

## Reference and Instruction in Special Collections

**Instructor: Melanie Meyers, MLS**

**Course Description:** This course will accomplish two learning objectives. First, we will explore the specific skills needed to perform reference work in a special collections environment, where the practice of reference and patron education frequently employs diverse resources and research strategies, and presents a different set of issues and potential challenges. Second, we will explore instructional work in special collections, as familiarity with instruction and instructional techniques is now an accepted facet of working in special collections. But, as special collections are often located within larger institutions, and frequently within non-traditional settings, the well-prepared special collections librarian will be grounded in both reference and instruction, as we are often called upon to perform both over the course of our duties.

**Course Objectives:** By the conclusion of the course, students will be familiar with:

1. Provision of reference services to different constituent user groups within special collections and what that entails
2. A thorough understanding of reference in a special collections environment
3. Familiarity with standard reference sources and formats specific to special collections reference
4. An understanding of the use of archival finding aids, digital surrogates, and other electronic reference materials frequently used in special collections reference and instruction
5. An understanding of general concepts in instruction, and how they are applicable within special collections instruction
6. Awareness of evolving trends in reference service provision and instruction, and how they relate to special collections

### **Palmer School Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)**

This course will address Palmer School learning goal 3 (“Deliver user-centered services and cost-effective programs tailored to the needs of diverse populations”), and in particular the following two SLOs:

- 3a. Evaluate and use information resources and services to meet the needs of diverse populations;
- 3b. Develop and deliver information programs designed to meet the needs of specific users and communities.

**Required Text:** There is no required text for this class; all readings are available on-line, or will be provided to you by me as photocopies or PDF files. **Additionally**, all students will be required to keep up-to-date on trends in the greater special collections community by reading library journals, blogs, newspaper articles, listservs, etc, that discuss issues related to special collections. A portion of every class will be devoted to discussing these readings, and contributions are not only required will be counted towards your participation grade. A list of suggested resources will be distributed.

### **Assignments and Evaluation: All assignments due the last day of class.**

1. One observation assignment (30%)

This assignment is to visit a special collections library or department, observe reference services, and request materials (if possible). The experience should then be summarized in a 2-4 page paper to be handed in. More details on what to look for/questions to ask will be provided as the assignment draws closer, as will a suggested list of institutions.

2. Lesson Plan (30%)

This assignment will be to create a lesson plan for an instructional session, for any age group you choose. You should include what materials you would teach with, and explain your selections in the context of the instructional lesson.

3. Two digital materials assignments (10% each)

This assignment will be to choose and evaluate and prepare a 2-3 page report on each of the following: a digital surrogate or digital humanities project, and an online finding aid. The report should include a brief description of the resource, discussion on how it would be used in reference work, how it would be helpful to a user, critique what is or is not constructive or about the item, and how functionality could be improved (if necessary).

4. Class participation (20%)

As a graduate level class, a healthy level of participation is a necessity. Discussion of the weekly readings is essential, as well as keeping abreast of current events in the library world for class discussion.

\*\* extra credit: Attend/observe a lecture or instructional session given by a special collections librarian, book history scholar, or UX professional. Summarize and critique in a 2-3 page paper. Webinars and recorded lectures (such as those available on the Rare Book School website) are totally appropriate.

### **Course schedule:**

#### **Class One (May 17):**

- Introduction to class
  - Discussion of syllabus, required readings, assignments, and expectations
- Special collections libraries and reference: an overview
  - What are the different types of special collections libraries and departments? What do they offer, and patrons do they serve?
    - Scholars (at all levels of proficiency)
    - Historians
    - Genealogists
    - General public
  - How is reference in special collections different?
  - The changing face of our profession: the emergence of the special collections reference librarian

#### Readings:

- Overholt, John. (2013). "5 theses on the future of special collections". *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*. 14(1): 15-20.

- Blouin, F. X. (1999). "Archivists, Mediation, and Constructs of Social Memory." *Archival Issues* 24(2), 101-112.
- "Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians". Available at: <http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/professional>
- On the RBMS Website, the following standards: "ACRL Guidelines: Competencies for Special Collections Professionals", "ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians", and "ACRL/SAA Joint Statement on Access to Research Materials in Archives and Special Collections Libraries". All are available at: <http://www.rbms.info/standards/index.shtml>.

### **Class Two (May 19):**

Selection and evaluation of sources for special collections reference: What makes a "good" source? Guest speaker- Zachary Loeb, Patron Services Librarian, CJH

- Types of sources available, both paper and electronic
- Special collections sources: Union catalogs, bibliographies, auction catalogs, and much more
- LibGuides: What are they?
- It may be a good source, but is it really the "right" source for the inquiry?

#### Readings:

- Look at the following resources online: The British Museum General Catalog of Printed Books ([catalogue.bl.uk](http://catalogue.bl.uk)), WorldCat ([worldcat.org](http://worldcat.org)), and The Library of Congress online catalog ([catalog.loc.gov](http://catalog.loc.gov)), National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections(<http://lcweb.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>)
- "A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology", by Richard Pearce-Moses, available at: <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary>. Please read the Preface, Introduction, and browse through the terms to familiarize yourself.
- Familiarize yourself with *Book Collecting: A Modern Guide*, edited by Jean Peters, and 3-5 other works related to bibliography or special collections reference and research. (List of suggested works to be distributed)

The special collections reference interview: assessing information seeking behavior

- What is the "reference interview"? And why is the special collections reference interview different?
- Types of reference encounters: How we interact with our constituent user groups (in-person, phone, email, chat, etc.)
- Assessing the inquiry- what is the patron really asking?

#### Readings:

- Chapters 2-3 in *Repositioning Reference: New Methods and New Service for a New Age* (Chapter 1 is optional)

- Malbin, Susan. (1997). "The Reference Interview in Archival Literature". *College & Research Libraries* January 1997. (Available at <http://crl.acrl.org/content/58/1/69.full.pdf>)
- Magi, Trina, and Mardeausz, Patricia. (2013). "What students need from reference librarians: Exploring the complexity of the individual consultation". *College & Research Libraries News* 74 (6): 288-291
- Rutner, Jennifer, and Shoenfeld, Roger. (2012). "Supporting the changing research practices of historians". *Ithaca S&R Report*, available online at: <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/sites/default/files/reports/supporting-the-changing-research-practices-of-historians.pdf> (It's long, so give it a skim and familiarize yourself with it.)

**Class Three (May 24):** Genealogists: An important user community for special collections  
(Guest Speaker: JD Arden, Genealogy specialist, CJH)

- What the special collections librarian needs to know about genealogy
- Reference works and electronic resources: Ancestry, Archives Grid, LDS microfilms, vital records, etc.
- Genealogists in the collections: What they commonly use

Readings:

- "Genealogy and Libraries". Selected articles, attached.
- Shown Mills, Elizabeth. "Genealogy in the Information Age: History's new frontier?". *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 91 (2003): 260-277.

**Class Four (May 26):** Archives, manuscripts, and finding aids

- Archival collections and manuscripts- what's the difference?
- Institutional collections, personal papers... The different types of archival collections
- What is a finding aid and how do readers use them?
- Navigating the finding aid in reference inquiries

Readings:

- Yeo, Geoffrey. (2009). "Custodial history, provenance, and the description of personal records." *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 44 (1): 50-64.
- Leff, Lisa Moses. "Rescue or Theft? Zosa Szajkowski and the Salvaging of French Jewish History after WWII." (2012) *Jewish Social Studies* 18(2): 1-39
- Cook, T. (1997). "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898 and the Future Paradigm Shift." *Archivaria* 43, 17-63. (LONG)
- Taylor, Marvin J. (2002). "I'll be Your Mirror, Reflect What You Are": Postmodern Documentation and the Downtown New York Scene from 1975 to the Present." *RBM* 3: 32-51.

Digital surrogates, microfilm, and preservation copies: Preservation vs. access

- Intro to digital surrogates

- Types of digital surrogates
- Use of digital surrogates in reference work

Readings:

- Beaudoin, Joan E. (2012). "Context and Its Role in the Digital Preservation of Cultural Objects". *D-Lib Magazine* 18 (11/12). Available online at: <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/november12/beaudoin/11beaudoin1.html>
- Nowviskie, B. *Reality Bytes*. (Text of plenary session from 2012 RBMS Pre-Conference, San Diego, CA). <http://nowviskie.org/2012/reality-bytes/>
- Look at 2-3 digital collections/ resources prior to class for discussion. A list of suggested resources will be given prior to the class.
- Kirschenbaum, Matthew, and Werner, Sarah. (2014). "Digital Scholarship and Digital Studies: The State of the Discipline". *Book History* 17: 406-458 (OPTIONAL)

**Class Five (May 31): The Special Collections Reading Room**

- Special materials...special formats.....different policies... The general collections vs. special collections experience
- Types of materials in special collections: Book, archive, manuscript, photographs, slides, audio-visual, maps, textiles, ephemera, art, and artifacts.
- Basic materials handling protocol: cradles, gloves, etc
- Assessing condition: to handle or not to handle?
- Security concerns: how to manage materials and readers

Readings:

- Traister, Daniel.(2003). "Public Services and Outreach in Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Libraries". *Library Trends* 52:(1): 87-109. (Also available online through *Scholarly Commons*)
- Samuelson, Todd, et al. (2012). "Unusual Suspects: The Case of Insider Theft in Research Libraries and Special Collections." *College & Research Libraries* 73(6): 556-568.
- Beyer, Jurgen. (2014). "The influence of reading room rules on the quality and efficiency of historical research". *Text* 8, 110-127. Available online at: [http://kodu.ut.ee/~jbeyer/Reading\\_room\\_rules.pdf](http://kodu.ut.ee/~jbeyer/Reading_room_rules.pdf)
- Look at the reading room policies of at least 2 special collections, such as: The Morgan Library and Museum, The Getty Institute, The Library of Congress, NYPL Rare Book Division, Columbia University RBML, etc. Come prepared to discuss.

UX. What is it? And why do I need to know about it?

- User experience- thinking about physical spaces
- User experience- thinking about design of digital surrogates and digital user tools
  - How do people interact with the physical materials and the digital surrogates?

- How can we improve the user experience?

Readings TBD

**Class Six (June 2):** Instruction, the basics

- Instruction vs. reference: what's the difference?
- Bibliographic instruction
- It's not just in the classroom: different opportunities for instruction
- Let's talk pedagogy: different approaches, different strengths and weaknesses
  - Active learning, informed learning, peer-led discussion, feminist pedagogy, etc...
  - Finding the right style for yourself and your students

Readings:

- "Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices: A Guideline". Available at:  
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/characteristics>
- Robyns, Marcus. (2001). "The Archivist as Educator: Integrating Critical Thinking Skills into Historical Research Methods Instruction". *The American Archivist*, 64:363-384.
- Garabedian, Michael. (2006) "You've Got to be Carefully Taught: American Special Collections Library Education and the Inculcation of Exclusivity." *RBM* 7(1): 55-63

**Class Seven (June 7):** Out of our comfort zone: teaching and instruction to non-traditional special collections readers. Guest speakers: TBD, to discuss K-12 instruction

Readings:

- Bunde, Janet, et al. (2015). "Where teachers and archivists meet: The ART K-12 education program". In *Innovative Best Practices in Archives and Special Collections: Instruction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield
- Davies, et al. (2015). "Fells, Fans, and Fame: Acquiring a Collection of Personal Papers with the Goal of Engaging Primary School Children". In *Innovative Best Practices in Archives and Special Collections: Instruction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield
- Zanish-Belcher, et al. (2015) "Web Archiving as Gateway: Teaching K-12 Students about Archival Concepts". In *Innovative Best Practices in Archives and Special Collections: Instruction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield
- Dekydspotter, Lori Lynn, and Williams, Cherry Dunham.(2013). "Alchemy and Innovation: Cultivating an Appreciation for Primary Sources in Younger Students". *RBM* 14:67-81.
- Robb, Jenny E. (2009). "The Opper Project: Collaborating with Educators to Promote the Use of Editorial Cartoons in the Social Studies Classroom". *RBM* 10:70-94.

**Class Eight (June 9):** Instruction in academic institution, both undergrad and grad students:

- “Think engine room, NOT treasure room”- special collections as the point of origin
- Undergraduate vs graduate students: determining instructional needs
- Assessment: an integral component of the classroom experience
- Creating a teaching collection: (Hint: It’s not as hard as you think)

Readings:

- Bahde, Anne.(2011). “Taking the Show on the Road: Special Collections Instruction in the Campus Classroom”. *RBM* 12:75-88.
- Bahde, Anne, and Smedberg, Heather. (2012). “Measuring the Magic: Assessment in the Special Collections and Archives Classroom”. *RBM* , 13:152-174.
- Katz, Robin. (2012). “Teaching cultural memory: Using and producing digitized archival material in an online course.” *Past or Portal: Enhancing Undergraduate learning through special collections and archives*. Mitchell, Eleanor, ed. Chicago: ACRL Press. 179-185.
- Malkmus, Doris. (2012). “Pulling on the white gloves...is really sort of magic: report on engaging history undergraduates with primary sources”. *Past or Portal: Enhancing Undergraduate learning through special collections and archives*. Mitchell, Eleanor, ed. Chicago: ACRL Press. 125-132.

**Class Nine (June 14):** Outreach and Public Programming (Guest speaker, Miriam Haier, The Center for Jewish History)

- Public programming as an aspect of instruction
- Social media as an instructional and reference tool

Readings:

- Brown, Leslie J. (2013). “Acquiring Literacy: A Library Exhibit”. *RBM* 14:82-91
- Priddle, Charlotte (2015). “Bridging the Internal Gap: Special Collections and “In-Reach”. *RBM* 16: 35-47.
- Stam, Deirdre C. (2006). “Bridge That Gap! Education and Special Collections.” *RBM* 7:1 16–30.
- Traister, Daniel. (2003). “Public Services and Outreach in Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Libraries.” *Library Trends* 52: 87–108

**Class 10 (June 16).....** Wrap up and final discussion