Access Techniques and Systems for Archives

Course Syllabus
Spring 2014

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Class Time: Wednesdays 2 – 4:45
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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Overview and Objectives
This course provides an introduction to access systems, research services, and customer support in archives. Its objectives are:

- To discuss methods, approaches and systems to locate, access, and use archival records
- To familiarize students with access issues facing customers and archivists dealing with non-textual collections
- To introduce new access trends which make use of the internet, digitization, and partnerships between archives and patrons.
- To develop the intellectual framework for the systematic identification and critical evaluation of access systems
- To understand the importance of empirical research in identifying user needs and evaluating the extent to which archival access systems meets those needs

Readings
Required readings are assigned for each week; their location (e.g. SAA website) is indicated in the syllabus. Access to e-reserves is through your ELMS account (www.elms.umd.edu). For further information see: http://www.lib.umd.edu/PUBSERV/RESERVE/student.html. Additional readings and other materials may be distributed during the semester. Students are expected to read the assigned readings and participate in class discussions.
There are no required textbooks for the course; however, it is recommended that you have a copy of Describing Archives: A Content Standard (Chicago: SAA, 2007), the standard archival description in the U.S. You can purchase this book directly from SAA (www.archivist.org) or from the University bookstore.


**Note on Archival Sciences journal readings.** These selections are available on-line at www.springerlink.com. It may be easiest to access that site, and to type in the name of one of the authors into the search box. The article you need should be in the search results screen.

**Course Requirements**

| Reflections | Due February 5 & 19, March 5 & 26 |
| Evaluation of Paper-Based Descriptive System | Due March 12 |
| Evaluation of Web Pages | Due April 23 |

**1. 5 Reading Reflections** (20% -- Each worth 5%)

Each student must submit six short papers (reflections), 1-2 pages double spaced on the required readings marked with a double asterisk (**). For the designated weeks, you must provide a reflection on at least one of the readings, but you may also write about more than one reading or about all of them. The purpose of the assignment is to demonstrate your critical thinking skills as you explore the issues raised in the reading(s); merely summarizing the readings is not sufficient. For example, you might consider the following questions: What special thoughts or insights does this reading give you? What is the one concept or theory that you agree with or disagree with? Has anything changed since the article was written? How would you apply a concept discussed in the readings in an institution? Do you have experience with archival arrangement that supports or contradicts a point in the reading?

You are to submit all reflections at the beginning of the class at which the topic will be discussed. No papers will be accepted for credit once a topic has been discussed in class. Only in exceptional circumstances, communicated to the instructor in advance, will electronic submissions be permitted.
2. Evaluation of a Paper-Based Access System (35%)  
Examine the finding aids available as course documents on ELMS. You will submit:

a) A brief description of each finding aid.
b) A report of 3-5 pages on how each finding aid relates to the others to form a system of finding aids to facilitate access to the records. Be sure to explain how they supplement each other and how you would explain how to use them to a researcher. Be sure to indicate potential difficulties or problems this system might present to the researcher and the archivist.

3. Evaluation of an On-Line Virtual Access System (35%)  
Your archives is planning to develop a system of virtual reference. You will be exploring e-mail, posting frequently asked questions (FAQs), on-line chat, and developing web pages on specific topics that will be of interest to your patrons. Choose one of the institutions’ websites to see how they have done it. Consult additional literature as required, but don’t contact the institution(s).

Your report should address at least the following issues:
- Structure and components of the on-line access, i.e. how do you navigate the site?
- Ways in which the descriptions can be searched (and ways in which they can’t)
- Assistance for users in searching archival material and understanding the descriptions they encounter, including e-mail and chat features
- Levels of description represented, and how the relationships among levels are represented
- Availability of digital surrogates
- Any difficulties you encountered in finding any of this information

University of Texas Libraries (www.lib.utexas.edu)

Maryland State Archives (www.msa.md.gov)

National Archives and Records Administration (www.archives.gov)

New York Public Library (www.nypl.org)

Organize your report in a logical manner, using headings to be sure that you have addressed all the issues. Since it is unlikely that you will look at every area on the sites, explain how you selected the samples you looked at, and how you systematically examined the sample.

Where necessary, cite the particular access tools and/or finding aids you looked at as evidence to support the statements you are making in the report.

4. Class Attendance and Participation (10%)  
I will assess you attentiveness to lectures and your participation in class discussions, as well as in in-class exercises. I do not believe there is a stupid question so do not hesitate to ask one when you do not understand. In addition, I intend the in-class exercises to be learning opportunities. If you follow the principles we learn and discuss in class and take the exercises seriously it will

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result in high marks; this is a time when making mistakes is OK if you demonstrate you are trying to learn.

REQUIREMENTS OF WRITTEN WORK
Quality of Writing
Excellent written communication skills are essential to the provision of information in professional contexts. Written work will be graded on the quality of writing as well as on its content and evidence of critical analysis. The mark for work that is not well written, clearly organized, and grammatically correct will be reduced accordingly.

Formatting
Double space, in Times New Roman 12 point type, with 1 inch margins all around
Include a list of sources consulted
Cite sources in conformity with the most recent edition of Turabian, using either notes-bibliography style or in-text citations-references list style. See examples at www.press.uchicago.edu/book/turabian-citationguide.html.
Number the pages and staple them together. Please do not submit your assignments in a binder or folder.
Limit headers and footers to page numbers only. Please do not include headers or footers to include your name or the title of the assignment.

Grade
A point-based letter grade will be assigned for each assignment. The course will be graded in accordance with University and i-school guidelines: A=Excellent (90-100); B=Satisfactory (80-89); C=Barely Adequate (70-79); D/F=Failure (<70).

Classroom Environment
The classroom environment should be professional and respectful. Students are to arrive punctually. Please do not leave early. If you know in advance you must leave early please let the instructor know before class begins. Please turn off or mute all phones and other communication devices during each class session. If you use your laptop in the classroom, limit the usage of the computer to course-related reasons, such as taking notes.

Academic Integrity
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. The Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all students. For more information on the Code, see www.shc.umd.edu.

Plagiarism is of particular concern in a networked digital environment. Be certain to cite your sources and use quotation marks where appropriate.

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Extensions
Extensions beyond an assignment’s due date will only be granted if the instructor is satisfied that you have a legitimate reason for being late. Late submissions of written assignments will carry a penalty, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Unexcused delays in submission of an assignment will result in a reduction of the grade by one category for each day the paper is late; for example, a paper that would have received a B+ if submitted on time will receive a B if submitted a day late.

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must inform the instructor of their needs and provide written documentation about the appropriate academic accommodation from Disability Support Services (www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS) at the beginning of the semester.

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week 1, January 29 – Introduction to Course

Week 2, February 5 – STUDYING THE USERS OF ARCHIVES
Who are they? What do they want? How do they access records?
Reflection 1 Due

Readings:

- **Duff, Wendy M. and Johnson, Catherine A. “Where is the List with All the Names?: Information-Seeking Behavior of Genealogists.” American Archivist 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 79-95. (SAA website)
- Duff, Wendy M.; Dryden, Jean; Limkilde; Cherry, Joan; and Bogomazova. “Archivists’ Views of User-Based Evaluation: Benefits, Barriers, and Requirements” American Archivist 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 144-166. (SAA Website)
Week 3, February 12 – ARCHIVISTS, “ARCHIVAL INTELLIGENCE,” AND RESEARCHER SERVICES
“Archival Intelligence” How archivists help patrons find information and education them about archives

Readings:
- **Deodato, Joseph. “Becoming Responsible Mediators: The Application of Postmodern Perspectives to Archival Arrangement and Description.” Progressive Librarian 27 (Summer 2006): 52-63. (on-line through UMD libraries Research Port)

Week 4, February 19 – TRADITIONAL ACCESS TECHNIQUES AND SYTEMS
Inventories, guides, file title lists. Reflection 2 Due.

Readings:
- **Holmes, Oliver W. “Archival Arrangement: Five Different Operations at Five Different Levels.” American Archivist 27:1 (1964) 41-61. (PDF on Course ELMS Site)
- **Roe, Kathleen D., Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts, Chapter on “Developing Access Tools,” pp 86-97 (PDF on Course ELMS Site)
- National Archives Staff Information Paper 14: “The Preparation of Inventories” (Course document on ELMS)
Week 5, February 26 – WEBSITES AS ACCESS PORTALS
Making information about holdings available on-line, including FAQs, topic pages, general information about holdings, ability to order finding aids and records on-line (“fixed fee” files)

Readings:

- Prom, Christopher J. “User Interactions with Electronic Finding Aids in a Controlled Setting.” American Archivist 67 (Fall/Winter 2004): 234-268. (SAA Website)

Week 6, March 5 – USING THE INTERNET AS A DYNAMIC ACCESS PORTAL
This includes e-mail, chat, on-line help, webinars
Reflection 3 Due

Readings:

- **Martin, Kristin E. “Analysis of Remote Reference Correspondence at a Large Academic Manuscripts Collection.” American Archivist 64:1 (Spring/Summer 2001): 17-42. (SAA website)
Week 7, March 12 – ISSUES IN ARCHIVAL ACCESS – RESTRICTIONS  
(PII, Security, FOIA, Donor Restrictions, Intrinsic Value, Physical Conditions of Documents)  
Paper-Based Access System Exercise Due.

Readings:


SPRING BREAK – MARCH 16 – 23

Week 8, March 26 – HIGHLIGHTS OF ENCODED ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION (EAD)  
Reflection 4 Due

Readings:

- **Fox, Michael “Implementing Encoded Archival Description: An Overview of Administration and Technical Considerations.” American Archivist 60 (Summer 1997): 330-343. (SAA website)
- Riley, Jenn; Shepard, Keley “A Brave New World: Archivists and Shareable Metadata” American Archivist 72 (Spring/Summer 2009): 91-112. (SAA Website)
Week 9, April 2 – ISSUES IN ARCHIVAL ACCESS – ELECTRONIC RECORDS
Issues surrounding access of e-records

Readings:


Week 10, April 9 – ISSUES IN ARCHIVAL ACCESS – NON-TEXTUAL RECORDS
Overview of issues surrounding access of still pictures, maps and dynamic media (Guest Speaker)

Readings:

- Boyer, Deborah; Cheetham, Robert; and Johnson, Mary L. “Using GIS to Manage Philadelphia’s Archival Photographs.” *American Archivist* 74:2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 652-663. (SAA website)
- Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas. Examine the website, especially the tabs at the top of the screen detailing services available. www.lib.utexas.edu/maps.
- Florida Department of State, Division of Libraries, Florida Memory Project. Examine the website to learn how to access information about photographs among their holdings. (www.floridamemory.com)
- Kalftatovic, Martin R.; Kapsalis, Effie; Speiss, Katherine P.; Van Camp, Anne; and Edson, Michael “Smithsonian Team Flickr: a library, archives, and museums collaboration in web 2.0 space” *Archival Science* (2008): 8: 267-277. (springerlink website)
**Week 11, April 16** – WIKIPEDIA AS AN ACCESS TOOL (Guest Speaker) MICROFILM AND ACCESS: METADATA AND EVOLUTION OF DIGITIZATION STRATEGIES

Using microfilm as a means of increasing access: How do you choose records, How do you alert patrons to filed records, etc  Role of microfilm as a legacy access system; evolution of microfilm publications to digital publications; what we can learn from microfilm techniques to create vibrant digital access systems

Readings:

- Access [https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Education_Program](https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Education_Program) to gain an overview of how Wikipedia hopes to educate information specialists on using its site for access

**Week 12, April 23** – DIGITIZATION AS PART OF YOUR ACCESS SYSTEM

General discussion of theory and practice

On-Line Access System Exercise Due.

Readings:

- Oliver, Gillian; Chawner, Brenda; Liu, Hai Ping “Implementing Digital Archives: Issues of Trust” *Archival Science* (2011) 11: 311-327. (springerlink website)
- Prom, Christopher J. “Using Web Analytics to Improve Online Access to Archival Resources” *American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011): 158-184. (SAA Website)
Week 13, April 23 – ENLISTING ASSISTANCE FROM NON-ARCHIVISTS TO ENHANCE ACCESS: CROWD SOURCING & “CITIZEN ARCHIVISTS”

Readings:

- Examine the National Archives website to see how NARA uses blogs to enlist support from patrons to develop access paths to records. ([www.blogs.archives.gov](http://www.blogs.archives.gov))
- Examine the National Archives website to see how NARA is seeking to enlist help to index the 1940 Federal census. (“Join Us!” section at [www.archives.com/1940census](http://www.archives.com/1940census))

PLEASE KEEP MAY 7 OPEN ON YOUR SCHEDULES IN CASE WE NEED TO CANCEL AND RESCHEDULE A CLASS