

**Term:** Community Outreach and Advocacy - Use of Archival Materials in Education

**Title:** Archives Education as Outreach to K-16 Teachers and Students

**Word Count:** 1500 (content split evenly between K-12 and Higher Ed)

Broadly defined, outreach is a tool through which targeted populations can learn more about your archive, your collections, or services. Encompassing a wide-ranging array of activities, outreach can include community scanning days, open houses, exhibits, speakers, workshops, and more. These initiatives serve to bring new audiences into archives and make your materials more accessible to diverse groups. Sometimes seen as a subset of these activities, educational outreach opportunities in archives can range in intensity from single instruction sessions to full credit-bearing classes taught by archivists. However, even more generalized outreach benefits significantly from components strictly seen as educational. Without educational components focused on the why, what, and how behind archives work, in conjunction with experiences tailored to be relevant to the group targeted by the outreach initiative, individuals impacted by outreach may become future users who do not understand your skills and services and might return with misconceptions or may be unlikely to return beyond the initial visit. By integrating hands-on educational experiences, all types of initiatives can accomplish outreach goals of increasing access and reach into a community and teach archive, primary source, and information literacy at the same time.

In this section I will discuss two outreach initiatives, one with middle school social studies teachers and the other with students in an undergraduate history methods course. Both activities focus not just on the materials found in archives and what services we offer, but also an explanation of what an archive is, why archives exist, how to use archives, and why having an awareness and understanding of all of these seemingly unrelated aspects is important. To situate these initiatives within a broader institutional context, I am writing as an archivist at an R2 university in a state with a significant rural population and limited resources. Within the archives are three staff members, two faculty-level archivists, and one faculty-level department head, all responsible for relatively discrete duties within the archive. My responsibilities include managing all manuscript and digital collections, digital preservation, student worker supervision, outreach, front-facing reference and circulation duties, and sharing the teaching load. Though outreach can often be overlooked in environments where archivists are split between an overwhelming number of responsibilities, it is a core function that should be considered critical to stimulate growth of your patron base, resulting in increased and higher quality use of materials. With those two facts in mind, I have included a graphic that provides tips, ideas, and benefits of outreach to teachers in students in K-12 and college settings at scalable levels accessible to even the lone arranger. College and K-12 populations were chosen because of the more immediate relevance of archives use to these groups. Community populations are immensely variable, unique, and frequently difficult to characterize in a generalized way and are outside the scope of this work.

One avenue that requires a comparatively minor amount of resources and staff time but has the potential for huge benefits is reaching out to area K-12 schools to provide professional

development on using primary sources in teaching. Many schools provide professional development opportunities for teachers throughout the year, and actively seek speakers on various topics. With resources at a premium for most schools, connecting teachers to free local resources that can maximize the effectiveness of their teaching is critical and results in highly effective outreach. For this project, I was initially approached to give five tours to teachers of every grade level, with each tour covering what local history resources we have available, what an archive is, and why primary sources are critical in K-12 education. Based on teacher response to the tours, I was then asked if I was interested in conducting a three-hour long workshop on a similar topic. The workshop was attended by thirty middle school social studies teachers and focused on the importance of primary sources as a method of teaching primary source and information literacy as well as analysis activities, strategies for finding primary sources in the archive and online, and an overview of what archivists do and how the archive can support teachers. During this workshop, I focused on teaching these topics through hands-on activities and participant interaction, including analyses techniques and options for assignments. I was heavily influenced by two trainings on this topic, both free and provided by the Library of Congress. These include the Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Program and the TPS Professional Development Providers Institute, which provide training on how to teach effectively using primary source materials as well as a framework for teaching teachers. These programs provided me with a national context and a variety of resources to present to teachers for primary sources on subjects that are not represented in our collections but are required subjects to cover for state and national educational standards. As a result of the workshop, I created connections to content specialists at the county board of education and will work with teachers to provide additional professional development on this and other similar topics in the future. In response to feedback, my institution is currently working to create educational resources such as primary source sets and lesson plans using our resources that will be hosted on our institutional repository and available to educators throughout the state.

The focus for outreach at my institution are those who we have identified as our primary audience: faculty and students at our university. Every semester we work with history faculty in the history research methods course to teach students about primary sources, material culture, and archival research. For these courses, archivists work with professors to accomplish their course goals using archival resources and facilitating experiences conducting archival research. Classes meet in the archive during relevant sessions and topics discussed by archivists include searching for relevant resources, how to read finding aids, analyzing primary sources, and incorporating primary sources as evidence into research. Sessions focused on the practical aspects of archives philosophy and use not only necessary to complete assignments immediately relevant for classwork, but also information relevant to broader use of archives outside of our institution. Activities included primary source analyses featuring physical items and reflective discussions of how these analyses can translate into understanding modern primary sources. While the embedded archivist approach may seem straightforward, I emphasize using these experiences as opportunities to forge relationships with professors and create assignments or opportunities for students to use our resources outside and inside the classroom in innovative ways. Though history is the most obvious subject upon which to focus when conducting outreach, archivists at my institution have worked with course subjects such as fine arts,

journalism, and general first year critical thinking classes. A future expansion of these sessions that is more resource intensive includes archivists leveraging their faculty status to teach full classes, especially first year critical thinking courses that focus on the intersection of information and archives literacy and integrating archives education early in a student's college career.

The two initiatives discussed previously are only two of many avenues through which outreach can be conducted, and they are by no means the only types of outreach done by my archive. While these two methods of outreach have worked for my current archive, they may not be feasible for everyone. To create a plan for outreach at your institution, one of the first things that any archivist must consider is what populations are important to your archive or institution. As an archive in a university, we prioritize our students and faculty, while a historical society may prioritize K-12 students or adult community members. When considering possible outreach options after groups are identified, it is critical to remain cognizant of the capabilities and resources, both human and otherwise, of your archive. For instance, if you don't have access to classroom space within your archive or within your building, outreach will need to be conducted in alternative spaces that require additional consideration for transportation and use of archival materials or digitization and use of digital analogs. In all outreach situations within education-based environments, it is critical to understand that most archivists are generalists outside of the field of archives and the individuals you will be working with are specialists in their areas. Listen to them and figure out how their needs intersect with what we do as archivists and provide information in a compelling way that seeks to enhance the work of the individuals you are working with. Lastly, when an outreach session does occur, reflect on the effectiveness of the session by talking with participants. Respond to their feedback by adapting your course materials to better meet the needs of the intended group. If your reflection results in an assessment that the method of outreach was ineffective, discard the method and learn from the experience. Basing outreach initiatives on a desire to educate individuals about archives beyond a surface level and incorporating further reflection to hone and improve future sessions will result in an educational outreach program that maximizes impact and minimizes ineffective use of resources.

Population	Outreach Tips	Outreach Ideas	Benefits
K-12 Students	Scale materials to be appropriate to the grade level—Kindergarten and high school students are different, and younger students require high interest materials that are more hands-on in nature.	Lower effort initiatives involve focusing on outreach to teachers, but higher effort initiatives involve visiting schools and conducting activities in the classroom or creating circulatable kits of copies of resources and affiliated activities.	Students at any level will gain exposure and awareness of what archives are and what they do. Higher level students can learn about how archives factor into preserving and educating people about their collections.
K-12 Teachers	Make integrating materials easy by having ready made and easily accessible resources. Minimize hurdles. Listen to teachers to determine what resources, techniques, or activities might be most relevant to their practice.	Create and make available primary source sets, lesson plans, and activities using your collections. Provide teacher support and act as a contact person for the archive. Higher intensity options include in-person visits to schools or class field trips to the archive.	In addition to improving learning outcomes related to information and archives literacy for students, working with teachers allows archives to extend their impact to <u>all</u> of the teacher's students taught using these resources and methods.
Higher Education Students	Minimize usage of non-contextualized jargon, as it can prove alienating. Include student thoughts and feelings in teaching situations. Be accessible and flexible but make your boundaries clear.	Create themed open houses or exhibits to provide ways for students to engage with materials outside of a traditional classroom setting. Focus on materials that are related to current assignments or their life.	Providing exposure to and active use of archives at a higher level improves critical information literacy skills for students to use in their area of study and in their lives as individuals.
Higher Education Professors	Create outreach tailored to the subject matter to ensure the best student learning outcomes. Minimize barriers using archival materials in classes and remain flexible to new ideas. Be aware of what resources you have and professional standards that can't be compromised.	Conduct targeted outreach at the department and individual level by creating guides about what relevant materials and subjects are present in your archive and what support you can provide. Consider creating presentations or workshops for using archival materials for research and teaching.	As subject specialists, professors can improve your understanding of your collections and serve as collaborators for completing innovative projects with students or with the professors themselves. Professors can serve as powerful advocates for the importance of your institution.