Experienced User," *American Archivist*, 73:2, Fall/Winter, 2010, pp. 425-62.

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.22-32

National Recording Preservation Board, Library of Congress, "[The State of Recorded Sound Preservation in the United States: A National Legacy at Risk in the Digital Age](#)," (Council on Library and Information Resources, CLIR Reports: August, 2010). Read Introduction & Summary, pp. 1-8 and Appendix C, "Obstacles to Access and Preservation of Recorded Sound," pp. 156-64.

Supplemental:

Michael Buckland,. (1997) "[What is a Document?](#)" *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 48 (9), pp. 804-809

Resources:

SAA Visual Materials Section, [Views](#) (newsletter)

Visual Resources Association, "[Resources](#)" page

The Association of Recorded Sound Collections, [ARSC Newsletter](#)

The Association of Moving Image Archivists, "[Guidelines, Manuals, Q & A's, and Fact Sheets](#),"

Sound Reproduction R & D <http://irene.jbl.gov/>Page – IRENE Project

[Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and their Images](#), "CCO Selections"

## **Week 13 April 17**

### ***Communities of Records – The Social Impact of Archives in the U.S. and Beyond***

#### Required:

Jeannette A. Bastian, "In a 'House of Memory': Discovering the Provenance of Place," *Archival Issues* 28:1 (2003-2004): pp. 9-20.

Kimberly Christen, "Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation," *American Archivist*, 74:1, Spring/Summer, 2011, pp.185-210.

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.274-303.

Randall Jimerson, "[Embracing the Power of Archives](#)," *American Archivist*, 69:1, Spring/Summer, 2002, pp. 19-32

#### Supplemental:

David Lowenthal, "Archives, Heritage, and History," in Blouin & Rosenberg, *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory*, pp. 193-206

Joel Wurl, "Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience." *Archival Issues*, 29:1 (2005) pp. 65-76.

First Archivists Circle, "[Protocols for Native American Archival Materials](#)," April, 2007.

## **Week 14 April 24**

### ***Connecting the Dots: Program Leadership and Professional Development in the Age of Information***

Guest Presenter, Tom Connors, Teamsters Labor Archivist, George Washington University

#### Required:

George Mariz, Donna E. McCrea, Larry J. Hackman, Tony Kurtz, and Randall C. Jimerson, "Leadership Skills for Archivists," *American Archivist*, 74:1, Spring/Summer, 2011, pp.102-122

Max J. Evans, "[Archives of the People, by the People, for the People](#)," *American Archivist*, 70:2, Fall/Winter, 2007, pp. 387-400

Jennifer Schaffner, Francine Snyder, and Shannon Supple, [Scan and Deliver: Managing User-initiated Digitization in Special Collections and Archives](#), (OCLC Research Services, 2011)

Theimer, *A Different Kind of Web*, pp.304-33.

#### Supplemental::

Karin Wittenborg, "[Rocking the Boat](#)," in *Reflecting on Leadership*, (Council on Library and Information Resources, CLIR Reports, December, 2003), pp. 1-15

John Roberts, "Practice Makes Perfect, Theory Makes Theorists,"  
and,

Terry Eastwood, "What is Archival Theory and Why is it Important," *Archivaria* 37, 1994 ([A debate on the validity and importance of "theory" in archival work](#))

**Week 15                      May 1**

**Oral presentations of preliminary research papers and practicum reports**

**Week 16                      NO CLASS -- final papers/reports due on Friday, May 11**