Milestone, Not Millstone: Archivists Teaching First-Year Seminars

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ABSTRACT

The first year of college is a milestone in students' lives. Whether attending a four-year, two-year, public, or private school, many students are challenged socially, economically, and academically. Beyond the freshman year, retention rates are disappointing: one-third of new students seriously consider leaving college during their first term, and, ultimately, only half of the students who start college complete a degree.[1] To ease the transition, many first-year college students are now required to take a course frequently titled "First-Year Seminar" to orient them to the university and learn college-level academic expectations. The University of Wyoming (UW) added the First-Year Seminar (FYS) to its freshmen curriculum in fall 2015. The UW American Heritage Center (AHC) taught a FYS course in-house. In this case study, the author examines what it takes to prepare and teach a FYS based on archival materials, as well as the broader implications for archives in teaching such a course.

KEY WORDS

Primary source instruction, Teaching first-year college students, Archivists' educational roles, Critical thinking

Introducing the Case

Educating Today's First-Year College Students

Research and theory on the cognitive and psychological development of college students strongly suggest that many first-year students are still struggling to achieve the intellectual maturity to make well-reasoned educational and occupational decisions. To some, multiple viewpoints, diversity of opinions, and different theoretical perspectives may be less enlightening than bothersome or confusing. First-Year Seminar (FYS) researcher Joe Cuseo explained that it is not until the sophomore year that students begin to appreciate relativistic thinking; that is, the multiple factors and perspectives needed to understand an issue, phenomenon, or decision.[2]

Adding to these developmental issues are generational complexities. In their 2012 book, *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, educators Arthur Levine and Diane R. Dean described the current peer group:

> This is a generation [of college students] that does feel entitled, expect approbation, have weak basic skills and large knowledge gaps, confuse effort with quality, multitask, follow rules, and blur the boundaries between their social and work lives. They are college graduates who want balance between their jobs and personal lives, want relationships with their employers, want to be listened to and do not want to fail, which helps to explain why they are rule followers, deal poorly with ambiguity, and seek parental intervention.[3]

Countering this rather pessimistic characterization, they also found that these young students are natives in a flowering of the digital age, are more comfortable with diversity in an increasingly multicultural society, and are experienced networkers in an age when boundaries are breaking and teamwork is highly important. They are accustomed to change—even demand change—in times when the pace of change is a constant. Even so, Levine and Dean stressed that the literacy skills of students as well as their comfort and competence in dealing with diversity and globalization will have to grow, as will their skills to translate their demand for change into the ability to influence that change.[4]

This generation's increased comfort with diversity may be due to variability in the student population itself. Raechele L. Pope, Teresa A. Miklitsch, and Matthew J. Weigand pointed out that the racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation of college students is more diverse today than it was in the early 1980s. In various studies, they found that, as of 2003, female students comprise more than 56 percent of U.S. student population and that the percentage of Hispanic and Asian undergraduates is growing. They also noted that the increasing number of international students, representing a myriad of cultures, adds to the growing diversity of campus populations.[5]

The University of Wyoming (UW) has brought campus diversity and multiculturalism into sharper focus, most recently through the establishment of a chief diversity officer position in university administration. Diversity is also a consideration in the language used for recruiting students and for hiring staff and faculty. In turn, the UW American Heritage Center (AHC), the university's repository of archives and rare books, emphasizes multiculturalism in a number of ways: spotlighting documentation of underrepresented communities, stressing internationality in core collecting strengths such as economic geology,[6] and promoting the relatively new foci of collecting within the themes of "Asia through American Eyes" (based on a course by the same title by a UW Department of History faculty member) and "Out West in the Rockies," which illuminates the history and culture of LGBTQ communities in the greater narrative of American western history. Additionally, the international scope of the AHC's collections has attracted scholars from around the globe to Laramie, Wyoming, to conduct research. The multicultural aspect of the AHC's collections greatly assisted our FYS to engage a wide variety of student interests.

Defining the First-Year Seminar

How did the idea of a first-year seminar in U.S. college curricula begin? Elsie Watts, in a 1999 dissertation about the origins of the freshmen experience course, suggested that the class was an administrative response to student unrest at the University of South Carolina (USC) during the late 1960s. In 1972, USC president Thomas F. Jones established "University 101," a course designed to "build trust, understanding, and open lines of communication between students, faculty, staff, and administrators."[7] The course was intended to encourage students' sense that the university responded to their concerns. There were expectations that students would, as a result, be more satisfied with their college experience.[8] University 101 survived into the administration of John N. Gardner because student satisfaction did improve, with a resulting increase in retention. Retention thereafter became University 101's institutional justification.[9] Gardner successfully promoted the program to USC constituents, and, by 1982, interest in the course spread outward to educators, administrators, and student affairs professionals in the United States and Canada. By 1990, most universities in the United States had established variations of University 101, many using textbooks by Gardner and his associates.[10]

University 101 courses covered many topics: library and study skills; adjusting to university life; dealing with sex, drugs, and alcohol; personal values; and career advising.[11] Over the years, however, many universities transitioned their FYS programs along more academic paths. Raymond Murphy, who published one of the most influential taxonomies of first-year seminars in the

Journal of the Freshman Year Experience,[12] defined the academic content seminar thus:

> This model differs [from the U101 seminar] primarily because of the emphasis given intellectual content. The great books of literature or current social issues are often the medium of course content. Objectives generally center around the improvement of communication skills, especially the development of critical thinking.[13]

This model is akin to inquiry-based learning described by Julia Hendry in her 2007 *American Archivist* article about archival opportunities in K–12 education. She defined *inquiry-based learning* as "an approach to teaching that emphasizes the process of discovery on the part of the student, rather than the straightforward transition of knowledge from teacher to student." Furthermore, she explained that the approach is "student driven and focuses on asking good questions, rather than finding definitive answers. It encourages students to consider multiple perspectives, and most importantly, to think critically about the subject at hand."[14] Proponents of inquiry-based learning cite its advantages: building cognitive frameworks, developing the scholarly habit of questioning, and evaluating and assessing the now vast quantities of information in the present-day world—and then taking these skills beyond the classroom into future careers in the economic and civic marketplace.[15]

Since the publication of Raymond Murphy's article in 1989, the academic content seminar based on a special theme has become differentiated from the seminar with common content across sections. The theme-based approach allows each instructor to develop a seminar around his or her particular teaching and research interests. This model allows for concentrated engagement on a specific subject and encourages students to participate in the instructor's research community.[16] Murphy's model is the type of FYS introduced at UW in 2015.

The University of Wyoming's First-Year Seminar

The University of Wyoming is a land-grant university located in Laramie, Wyoming, and is the only four-year institution of learning in the state. The university offers 190 undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs and has seven colleges: agriculture and natural resources, arts and sciences, business, education, engineering and applied science, health sciences, and law. UW has about 14,000 enrollees, around 10,000 of whom are undergraduates. The university draws students from throughout the United States and from more than ninety countries. The average class size is about thirty students.

At UW, the FYS is designed to be a student-centered class of no more than twenty-four enrollees. Its overall objective is to help students successfully

FIGURE 1. First-Year Seminar students poring over archival documents to be incorporated into their final projects, October 2015

develop the analytical and creative skills needed to earn a baccalaureate degree. Because public institutions of higher education face increasing demands for accountability, especially for demonstrating their impact on learners, a traditional lecture format is discouraged in teaching these classes.

UW students enroll in a FYS on a first-come, first-served basis; they may get the FYS of their choice, or they may have to take what is available by the time they register. Course types vary from discipline-specific, such as in the fields of engineering and nursing, to thematic, for instance, "The Anthropology of Monsters," in which students study the psychological and symbolic dimensions of monster beliefs in different cultures.

The American Heritage Center Encounters the First-Year Seminar

The American Heritage Center is a public archives on the campus of the University of Wyoming. Since its establishment in 1945, the AHC has accrued nearly 70,000 cubic feet of historically important materials, becoming one of the largest nongovernment archives in the United States. Its collections focus on Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West with a select handful of national topics related to environment and conservation, economic geology, transportation, journalism, military history, and the popular entertainment industry. It

houses the archives of the university and is also home to UW's rare book collection, the Toppan Library.

The AHC has long served both students and instructors, incorporating former AHC director Mark Greene's observation that "[a]dvancing the use of archival records in [university] curriculum should be considered an important part of, rather than an alternative to, the 'administrative' duties of the archivist."[17] Based in part on this emphasis, the AHC won the Society of American Archivists' Distinguished Service Award in 2010, recognizing that the institution provides "outstanding service to its public and has made an exemplary contribution to the archives profession."[18] Outreach and service to undergraduates are mentioned no less than nine times in the last AHC strategic plan.

For the past two decades, the AHC's Reference Department has been a buzzing center of bibliographic instruction, topic lectures, on- and off-site reference services, and course development assistance for UW and community college faculty and undergraduates in a variety of disciplines, such as history, American studies, creative writing, journalism, and political science. Primary source education for precollege students has also been emphasized. The AHC houses the Wyoming History Day program and hosts its annual competition, an all-hands-on-deck time at the AHC when faculty and staff act as co-coordinators and judges. With the help of the reference staff, middle and high school students from around the state delve into the institution's collections for their History Day projects to abide by the requirement for primary source materials.

Initially, the AHC was interested in the FYS program to encourage instructors to incorporate primary sources into their courses; however, the university's FYS program coordinators encouraged the AHC to consider teaching its own FYS as well. Teaching a course based on archival materials lit a fire under some members of the AHC faculty. Primary sources help engage students directly with topics, promote critical thinking skills, and construct knowledge. The prospect of helping first-year students at UW develop research and critical thinking skills in a full-semester course was exciting. And, it fit well with the AHC's mission to support undergraduate learning through literacy education.

At the time of the FYS, the AHC had eleven faculty members distributed among departments including reference, processing, digital programs, university archives, administration, and the rare book library. Each of the faculty provides on-demand subject and archival-related lectures to UW and community college classes, but only two members of the faculty regularly taught full-semester UW courses on the topics of book history, public history, and research methodology (and they voluntarily agreed to teach these classes because AHC archivists are not "teaching" faculty nor do they earn the salaries of teaching faculty). As these two AHC faculty members already had classes scheduled for the fall semester

2015, it would be up to less experienced classroom instructors at the AHC to take up the reins for the creation and implementation of the AHC's FYS.

Literature Review

The majority of library literature on instruction to first-year college students revolves around two themes: librarians who are lead instructors for their own sections of FYS courses and, more commonly, librarians who are guest lecturers for a FYS.[19] A 2001 survey of 368 public and private four-year colleges and universities found that the majority (86 percent) of the first-year experience courses had a library component, although the survey authors were disappointed that only one or two hours of the curriculum were devoted to library instruction.[20] Nonetheless, their survey pointed out how campus libraries are seen as an integral part of the orientation of incoming students.

When it comes to teaching full-semester first-year experience courses, librarians provide some remarkably candid perspectives. A 1998 *References Services Review* piece by Sarah Blakeslee offers a realistic and humorous account of her adventures teaching such a course in 1997. As Blakeslee described, "Two areas where my lack of teaching experience led to problems were in the amount of preparation time I budgeted to teach the course and in my estimation of student motivation and behavior."[21] She honestly summed up her experience:

> When you are already working a 40-hour work week, either teaching a class becomes an additional half-time job, or your library duties suffer. You need to really love what you're doing, and hope that your boss and your colleagues are supportive of how important a class of this kind is to the whole mission of the library because inevitably the class will take precedence over the less visible demands of the library.[22]

She also concluded that "too often we tend to 'send' students off to use resources. My teaching experience has proven to me that this is overwhelming to the majority of students who desperately need to be walked through how to use new resources."[23] In 2005, Virginia Tech librarians Nicole Auer and Ellen Krupar published an article about their own experiences teaching and facilitating first-year seminars at their university. As with Blakeslee's course, their efforts were concentrated on databases and search strategies within them. And, like Blakeslee, one of the lessons learned was that teaching the FYS took longer than they imagined.[24] Nevertheless, Auer and Krupar valued their experience, believing that teaching helped them feel a sense of community with teaching faculty at their university.[25] They identified with Kimberly Donnelly's *Computers in Libraries* article, which states "that librarians at her institution who taught a for-credit information literacy course felt that their experience made them feel

'equal with other faculty' and that they 'now understand what it means to teach a course: class preparation, revising, grading, and dealing with students.'"[26]

In 2000, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) released the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, which described five standards and numerous performance indicators considered best practices for the implementation and assessment of postsecondary information literacy programs. The standards define the information-literate student as being someone who can determine the nature and extent of information needed, the ability to access information effectively and efficiently, and the aptitude to critically evaluate information, incorporate select information into his or her knowledge base, and use the information for a specific purpose. Additionally, the student would understand how to use information ethically and legally.[27] These standards assisted information literacy instructors for years, but, after a review conducted between 2011 and 2012, an ACRL-appointed task force found that the standards needed to be reworked to reflect a more global higher education and learning environment where students need to know multiple literacies, such as transliteracy, media literacy, digital literacy. A shift was required from information literacy to the more multifaceted concept of information fluency.[28] Information fluency includes information literacy along with two other important skills: technology literacy and critical thinking.

In 2016, the ACRL board of directors rescinded the standards and adopted a more flexible approach that allows for a "richer, more complex set of core ideas." The resulting *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* creates a cluster of six interconnected core concepts with adaptable options for implementation rather than a set of standards. Reflecting on the need to instruct on information fluency, the *Framework* scaffolds the learner through a progression that allows him or her to reflectively discover information, understand how information is produced and valued, and use information in creating new knowledge while participating ethically in communities of learning. Additionally, students participate actively in the flow of information as content creators and curators.[29] The more flexible *Framework* assists in answering criticism such as that from Yale University's former director of Undergraduate and Library Research Education, Barbara Rockenbach, who found that librarians tended to "shoehorn" strictures of the Information Literacy Competency Standards into a course instead of suggesting creative collaborations.[30] The *Framework*'s adaptability offers opportunities for FYS instructors because, rather than promoting a linear set of skills and search techniques, it provides threshold concepts, which are those ideas in *any* discipline that are key portals to ways of thinking and practicing in that discipline.

Archival Literature and Undergraduates

Several archival journal articles examine undergraduate instruction, as observed by Marcus Robyns in his 2001 article regarding critical thinking in historical research methods instruction.[31] Peter Carini outlined literature on "archivist as educator" up to 2009 with the critique that ". . . the literature, beyond the 'how we do it in our shop' style of article, remains sparse."[32] In addition, Magia Krause provided a literature review and echoed the criticisms of Robyns and Carini when she stated: "[T]he archival literature has explored the topic of the educational role of archivists over the last three decades, albeit superficially."[33] For example, in a 2010 *American Archivist* article, Krause commented that studies conducted by Wendy Duff and Joan Cherry and by Xiaomu Zhou offer important first steps in assessing the impact of archival instruction on undergraduate students because they assess feedback about the process, but their results are limited by the fact they reveal little about what students actually learned.[34]

In her own research about how archivists perceive their educational roles, Krause found three major themes: archivists believe their roles are to provide knowledge of primary sources and collections, to instill navigation skills, and to contribute to the information literacy programs at their home institutions. Similarly, the AHC instructors felt those roles to be their main responsibilities with in-house FYS and in facilitating other FYS instructors' experiences.[35] Instructing and/or facilitating a FYS have not yet been addressed in-depth within archival literature. Krause touched on FYS programs in terms of including several participants in her study published in *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* who either taught or were heavily involved in FYS instruction, but she did not provide details of their experiences.[36]

Orientation sessions are the typical way that archivists interact with undergraduates and their instructors. Duff and Cherry provided a literature review regarding archival orientations in a 2008 *American Archivist* article[37] and offered findings from a study on orientation sessions given at Yale University Library Manuscripts and Archives. The study investigated students' levels of confidence in finding archival material and their subsequent use of archival materials. Comparing pre-orientation and end-of-term questionnaires, they found that students self-reported a notable increase of confidence in their ability to find what they needed, as well as a slight increase in use of archives. But some students also commented on weaknesses in the orientations, such as a lack of sufficient information on access procedures. They also requested a hands-on component for access instruction. Duff and Cherry concluded that a positive impact from archival orientation sessions was noticeable, but the challenge remains: how do we extend the positive impacts for all students?

Digging into the topic of archival literacy, archival scholars Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres in a 2001 article emphasized the need for "archival intelligence": the ability to understand the procedures for and nomenclature of archival research.[38] What, for instance, is a finding aid? It is easy for students to get lost in archivists' professional jargon. Yakel and Torres received this response from a novice, "Yeah, it takes a little while and it really is complicated and sometimes very counterintuitive where things are and how they're filed or not filed. . . . I don't fully understand yet how it's organized."[39] Yakel and Torres offered an explanation of the issue:

> Archives have very specific and distinctive rules for access and use . . . although libraries are hardly devoid of rules, most library patrons have so internalized library rules that these rules are now taken for granted—they have become part of the background. This makes archival rules all the more striking, particularly since there may be more variation in archival rules.[40]

Promoting archival literacy to undergraduates frequently emphasizes the humanities. Sammie Morris, Lawrence J. Mykytiuk, and Sharon A. Weiner focused on creating archival literacy standards for undergraduate history majors. They defined archival literacy as the "knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively and efficiently find, interpret, and use archives, manuscripts, and other types of unique, unpublished sources." Their focus on history students was due to their assertion that "finding, interpreting, and using archives is inherent in the study of history" and "to succeed in their professional endeavors, historians need to know how to use archives effectively in their research."[41] Krause's 2009 field study, published in *The American Archivist*, is also relevant, examining what undergraduates at a large state university learned from archival instruction focused on a history course.[42]

Lindsay Anderberg noted in 2015 that efforts to engage STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) undergraduates in primary source research have increased since the 1990s, but finding archival case studies about instruction outside the humanities is not easy.[43] She found that ". . . archivists themselves are reluctant to introduce primary sources to classes outside of the history department."[44] To make her point, she referred to a 2009 New England Archivists' conference session where a common assumption among participants was that their institutions' materials were only relevant to history courses.[45]

Back in 1989, Mark Greene, then the college archivist for Carleton College, encouraged archivists to think beyond the humanities in a *Midwestern Archivist* article. He explained that, during his time at Carleton, he found more success with faculty in biology and religion than with the more traditional archival audience in the subjects of history and political science. He noted as well that archival use resulting from outreach by the archivists may not be for extensive term papers or class assignments, but "brief raids" to garner "photographs for

teaching aids or yearbooks being examined for examples of the psychology of prejudice."[46] At a 2011 SAA annual meeting session entitled "Which Hat Are You Wearing: 'You Need What? When?'," Russell Gasero, Chana Kotzin, Lisa Sjoberg, and Alison Stankrauff encouraged archivists to think outside the history department when it comes to promoting the use of archival materials: "History students are common users of primary sources, but shifts in pedagogy and new understanding of information literacy have increased awareness of the utility primary sources have in a variety of disciplines."[47]

Julia Hendry particularly encouraged archivists at academic institutions to instruct education majors so that they can pass the knowledge to their future students. Possessing this knowledge can help them reassure students that archival research is not as intimidating as it might seem to the novice. More ambitiously, Hendry added that a worthwhile goal is for archivists to teach education majors how to create effective lesson plans using archival documents.[48]

Examinations based on history courses are valuable, but overemphasis can increase the misperception that history students are the archivists' primary beneficiaries. Also, examples drawn from that perspective alone do not translate easily to teaching nonhistory majors in courses such as a FYS.

Planning and Teaching a First-Year Seminar

With the support of AHC administration through duty reallocation, AHC faculty member Rachael Dreyer and I spent many hours during 2015 preparing for the fifteen-week fall semester course. We were both multiyear AHC employees who had worked with undergraduates and precollege students through bibliographic instruction, subject lectures and discussion, one-on-one reference interactions, and History Day participation. I transitioned from reference work to program curatorship to processing in my fifteen years at the AHC, and Dreyer had been a member of the Reference Department for five years. Neither of us had taught a full-semester course before. So, our first task was to identify appropriate methodology for the FYS.

To design the course, we employed what library and information science professor Gloria J. Leckie dubbed "stratified methodology," essentially the strategy of presenting an assignment in phases, from proposal to draft to completed assignment (in our case, a final project). We sought to integrate information-seeking and evaluative skills into our course content. We became, in part, "bibliographic instruction mentors," as termed by Gloria Leckie, to our students. Leckie identified six stages of stratification: (1) narrowing the topic; (2) understanding and using the popular literature [and, in our case, archival collections]; (3) demystifying scholarly research; (4) finding and using scholarly

literature [and archival materials]; (5) understanding legitimate shortcuts; and (6) developing a strategy for completion of the project.[49] Our students worked through these stages en masse, guided by us as instructors. Following Leckie's model, we developed short research assignments meant to scaffold the students into researching their chosen topics within the AHC's collections. The topics were diverse, from one woman's travels on the Oregon Trail, to personal perspectives about the Vietnam War, to the original Spanish residents of California. In the end, students would take their accumulated results and apply them directly to a final project. We also kept in mind the learning outcomes created by UW for the FYS, which centered on developing communication and critical thinking skills. According to the learning outcomes, by the end of course students should be able to:

- access diverse information through focused research, active discussion, and collaboration with peers;
- separate facts from inferences and relevant from irrelevant information, and explain limitations of information;
- evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of conclusions drawn from information; recognize and synthesize multiple perspectives to develop innovative viewpoints;
- analyze one's own and others' assumptions and evaluate contexts when presenting a position;
- communicate ideas in writing using appropriate documentation.

Having these delineated learning outcomes let us know exactly what UW had in mind for instruction of first-year students. The outcomes also helped us avoid the situation experienced by librarians in Krause's 2010 study as described in her article in *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* in which the librarians/instructors had difficulty identifying specific learning outcomes. This left them vaguely hoping that, after orientation to the library, students would "come away with positive impressions about the repository and the materials and a willingness to return."[50]

In our resulting course, "Your Loyal Correspondent: Journals, Letters, and Diaries in Peace and Conflict," we permitted students to engage collaboratively with and critically examine primary and secondary sources to explore the concept of "otherness." The AHC's travel-related collections were emphasized; in these collections people are confronted with an unfamiliar culture, whether as war correspondents, missionaries, tourists, or even internees in their own country, such as Japanese and Japanese Americans interned during World War II (as discussed below, one of the internment camps was located in Wyoming). The diversity in the AHC collections and our own interest in these topics led to the theme of the course. Supporting our decision was research conducted by Pope, Miklitsch, and Weigand, who emphasized: "[I]t is vital for all first-year students

FIGURE 2. First-Year Seminar instructor Leslie Waggener enjoying the process of discovery with a FYS student, October 2015

to be educated about the value of diversity. Teaching first-year students the attitudes and skills necessary to form meaningful relationships with individuals who may be culturally different from them will prepare them to enter the workplace after college and make important contributions as citizens."[51] At UW, as at other institutions, higher education professionals are increasingly called upon to implement multicultural programs and services.[52] The FYS provided a great opportunity for us to do this.

In September 2015, Dreyer departed the AHC for another position. AHC associate director Rick Ewig stepped in to assist me in teaching the FYS. Ewig (now retired) is an experienced instructor who had taught public history and historical methods courses for the UW Department of History for a number of years, so he was able to step in quickly once Dreyer left. Ewig was available due to his own planned course not meeting enrollment numbers; a lucky break for me, if not for him!

Developing Assignments

Ewig and I began with a simple assignment: we asked students to write an introductory letter about themselves and tell us why they decided to take our FYS. This assignment served a twofold purpose: it let us get to know our students and their interests personally, but it also allowed us to gauge their abilities

to communicate in writing. Next, we approached the "analyze one's own and others' assumptions" learning outcome by assigning a designated online TED (technology, entertainment, and design) talk about embracing otherness. In watching it, we asked them to identify and explain the arguments the speaker made and provide their own statements about that argument. This exercise offered us the opportunity to gauge the students' critical thinking skills.

After receiving this input, we better understood the skills range of our class. We then began to familiarize the students with archives. First, we introduced them to the physical space of the AHC, then we conducted an intensive class session on using finding aids. Following this, we examined documents from the AHC's collections on war correspondents. We chose these journalists not only because they typically travel overseas and confront unfamiliar cultures and situations, but also because journalists are typically perceived as impartial. We wanted our students to express their opinions on the impartiality. We also had our students look at the collection of the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in northern Wyoming, one of ten camps in the United States that incarcerated Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. Students analyzed information from documents, photographs, video, and a classroom speaker who had been interned at the camp. We assigned students to write a compare-and-contrast essay based on what they read, saw, and heard. In this way, the students gained experience with another learning outcome: to recognize and synthesize multiple perspectives.

By this time, we felt the students were ready to choose topics within our collections for their final projects. The theme of the projects was "Travel: Discovery, Encounter, Exchange." During the last week of the semester, students had to sum up their findings and present them to the class and outside visitors via a research paper, documentary, online exhibit, or website. Learning outcomes were furthered as we asked the students to use secondary sources to understand their topics in the context of the period: why did the event researched happen at a particular time and place? What events or influences precipitated it? We discussed accessing secondary sources at campus libraries and through interlibrary loan. The students created annotated bibliographies for their topics, as well as learned how and when to use citations. Additionally, we familiarized them with campus resources such as the UW Writing Center and the Oral Communication Center, with visits made to each.

We also offered sessions to provide intellectual challenges, meeting more learning outcome goals. A particularly successful session was "What Do You Know or What Have You Heard?" for which we placed poster-sized sheets on the walls around the classroom with the name of a different person or group written at the top of each. Students circulated around the room writing their answers regarding what they "know" or have heard about each person or group.

A lively discussion ensued about stereotypes: how we have often become conditioned to think automatically about those whose backgrounds are different from our own.

Teaching Phase

When it came to instructing freshmen, we found special challenges and rewards. At first, students seemed excited to be in uncharted territory, an archives in an unusually shaped building —a rather intimidating giant black cone dubbed the "Cone on the Range"—on the eastern edge of the UW campus. But, after having to trek back and forth to that cone every Tuesday and Thursday, the allure soon wore off. Also, some thought the FYS would be a light class of fun activities. That they had research to do and a major project to create were annoying to some students. Still, it was a joy for us and for many of the students to discuss the topics for their final projects. The possibilities within our archival collections seemed to excite and delight them.

One challenge that presented itself was relaying to students how to find and evaluate reliable information sources, as well as discovering the lengths they would (or would not) go to discover proper sources. It was evident that the students found some of the archival research confusing and bothersome. Additionally, the ambiguous nature of such research could be a difficult concept to get across. Many experienced what Howard Gotlieb noticed in undergraduates during the late 1950s, when he remarked how the "appeal of using unpublished sources is tempered by . . . the sometimes overwhelming mass of papers."[53] We emphasized that primary sources are the most important materials to draw upon in generating and presenting their arguments. Secondary materials play supporting roles, such as informing them about untrodden intellectual territory, providing background, supplying leads to pertinent sources, and filling in facts. But, by and large, the students were unwilling to spend time reviewing the secondary literature for clues and context.

Faced with this, we turned to the more hands-on method of pointing out topics and naming specific sources for students who had topics, but still did not grasp how to access information. Although we thought we had provided a useful starting point for the students with earlier work in the semester, they still needed help finding a place to begin when it came to using research materials in a concrete manner. We felt some reservation in becoming "walking finding aids," as Wendy Duff, Elizabeth Yakel, and Helen Tibbo refer to it in their follow-up work to Yakel and Torres[54]; however, in the interest of moving students forward in their final research projects, we felt the need to assume this role for some of them.

Another challenge was that not all students were happy about the FYS. A few students saw it as a costly hoop to jump through before they could get to the heart of their curricula. One of the students asserted, "In my personal opinion, I do not find the First-Year Seminar to be effective because of the financial aspect, it is unnecessary for a degree, and the time spent doing assignments distracts from core classes."[55] Another student stated that she felt the FYS is "unnecessary since a lot of incoming freshman [*sic*] do not need a transition class once they leave high school because of [existing] advance placement courses."[56] Levine and Dean observed that today's college student is from a "pragmatic and career-oriented generation . . . [one who] wants career skills and knowledge from college"; consumerism pervades their (and their parents') perception of higher education.[57] Some found it difficult to bridge their perception of cost vs. value of an archives-based FYS. Even students in the humanities felt that archival research was not something they would need again in their college careers. A political science major stated to us, "I know how to find a document at the AHC, true, but will I ever need to do that outside of my First-Year Seminar class? Not likely."[58] This student did not see the archival research skills as vital to his college career. Perhaps because college was new to them, many of the students did not know what their college careers would require of them; they didn't know what they didn't know.

Two of our students were international, neither being native English speakers. One was from Saudi Arabia, majoring in petroleum engineering, and the other from Vietnam, majoring in civil engineering. Both were quiet in class and, especially at the beginning of the semester, had to be gently prodded to join in class discussions. One of these students wrote to us explaining his hesitancy in speaking up: "As a 20-year-old student from Saudi Arabia, sometimes learning in the U.S. can be challenging. There are different customs, and the language can be difficult for a foreign student."[59] It highlighted an awareness that international students or ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities have unique adjustment needs not met by conventional first-year or retention programming. Maureen Andrade studied international students one year after they took an English as a second language–based FYS; she concluded that one option to support social, cultural, and linguistic growth is to incorporate more interaction between international students and domestic students through the seminar model itself.[60] The benefit of a small seminar class was borne out in our FYS. As the semester progressed, these two students began to interact more and more with their fellow students in class discussions and in chatting before and after class. We quietly relished those moments.

As the culmination of the course, the students presented their final projects to the instructors, peers, and any outsider visitors we could round up (usually our AHC colleagues). By this point in the semester, the students had

been instructed on the differences between primary and secondary sources and how to access each, critical analysis, the credibility of sources, tracking footnotes, producing a clear thesis statement, general writing skills, and creating effective oral presentations. To do well for the final project meant students had to exhibit a good level of proficiency in these areas. It would be great to say that all of the students succeeded with flying colors, but the reality was more mixed. We were pleased to see the creativity evidenced by the students. They brought forward everything from poetry to a radio broadcast to an antiqued journal, with websites and research papers wedged in between.

The most common mistake in the students' projects was that they tended to describe their topics rather than analyze them. During grading, we offered extensive feedback to our students to show them where critical analysis was needed and where shortcomings, such as lack of citations, grammatical and spelling errors, and a need for more sources, existed. However, we found praise worked well as encouragement. We could tell from the oral presentations that several students had become quite passionate about their topics, and we certainly did not want to dampen that enthusiasm! We looked for ways to congratulate each student, whether regarding the quality of an oral presentation, the beauty of a re-created journal, or the images chosen to describe a topic.

Although I have outlined the major challenges, there were also highlights. One student in particular comes to mind. She came to our class because her top choice of an agriculture-related FYS was full. She took this in stride and subsequently became fascinated by a journal in our collections written by a woman who trekked the Oregon Trail with a small company to join her husband in the California gold fields of the early 1850s. The student carefully created a detailed website about this woman's story, adding in the context of the arduous travel along the trail and a timeline of her travels. Another student, a Vietnamese native, took our collections about the Vietnam War and crafted a fascinating research paper in which he added his own perspectives about the war. Although these students and others in the class struggled at times with the complexities of the archival research process, we cherished the "aha" moments when it came together for them—maybe through locating "the box" of great stuff in a chosen collection or discovering an unexpected twist in their research, as did one who found herself unexpectedly defending a convicted murderer based on what she found in various archival collections and secondary sources. These were the types of incidents that kept Rick and me fully enthralled in teaching the FYS, and at times in wonderment over what our students unearthed in the AHC's collections.

Conclusions (Lessons Learned)

So, what do I conclude from our First-Year Seminar based on archival materials?

When it came to the learning outcomes expected from each FYS, I realized that incorporating those skills into students' academic careers is a journey, not a destination, and that our class was an initial step along the way. In 2012, Caralee J. Adams, a contributing writer on higher education for *Education Week*, summed up a study by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University. Her article showed that, while students in introductory courses such as the First-Year Seminar did improve their skills and knowledge of college resources, there was not enough time in a single class for them to fully apply and practice those skills.[61] I do feel this is true. But also true is that a college education is completed in incremental steps; that it is not a defeat that not every student left our class fully proficient on each learning outcome. I was satisfied that we had helped them along the way, in areas such as research, writing, and public speaking, and some students became much more interested in archives and history in general.

I did go into the FYS experience with a naïve hope that the students would be as excited about archives as I am. I am an archivist for a reason: I love historical primary sources and am passionate about imparting that love to others. But I believe that passion led me to forget that not everyone is like me; rather ironic for an instructor intending to promote diversity. However, the FYS did encourage a number of students to get excited about "touching history."

I also learned that it is best to limit some of the class activities; that is, do not do so many types that the class loses its focus. Our attempts to add variety and interest were well meant, but in some cases, they also added confusion. We pulled from the AHC's collections based on cultures of Iran, Russia, and China, and on Japanese internment during World War II. We also had students consider war correspondents reporting during World War II and the Vietnam War, and even examine the reaction to "otherness" by the British comedy travel series *An Idiot Abroad*, in which Karl Pilkington, a man with no interest in global travel, is placed in uncomfortable cultural situations with amusing results. In our minds, the assortment of topics and activities meant that we could provide something of interest to students from diverse backgrounds. When taught again, I would most likely follow a more closely defined topic and keep it as the focus for the entire semester. Also, in addition to the student work, we included videos, book chapters, segments of a television series, and speakers as well as hands-on work in the archives. Perhaps we worried that the archival materials wouldn't have the variety to draw students' interest, but, after the class, I realized they interested students the most.

Overall, many students reported to us that the FYS did benefit them; it enhanced writing and research skills, and fostered good public presentation skills. They enjoyed the small class size and the opportunity to better bond with instructors and classmates. We received positive comments such as, "I have never been a huge history person, but the seminar has really opened my eyes and interested me in many aspects of history."[62] The instructors' passion for history was inspiring to another. Still another noted that engagement through archival documents made learning history more interesting. These comments were highly encouraging for me.

The AHC considered offering another FYS during the 2016 fall semester, but by the end of the 2015 fall semester, staffing resources had dwindled so that it was no longer feasible. One very important part of my discovery process, just as Sarah Blakeslee discovered, was that teaching the FYS is a full-on commitment. Accomplishing the other tasks of a working archivist—processing, reference work, and more—tend to go by the wayside while the archivist/instructor researches likely topics, creates lesson plans, teaches classes, and grades assignments. Clearly, sustaining the effort and its accomplishments are a matter of institutional resources, creativity, and priorities. Over time, as the barriers are worked out, I feel an ideal course could be designed. As UW moves toward an emphasis on classroom teaching as a defining attribute for faculty status, the faculty archivists at the AHC may be asked to consider another FYS, or similar course, and prioritize for it, but, at the same time, this must be weighed against the fact that AHC archivists are not expected to teach semester-long courses and, in turn, are not paid the salaries of teaching faculty.

Implications for other archives, especially academic archives, include definite advantages. The format of a FYS lends itself particularly well to training young students to conduct archival research. Guiding students on how to navigate the mediated approach of finding aids and collection guides required to access archival materials and then to master sifting through the "chaff" to get to the precious kernels requires a certain level of hand-holding and individualized attention. That kind of personalized instruction is generally a prerequisite for the FYS, in part because the FYS is a retention tool meant to provide a supportive bridge so that students do not feel overwhelmed by their new environment, especially because their other classes may be large survey courses typically encountered in the freshmen year. Because the FYS is usually small in size, offering individualized attention is more possible for the archivist/instructor. Additionally, the objectives of an academically focused FYS include the enhancement of critical thinking skills. Archival research is an ideal forum for teaching such skills. Because the subject matter of a FYS can vary according to the instructor's expertise, it is also an opportunity to showcase the archival discipline in a class that

focuses on archival methods and it might even interest new college students in learning more about the archival profession. After all, many students do not know about archives, let alone the profession of archivist, and an archives-based FYS can enlighten them. If the archivist/instructor is faculty-line, then teaching a full-semester course can enhance the collegial relationship with other teaching faculty on campus and can further incorporate the archives into their pedagogic sphere.

On the flip-side, it is time-intensive to prepare and teach a full-semester course, and it requires a commitment on the part of the archivist's institution, which must provide its employee the space to create and implement the course, recognizing that typical day-to-day work will most likely fall by the wayside. Also, the institution will require one or more archivists so passionate about sharing their expertise with young students that they do not mind the effort needed to teach the course.

Perhaps there is a middle way for archives considering this type of instruction. Because of the popularity of first-year seminar courses at universities and community colleges and the number of archivists, especially faculty archivists, working at academic institutions or performing outreach to those institutions, developing an archives-based core curriculum for such a course is to be considered. All academic archives are different, from the way they are structured to the content of their collections, but there are some commonalities. Those commonalities of practice have been explored through the work of the Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Standing Committee within the SAAs' Reference, Access, and Outreach Section. The TPS recently became a separate, permanent SAA committee to "advocate for the active and interactive use of primary sources in teaching and learning as a core component of archival work."[63] Having a toolkit of resources, including ACRL's *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, and suggested curricula could go a long way to relieving individual archives of having to "reinvent the wheel" each time an introductory course such as the FYS is being crafted. This idea, of course, does not take away from the time it takes to teach the course. But having a curriculum based on tested ideas would help archivists know the direction they should take and how others have overcome challenges when instructing this age group. A recent SAA publication, *Teaching with Primary Sources*, edited by Christopher J. Prom and Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe,[64] is a step in the right direction, as is a new SAA workshop on the same topic.[65] However, with the popularity of the FYS across the nation, I recommend using suggested curricula (syllabi, lesson plans, assignments) and other resources specific to that type of course, whether for facilitating the course or teaching it.

Notes

This article is dedicated to Mark Greene: mentor, realist, and prodder of excellence. Rest in peace, dear friend.

[1] Robert S. Feldman, ed., *Improving the First Year of College: Research and Practice* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2005): vii.

[2] Joe Cuseo, "'Decided,' 'Undecided,' and 'In Transition': Implications for Academic Advisement, Career Counseling, and Student Retention," in *Improving the First Year of College*, 37. Cuseo also refers to W. G. Perry's work, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970 and San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

[3] Arthur Levine and Diane R. Dean, *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012): 188.

[4] Levine and Dean, *Generation on a Tightrope*, 162–63.

[5] Raechele L. Pope, Teresa A. Miklitsch, and Matthew J. Weigand, "First-Year Students: Embracing Their Diversity, Enhancing Our Practice," in *Improving the First Year of College,* 52–53.

[6] Economic geology is the scientific study of the Earth's sources of mineral raw materials and the practical application of the acquired knowledge for economic and/or industrial purposes. The term commonly refers to metallic mineral deposits and mineral resources.

[7] "History of the First University Seminar and the University 101 Programs," University 101 Programs, Division of Student Affairs, University of South Carolina, http://www.sc.edu/univ101/aboutus/history.html.

[8] Elsie Watts, "The Freshman Experience, 1962–1990: An Experiment in Humanistic Higher Education" (PhD diss., Queen's University, Canada, 1999): 4.

[9] Watts, "The Freshman Experience, 1962–1990," 4.

[10] Watts, "The Freshman Experience, 1962–1990," 5.

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[13] Raymond O. Murphy, "Freshman Year Enhancement in American Higher Education," *Journal of the Freshman Year Experience* [now titled *The Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*] 1, no. 2 (1989): 95.

[14] Julia Hendry, "Primary Sources in K–12 Education: Opportunities for Archives," *The American Archivist* 70, no. 1 (2007): 117.

[15] Hendry, "Primary Sources in K–12 Education," 118–20.

[16] Brent, "Reinventing WAC (Again)," 255.

[17] Mark A. Greene, "Using College and University Archives as Instructional Materials: A Case Study and an Exhortation," *Midwestern Archivist* 14, no. 1 (1989): 32.

[18] "Distinguished Service Award," Society of American Archivists, http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section12-service.

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[20] Boff and Johnson, "The Library and First-Year Experience Courses," 285.

[21] Sarah Blakeslee, "Librarian in a Strange Land: Teaching a Freshman Orientation Course," *Reference Services Review* 26, no. 2 (1998): 76.

[22] Blakeslee, "Librarian in a Strange Land," 76.

[23] Blakeslee, "Librarian in a Strange Land," 77.

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[25] Auer and Krupar, "Librarians Grading," 52.

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[28] Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, *Appendix 2* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2016): 15.

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[32] Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources into the Curriculum," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7, nos. 1–2 (2009): 42–45.

[33] Magia G. Krause, "'It Makes History Alive for Them': The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36, no. 5 (2010): 402.

[34] Magia G. Krause, "Undergraduates in the Archives: Using an Assessment to Measure Learning," *The American Archivist* 73, no. 2 (2010): 511. Krause is referring to these articles published in *The American Archivist* 71, no. 2 (2008): Xiaomu Zhou, "Student Archival Research Activity: An Exploratory Study," 476–98, and Wendy M. Duff and Joan M. Cherry, "Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact," 499–529.

[35] Krause, "'It Makes History Alive for Them'," 404.

[36] Krause, "'It Makes History Alive for Them'," 407.

[37] Wendy M. Duff and Joan M. Cherry, "Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact," *The American Archivist* 71, no. 2 (2008): 502–8.

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[39] Yakel and Torres, "AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise," 65.

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[44] Anderberg, "STEM Undergraduates and Archival Instruction," 550.

[45] Anderberg, "STEM Undergraduates and Archival Instruction," 550. Anderberg is quoting Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources into the Curriculum," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7, nos. 1–2 (2009): 45.

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[51] Pope, Miklitsch, and Weigand, "First-Year Students: Embracing Their Diversity, Enhancing Our Practice," 53.

[52] Pope, Miklitsch, and Weigand, "First-Year Students: Embracing Their Diversity, Enhancing Our Practice," 59.

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[55] Student [name withheld], First-Year Seminar, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center, fall 2015.

[56] Student [name withheld], First-Year Seminar, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center, fall 2015.

[57] Levine and Dean, *Generation on a Tightrope,* 91.

[58] Student [name withheld], First-Year Seminar, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center, fall 2015.

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[64] Christopher J. Prom and Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, eds., *Teaching with Primary Sources* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2016).

[65] Robin Katz, "Teaching with Primary Sources: How to Design for Active Learning," Workshop, Society of American Archivists, https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/catalog.

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