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Archival Literacy: Reading the Rhetoric of Digital Archives in the Undergraduate Classroom

This essay explores the pedagogical project of integrating digital archival research into the undergraduate classroom. We contend that rather than simply asking students to conduct such research, we should teach them first to read digital archives critically. We define this archival literacy by identifying how students might assess the rhetorical properties of various digital archives.

Archives have figured prominently in scholarly conversations across the humanities, as researchers have long considered the role archival methods and methodologies play in their historiographic scholarship.[1] Only recently, however, have scholar-*teachers* turned their attention from the archive's role in research to its role in pedagogy. Figures such as Joanne T. Diaz, Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack, Jane Greer, Wendy Hayden, Megan A. Norcia, James P. Purdy, and Pamela VanHaitsma are among a growing cohort that argues for the relevance of this practice, claiming that when students conduct archival research, they have the opportunity to engage in genuine scholarly inquiry.[2] Greer notes, for instance, that through working in archives, students learn to "locat[e] primary sources, analyz[e] primary sources, and us[e] primary sources to participate in ongoing scholarly conversations" (3). Norcia elaborates on this

idea, pointing out that students who engage in archival research gain experience in "sophisticated historiography" by "asking questions about the nature of presentation of the past, establishing authority in relation to a historical object, and considering issues of audience, especially how to contextualize this material for future users" (94). The end result of such research, Hayden concludes, is that undergraduates are invited "into the scholarly community," where they find "they have much to contribute" (418).

It is crucial to pause before asking students to leverage digital archival materials in their writing projects and prompt them first to *read* these archives carefully and critically.

The advent of *digital* archives has only furthered such a pedagogical project. As Purdy explains, the spatial and temporal convenience of digital archives "makes using and teaching digital archival materials feasible as doing so need not entail traveling or taking students to distant locations" (41). In a course on African American women writers, for example, teachers are now able to easily point students to the New York Public Library's Digital Schomburg collection; or in a course on Native American rhetorics, students can access the numerous sources available through the Utah American Indian Digital Archive. These are just two examples from among a vast number of digital archives now available. Indeed, from institutionally sanctioned sites such as the Library of Congress's Digital Collections to commercially supported archives such as Ancestry, digital archives are ubiquitous in our online culture. Scholar Helen Freshwater acknowledges this ubiquity and sees it as reflective of a "recent societal obsession," in which researchers as well as everyday citizens turn to archives for answers to personal, communal, cultural, and scholarly questions (732).

Our essay responds to this new archival situation by considering ways to teach with digital archives during this moment of abundance, ease, and even obsession. While our goal, like that of the scholars above, is to advance the work of bringing archives into the undergraduate classroom, our project is not to offer pedagogies that will enable students to *use* digital archives for their research. Rather, we see that it is crucial to pause before asking students to leverage digital archival materials in their writing projects and prompt them first to *read* these archives carefully and critically. Our work is to set out what an archival literacy might look like for students engaging these new and compelling digital entities.

In characterizing this archival literacy, we build on Purdy's argument regarding digital archives. He writes, "Millions of daily Internet users, including ourselves and our students, are crucial players in digital archives. Literacy in a networked, digital world, then, will increasingly involve the ability to ethically,

critically, and effectively create, navigate, evaluate, and use digital archives" (43). In agreement with Purdy, our purpose is to suggest ways for students to examine digital archives. The key to our discussion, however, is that we ask them to do so by cultivating a certain kind of archival literacy. The particular type of archival literacy we set out emphasizes reading digital archives to understand and analyze their *rhetorical* properties. Such a pedagogical project contributes to recent scholarship regarding the archive's rhetoricity developed by scholars such as Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, Jean Bessette, Barbara Biesecker, Cara Finnegan, Charles Morris, Madhu Narayan, K. J. Rawson, and Janine Solberg. These scholars argue that archives—both material and digital—are not "passive receptacle[s] for historical documents"; they are not "benign research space[s]" (Morris 115). Rather, archives are "dynamic sites of rhetorical power" (115). Archives are rhetorical, these scholars contend, because they are created in time and space by human beings who make decisions about the selection, preservation, and presentation of materials, and each of these decisions (and more) shapes in important ways the kinds of meanings that can emerge from the sites. In this essay, we redirect the scholarly discussion about the rhetoricity of archives by considering how we might teach students to analyze digital archives for their rhetorical properties with the goal of assessing the ways these properties affect and inflect the research and knowledge-building process. While *all* archives should prompt the kind of inspection we promote in this essay, we see special value in investigating with students the archive's *digital* iteration.

As we extend scholarship that investigates the archive's rhetoricity and contribute to the conversation about introducing archival research into the undergraduate classroom, we also add pedagogical depth to a growing conversation about the promise (and perils) of digital archives and digital historiography more generally. Scholars such as Shannon Carter and Kelly Dent, Ellen Cushman, Tarez Samra Graban, Alexis E. Ramsey-Tobienne, Ashley Reed, and Jim Ridolfo have astutely discussed the potential for emergent digital archives to change traditional research methods and methodologies and prompt new ones.[3] Yet few in rhetoric and composition have engaged digital archives from a pedagogical perspective.[4] That is, there is little scholarship that investigates, as we do here, how teachers might bring digital archives into our classrooms and engage them with our students. To be sure, there are any number of ways teachers might productively build on this emergent body of scholarship to imagine possibilities for teaching archival literacy by, for example, focusing student attention on the overlapping practices of searching, navigating, using,

tagging, and even creating digital archives (see Rice). We argue here, however, that asking students to learn about the *rhetorical* characteristics of digital archives is integral to understanding the archive's power, its promise, and, indeed, its problems.

Before we set out this pedagogical project, we want to meditate on one final point of complexity. As the numerous examples in our essay reveal, examining digital archives is especially complicated because of their rich variety—a variety that at times elicits definitional debate. Archival specialists and digital humanities scholars such as Kate Theimer, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price ask what digital archives are and debate whether or not certain digital formations fall into the category "archive."[5] Instead of entering into a litmus testing of digital resources, we are interested in embracing the diversity of digital sites that claim to be archives. In order to look broadly at what our students might encounter when they conduct research online, we approach the term *archive* loosely. Some of the archives we examine follow Theimer's designation of what many scholars understand digital archives to be: "online groupings of digital copies of non-digital original materials, often comprised of materials (many of which are publications) located in different physical repositories or collections, purposefully selected and arranged in order to support a scholarly goal" ("Archives"). Others, however, collect materials for nonscholarly purposes. Some bring together materials that were born digital, and still others invite users to contribute to the site by offering their own artifacts and memories. Many are robust and multiform, offering links to special collections, teaching materials, information about historical context, and bibliographies. With this variety in mind, we define digital archives inclusively, as any digital resource that collects and makes accessible materials for the purposes of research, knowledge building, or memory making.

Working from this broad definition of digital archives, we show how students might develop an archival literacy that enables them to read these sites rhetorically, gaining a deep sense of what a site does and, crucially, what it asks users to do. As the sections below demonstrate, the archival literacy we promote asks students to approach digital archives by exploring the rhetorical properties many sites exhibit: archival selection, exigence, narrative, collaboration, and constitution. Through these investigative nodes, we ultimately hope to persuade teachers to cultivate in students a literacy that involves pausing to attend to the rhetorical properties of digital archives. Each of this essay's major sections also reveals, though, a secondary project of ours: rather than

focusing on one particular digital archive and examining its varied rhetorical components, we treat more than twenty digital archives. Our purpose in identifying and examining these many sites is to underscore the rich variety in, and stark differences among, the digital archives available for pedagogical exploration. All digital archives are not the same; each one requires users to leverage their archival literacy as a means to understand the archive's particular rhetorical import. Finally, while the main goal of this essay is to help teachers engage students in broad-based discussions about the rhetorical significance of digital archives, our conclusion offers more specific examples of projects teachers might use to help students further hone their archival literacy skills.

Archival Selection

> *We need to recognize that archives . . . function as terministic screens, simultaneously revealing and concealing "facts," at once enabling and constraining interpretation.*
> **—Cara Finnegan, "What Is This a Picture Of?: Some Thoughts on Images and Archives"**

A primary way archives garner rhetorical power is through the process of selection. Those who build archives choose what is important and what is not, and in doing so, they make implicit arguments about historiographic significance. In this way, as Cara Finnegan argues, "archives . . . function as terministic screens"; they both reveal and conceal, "at once enabling and constraining interpretation" (117–18). Thus, whereas Diana Taylor posits that "what makes an object *archival* is the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis" (19, emphasis added), we also argue that this is the same process whereby it becomes *rhetorical*. As such, a first step in cultivating students' archival literacy is considering with them how archives make arguments about the past by investigating what the archives include and exclude, or how, in Kenneth Burke's terms, they select and deflect archival materials (*Language* 45).

The selective and therefore rhetorical nature of archives gains particular pedagogical relevance in digital contexts, where archivists, researchers, and everyday enthusiasts can easily publish archives online. Programs such as Omeka and Archive-It make building individualized archives a relatively simple task. As the Omeka site promises, it is a "free, flexible, and open-source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions. Its 'five-minute setup' makes launching an online exhibition

as easy as launching a blog" ("Project"). By virtue of the relative ease for digital archivists of any stripe to build, publish, and make accessible primary and archival materials, the rhetorical project of digital archives becomes even more pronounced. Selecting and deflecting artifacts for display, novice and expert digital archivists alike customize archives toward their own ends.

Teachers should invite students to explore the significance of this archival customization and selection, and one way to do so would be by examining a plethora of archives dedicated to the same subject matter. Take digital archives dedicated to the civil rights era, for example. A quick Google search for "civil rights archives" reveals a number of sites where academic and non-academic archivists have selected and collected documents for specific purposes and toward different ends. Teachers might ask students to compare the rhetorical effects of these selections by considering how the videotaped oral histories available through the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute offer different kinds of information than the Queens College Civil Rights Archives, which are "particularly strong in documenting the civil rights work by Queens College students during the early 1960s" (Queens). Students might reflect upon how these different emphases, and related selections of different artifact genres, condition users' experiences in the archive, shaping their understandings of what the period was like and how it should now be remembered.

Through this exploration of archival selection, students would no doubt discover the attention paid to major figures in the civil rights movement, with many digital archives dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. Teachers might ask students to consider, however, the ways some digital archivists have tried to draw researchers' attention away from famous figures by choosing to select or highlight lesser-known participants in the movement. The Wednesdays in Mississippi: Civil Rights as Woman's Work site would offer students a poignant example. This archive focuses attention on the Wednesdays in Mississippi (WIMS) project, which was the only program of the period "organized by women, for women, as part of a national women's organization" ("About Us"). The archive's goal is to prompt researchers to "look beyond the household names and headline events to explore the important work done behind the scenes."

To mine the complexity of archival selection, students could compare the materials chosen for the WIMS archive to those that make up the robust digital archives found on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change site ("Archive"). As students meditate on the implications of focusing archival attention on well- or lesser-known figures, they might also

attend to the selections of materials within the archives. The WIMS site is certainly less robust than the King site. In the former, users could read all the documents in one sitting, while the King site would seemingly take a lifetime. Students could reflect upon how the WIMS archive with less material might enable users to gain a fuller or more complete sense of what a specific group, as opposed to a larger movement, was trying to do. But the limited nature of its archival selections might also elicit questions about the significance of the program. Students could debate why (or why not) researchers might choose to study the civil rights era via King rather than the WIMS women due to the plethora of documents at users' fingertips. Such conversations would hopefully draw students' attention to the rhetoricity of selection in digital archives, to the effects of those selection processes, and, ultimately, to how archives "function as terministic screens," with different archival selections "simultaneously . . . enabling and constraining interpretation" of past events (Finnegan 118).

Archival Exigence

> *Any* exigence *is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be.*
> **—Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation"**

Like all rhetorical entities, digital archives emerge out of a rhetorical situation. They function in response to a need or an exigence, what Lloyd Bitzer calls "an imperfection marked by urgency" (6). The imperfection typically marking archival exigencies is, of course, the "urgent" need to preserve important materials. However, these exigencies may have different nuances, with "important" framed in different ways. For archives such as the WIMS site discussed above, as well as Cornell University's Home Economics Archive and the Denshō Digital Archive related to Japanese internment during World War II, the exigence is to create significance for and attract attention to a group, subject, or event that might otherwise go unnoticed or forgotten. And while archives such as the Yad Vashem World Center for Holocaust Research and the Independent Institute's Pearl Harbor Archive are created in response to historical events long embedded in public memory, archives also respond to more recent tragedies, with Virginia Tech University's April 16 Archive and Northeastern University's Our Marathon: The Boston Bombing Digital Archive being examples in this category. Whatever the exigency might be, it is critical for students to explore

the digital archive's reason for being and to see it as a rhetorical project, crafted in response to circumstances situated in time and place.

Digital archives are ideal for such exploration because, like everyday websites, they usually include "About" pages that articulate the archive's exigencies. Less obvious but perhaps more important for student inspection, though, is the exigence an archive identifies for *researchers*, as many digital archives project the kind of work they hope researchers will take up in response to the holdings collected on the site. Consider, for example, how students might explore the multiple exigencies at work in the September 11 Digital Archive, a collaborative effort of the American Social History Project at the City University of New York Graduate Center and the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University.

As we might expect, the "About" page on the September 11 site explains that the archive came into being to preserve records of the 9/11 tragedy. Yet the digital archivists also identify another, future-oriented exigence directed at the researcher:

> Our goal is to create a permanent record of the events of September 11, 2001. . . . Through maintaining these collections, we hope to foster some positive legacies of those terrible events by allowing people to tell their stories, making those stories available to a wide audience, providing historical context for understanding those events and their consequences, and helping historians and archivists improve their practices based on the lessons we learn from this project. ("About")

Analyzing this passage with students, teachers could prompt reflection on the archive's directives: users are expected to listen to personal stories rather than published or formal accounts of the tragedies, and this process is intended to help the user "foster positive legacies" and learn "lessons" about both the tragic event and related research "practices." With the exigence for researchers quite clearly set out, students might consider how the stated expectation for archival use could condition the ways users leverage the materials archived there. What possibilities are opened up or closed down because of how the digital archive constructs the rhetorical situation for the user? What if a user worked against the exigency of this archive? How *else* could the user respond?

Students might delve more deeply into this type of investigation by contemplating other exigencies articulated throughout the 9/11 site and additional ways researchers are expected to respond. Of particular interest is the special collection Ground One: Voices from Post-911 Chinatown, which works in partnership with the Museum of Chinese in the Americas. Upon inspection,

students would quickly learn this collection came into being because Chinatown was "the largest residential area affected by 9/11" ("Ground One"). Yet students would also see that, besides this more general purpose, the collection highlights another exigence: "'Ground One' aims to provide an in-depth portrait of the ways in which the identity of a community, largely neglected by national media following 9/11, has been indelibly shaped by that day" ("Ground One"). Part of this collection's exigence, in other words, is not simply the tragedy of 9/11, or the effects of "that day" on "the identity of a community," but the fact that national media "largely neglected" to report on these effects.

Key to this discussion about archival exigence would be for students to contextualize the particular "imperfection marked by urgency" of the Ground One collection, placing it in conversation with the more general exigence identified for the entire September 11 Digital Archive. In doing so, students could explore how the "lessons" learned about 9/11 might be not only about terrorism, loss, and recovery, but also about racism, (in)visibility, and the allocation of media resources in times of crisis. By identifying the singular, multiple, and possibly even competing exigencies set out in digital archives, students may realize the varied ways archives respond to situations and circumstances. Students would learn how digital archives craft what the "obstacle" is, to borrow from Bitzer (6), and how they often set out specific ways for researchers to overcome it.

Archival Narratives

> *Narrative probability refers to the formal features of a story conceived as a discrete sequence of thought and/or action in life or literature. . . . [I]t concerns the question of whether or not a story coheres or "hangs together," whether or not the story is free of contradictions. Narrative fidelity concerns the "truth qualities" of a story, the degree to which it accords with the logic of good reasons: the soundness of its reasoning and the value of its values.*
>
> **—Walter Fisher, "The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration"**

Many digital archives are straightforward in terms of presentation: they provide researchers with almost immediate access to primary texts through links to archival holdings. Other digital archives, however, delay access by attempting to create a historical narrative for users. In this way, archivists leverage what

Walter Fisher calls "[n]arrative probability" and "[n]arrative fidelity": they show users how selected artifacts from the larger archive "hang together" without "contradiction," creating a story that functions in "accor[d] with the logic of good reasons" (349). This latter type of digital archive comes in multiple forms and in some instances is identified as an "exhibit." Much like the exhibits one encounters in a brick-and-mortar museum or library, sites such as the Nelson Mandela Digital Archive Project exhibit and the Greenwich Village History exhibits display digitized artifacts in order to tell a story about that person or place ("Browse").[6] While the digital exhibit certainly makes use of narrative, other archival formations also take up this work. Here we focus our pedagogical inspection on the "document projects" within the Women and Social Movements site.[7]

Developed by historians Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, Women and Social Movements offers users over 2,600 primary documents related to women's rights from 1600 to 2000. When originally putting together this vast array of primary materials, Sklar and Dublin identified a problem with the simple listing of document after document. They write, "now that the World Wide Web offers a sea of information, we wish there were more sites that took the next step and helped scholars construct meaning from that sea" ("Creating").[8] To address this issue and help researchers make meaning from their archival materials, Sklar and Dublin have developed their "document projects."

These projects begin with guest contributors, all of whom are scholars, and many of whom are collaborating with their students, composing a research question. As the site details, such questions include "How Did Oberlin Women Students Draw on Their College Experience to Participate in Antebellum Social Movements, 1831–1861?" and "How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918–1923?" (Lasser; Mungarro). Then these same guest archivists respond by creating a mini-archive or document list that answers the research question through a process of accretion. Most important to our point about archival narrative, though, is how creators also offer narrative framing for their mini-archives: they compose introductions to the primary documents that help readers draw connections among the documents and discern significance.

For instance, to introduce their response to the question regarding Oberlin students and antebellum social movements, Professor Carol Lasser and her student collaborators write:

> The documents in this project demonstrate that the story of Oberlin women before the Civil War was neither an uncomplicated chronicle of progress towards the realization of "woman's rights" and interracial sisterhood, nor a tale of the triumph of gender conservatives who effectively promoted domestically-enclosed boundaries to women's work. Rather, the historical record suggests the complexity of the evangelical construction of womanhood, and its implications for pathways to women's empowerment. ("Introduction")

By bringing specific artifacts together and narrating the complicated "story of Oberlin women," Lasser and her students help users see how historians connect the archival dots to construct meaning out of archival confusion. Such work would certainly be instructive to students of historiographic method and meaning making. But for teachers and students interested in the rhetorical dimensions of archives, the "document projects" offer much more to consider.

Focused on questions relating to how the projects function rhetorically, students might reflect upon how users are positioned through the narrativizing process. They might ask, is the user expected to create history or consume it?

Focused on questions relating to how the projects function rhetorically, students might reflect upon how users are positioned through the narrativizing process. They might ask, is the user expected to create history or consume it? Building on responses to this question (which would likely be the latter), students might imagine how they could enact their own historiographic thinking by making different combinations of archival artifacts and seeing how these combinations tell a story that "hangs together" in a different way (Fisher 349). What would it mean, for instance, to place the documents under the Oberlin heading in conversation with documents under other headings or research questions? How might students work against the narrative probability and fidelity throughout the "document projects" to create archival narratives of their own? By asking questions such as these, students would have the opportunity to see how the work of archival narrative ties artifacts to ideas as well as logical structures, potentially constraining users' creative historiographic thinking in the process.

Archival Collaborations

[C]ollaboration [is] a cooperative endeavor involving two or more people that results in a rhetorical product, performance, or event. This definition of collaboration considers process fully

> *as much as product, examining the shared social and rhetorical practices that produce such discursive outcomes as books and articles, speeches and sermons, petition drives and conventions.*
> **—Lindal Buchanan, "Forging and Firing Thunderbolts: Collaboration and Women's Rhetoric"**

Lindal Buchanan defines collaboration as a deeply rhetorical endeavor, a process "as much as product," that often results in a wide range of "discursive outcomes" (43). Like the "speeches and sermons, petition drives and conventions" that Buchanan examines in her historical study, twenty-first-century digital archives are often produced through rhetorical processes of collaboration between archivists and users. As Alexis E. Ramsey-Tobienne explains, digital archives have begun to take advantage of web 2.0 innovations that invite user participation. Whereas in previous archives the line between the archivist and the researcher was clearly drawn—the archivist collected and catalogued what was in the archive, and the researcher used the artifacts supplied—new technologies blur this line. So-called archives 2.0 now invite and "facilitate . . . collaborative endeavors," prompting users to involve themselves in the very creation of archives (Ramsey-Tobienne 6).[9] We see two forms of archival collaboration that especially warrant pedagogical attention: archival contributions and archival crowdsourcing.

Archival Contributions

Sites such as the Grateful Dead Archive Online ("Contribute"), the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank ("Share"), and the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN) encourage collaborations that fall into the category of archival contributions. While Purdy highlights the significance of the DALN for scholars and students of rhetoric and composition, we draw attention to the collaborative endeavors of the Bracero History Archive (BHA). This bilingual archive has collected over three thousand documents and artifacts relating to the largest guest-worker program in U.S. history. Most important to our discussion about archival collaborations and contributions is the "Tell Your Story" link (see Figure 1).

Clicking this link, users have the opportunity to collaborate in the digital archival experience by contributing their own stories of experiences with the Bracero program. User-collaborators are prompted to offer a traditional narrative through writing or audio or to upload an image or video; once they have uploaded their contributions, they are invited to identify the key words

Figure 1."Contribute a Story or File" option via "Tell Your Story" link within the Bracero History Archive: http://braceroarchive.org/contribution.

that distinguish their entries, enabling others to search for specific terms. Examining sites such as the BHA, students might interrogate the effects of this collaboration, including the assertion that the history of the Bracero program is made through the contributions of archival participants. Students could reflect upon what this investment in the user's experience suggests about how the archive understands history and what should "count" as a legitimate source that accounts for the program. Certainly such thinking would enable students to consider the rhetorical framing of history and archival research.

Yet, as students turn attention to the changed rhetorical situation of digital archival collaborations, students might also explore a range of other concerns. With such collaboration, the artifacts are not static; they are open to continual contribution and change, and students might ask themselves whether they see this new situation as offering a sense of historical inclusiveness, or if they read it as a loss of archival control. To pursue this point, students could investigate the mechanisms the BHA puts in place both to garner collaborator interest and monitor contributions. As Ramsey-Tobienne suggests, "one downside of archives 2.0 or participatory archives is readily evident—the need for participation, the need for consumer buy-in" (8). Teachers should consider with

students, then, how sites publicize their archival projects in order to invite user contributions, how contributions are monitored to ensure collaborators are telling legitimate or relevant stories, and how collaboration may be forestalled or undermined when archivists do not reach the most significant stakeholder communities.[10]

Archival Crowdsourcing

Through archival crowdsourcing, digital archivists make use of the crowd by inviting users to create metadata for the site. This metadata often comes in the form of tagging artifacts with descriptors that will enable researchers to extract artifacts that are coded with those specific terms or transcribing archival documents to make them searchable for future researchers. Such forms of archival collaboration have become especially important tools for archivists, whose holdings often include scores of artifacts that have already been digitized but have not been tagged or transcribed, and that thus remain, in many ways, hidden to potential researchers. Thus the promise of these kinds of collaborations is that, by involving the "crowd," there is accelerated access to archived materials (Reynolds). To direct students' attention to this particular archival practice, teachers might introduce them to the popular National Archives's "Citizen Archivist Dashboard" program or the University College London's "Transcribe Bentham" initiative. Here, though, we center attention on the DIY History project run by the University of Iowa. Through participation in this project, students could analyze the rhetorical nature of archival collaborations by becoming part of the crowd and taking up the work of transcription themselves.[11]

In a course on women's rhetorics, for example, students might work specifically with the collection entitled Iowa Women's Lives: Letters and Diaries. This collection, like the broader DIY History project, encourages users to transcribe primary materials. Teachers could couple student transcriptions of diaries in the collection with readings by scholars such as Kimberly Harrison and Jennifer Sinor on women's diary keeping as rhetorical action. To initiate class discussion, teachers might first ask students to reflect on their transcription process and the intellectual work required to make sense of the diarists' daily reckonings and often indiscernible handwriting. Having read about the rhetoricity of women's diary keeping, students might move on to explore how their transcriptions mirror, contradict, or add nuance to the kinds of "self-rhetorics" that Harrison identifies—rhetorics that "cultivat[ed] agency and a sense of the

rhetorical self" (171). Finally, and in order to focus attention on transcription as a form of crowdsourced archival collaboration, teachers might ask students to think about Buchanan's ideas regarding the rhetorical process (rather than the product) of collaboration. Students might consider not only how their participation drew them into the practice and history of diary keeping, but also how their transcription work shaped their relationship to the archive itself. In what ways did the process of transcribing influence their interest in this digital archive and its holdings? What did the invitation to collaborate and the work of transcription do for them and to them?

Archival Constitutions

Constitutions are of primary importance in suggesting what coordinates one will think by.
—Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*

We conclude our pedagogical exploration of the digital archive's rhetorical dimensions by turning to archival constitutions. Here we are interested in examining with students how digital archives rhetorically constitute both group and individual identities. In thinking about group identity formation, Kenneth Burke makes clear that the act of constitution brings individuals together as a group, whereby members identify with one another as likeminded in some way, agreeing on the "coordinates one will think by" (367). This move toward group identification and constitution is deeply rhetorical because, as Maurice Charland asserts, members of a group "do not exist in nature" or "outside of rhetoric," but "within a discursively constituted history" (137). Our proposition that archives have a hand in group constitution is not new. In fact, as archivist Elisabeth Kaplan explains, brick-and-mortar archives have long been imbricated in the work of "apprais[ing], collect[ing], and preserv[ing] the props with which notions of identity are built" (126; see also Hametz). Below, we first consider how students might engage this idea of group constitution through digital archives. A second concern, though, is for students to investigate the digital archive's role in *individual* constitutions and identity formations. As Dana Anderson writes, rhetoric functions to constitute not only group but also individual identity: through the work of "strategic self-constitution," people craft themselves as unique individuals, one distinct from the next (38). We see it as important for students to investigate how individuals also constitute their identities through the personal digital archives they contribute to every day.

Group Constitutions

While many of the digital archives discussed already would be ripe for inspection as constitutive entities that cohere group identities, an especially salient pedagogical example is the recently created Arizona Queer Archives (AQA), based out of the Institute for LGBT Studies at the University of Arizona. AQA archivists understand that defining queer identity is a key concern for the archive's relevance as well as its historiographic and political power, and the AQA is overt about its participation in constituting and complicating *queer*, *LGBTQ*, and *Arizona* identities. Consider, for instance, how "About the Arizona Queer Archives" explains its purpose:

> The Arizona Queer Archives of the Institute for LGBT Studies at the University of Arizona works in collaboration with the heterogeneous lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), gender non-conforming, and *Two Spirit* communities throughout Arizona to identify, preserve, and make available records, papers, and ephemera of enduring (and endearing) value that document the distinct histories of these communities.

In examining this statement, students might first consider how the AQA constitutes *queer* and *LGBTQ* identity in order to render a more inclusive *Arizona* identity. In conjunction with the Arizona LGBTQ Storytelling Project, for example, the AQA's online collections offer video clips from interviews with various LGBTQ community members "throughout Arizona." In this sense, the AQA cultivates a digital presence that constitutes Arizona as a group identity inclusive of LGBTQ individuals.

At the same time, AQA archivists push the boundaries of *queer* and *LGBTQ* as group identities. In keeping with queer theory and activism more broadly, the AQA calls attention to the multiple inclusions and exclusions at work in the rhetorical constitution of these identities, challenging limiting constructions along the way. This practice is evidenced in the statement above, wherein the site names those who might not be defined as (or define themselves as) *queer* by identifying "gender non-conforming, and Two Spirit" people as potential contributors to the archive and thereby members of the group. Here and across the digital archive's website, the AQA repeatedly emphasizes the heterogeneity of "LGBTQ communities" and the intersectional nature of identity, thus providing many opportunities for students to analyze how the digital archive is working to create this group while archiving its materials. A critical part of an exploration of this kind would be for students to look beyond the "About" page to see how these complicated constitutional moves are exercised through

the archival materials themselves. Here students might investigate the ways particular entries to the digital archive, as much as the overt statements about what the archive sets out to do, help to constitute Arizona queer identity.

Individual Constitutions

The AQA offers a clear example of group constitution in process through archival statements and collection practices. But we also suggest that students attune themselves to the constitutive work of digital archives when it comes to *individual* identity. Students might take up this work by examining the personal archives they likely contribute to every day: social networking sites (SNSs), such as Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook. In theorizing what she calls "personal digital archive fever," Joanne Garde-Hansen writes that Facebook in particular "can be seen . . . as sine qua non of digital memory-making and personal archive building" (135, 144). Not surprisingly, then, scholars from a range of fields have studied SNSs such as Facebook, considering their archiving functions (McCown and Nelson; Zhao et al.). We build on this scholarship by underscoring the importance of having *students* develop an archival literacy that enables them to analyze how identity is rhetorically constituted through these sites.

A productive starting point would be for students to study archival constitutions via others' pages. For example, those students on Facebook could begin by analyzing the page of a "friend" in their social network. Key here would be for students to defamiliarize the page by approaching it not as an arhetorical collection of posts, updates, and tags, but as a complex archive that rhetorically constitutes identity through the accumulation of entries. Students would ask, in other words, how do we come to know this person by assessing consistencies and inconsistencies across archival artifacts? How does identity come into focus through the artifacts collected here? As students explore these questions, it would be important for them to reflect upon what users can and cannot control on the site, analyzing how these options (or lack thereof) inflect the archival memory-making process as well as the user's identity constitution. Garde-Hansen explains, for instance, that through changes to its interface, Facebook can "restructure, at will, how your life is organized, regardless of your objections" (136). Such restructuring does, of course, affect freedom of self-constitution, but students might also consider the wide range of curatorial strategies, including "hiding content," untagging, and "delaying approval of tags," which allow for constitutional flexibility and creativity (Zhao 8). The end result of this particular conversation, we hope, is an archival literacy that

sharpens students' attention to the decisions they might make about their own archival constitutions with awareness that, as Anderson states, "To *constitute* something . . . is to define its *substance*" (40).

Conclusion: Cultivating an Archival Literacy through Student Projects

We have discussed how students might cultivate an archival literacy by reading digital archives through the rhetorical lenses of selection, exigence, narrative, collaboration, and constitution. We hope our work provides a space of opening from which teachers might initiate conversation with students that revolves around the rhetorical concerns we set forth. Yet exploration of the rhetoricity of digital archives should not stop here. We expect that teachers and students would continue this conversation, first by identifying still other rhetorical properties of these digital formations, and, second, by developing a wide range of related projects that enable students to hone their archival literacy. In terms of further identification and analysis, we see that teachers could extend this discussion by delving more deeply into the *digital* component of these archives to consider how tagging, metadata, search capability, design interface, and other technological features shape the researcher's online experience. Additionally, and moving in a slightly different direction, teachers and students might also explore the kinds of sponsorship that enable and sustain these digital sites. How, they might ask, have technical support and expertise, donors, granting agencies, and fellowship opportunities propelled and directed digital archival formations in certain ways?

We have discussed how students might cultivate an archival literacy by reading digital archives through the rhetorical lenses of selection, exigence, narrative, collaboration, and constitution. We hope our work provides a space of opening from which teachers might initiate conversation with students that revolves around the rhetorical concerns we set forth. Yet exploration of the rhetoricity of digital archives should not stop here.

As we envision teachers and students taking up these types of conversations, we also hope that such discussions lead to more formal projects. By way of conclusion, we offer an idea of what such projects might look like by outlining a three-part assignment sequence. We imagine this sequence would be couched within a broader research project that students are pursuing, enabling them to sharpen their sense of how the digital archives with which they are working shape knowledge production and meaning making.

The first project aims to extend students' understanding of the rhetoricity of digital archives by asking them to turn attention to the sites they are using

to conduct actual research. Here, each student would identify three digital archives on or related to his or her subject and then compose a rhetorical analysis of those archives in terms of the five rhetorical properties introduced during class discussion. So whereas class conversation would have inspected digital archives relating to a wide range of subjects, this next step would prompt students to delve more deeply into understanding how the archives necessary for their research are indeed rhetorical entities that suggest specific ways of engaging the topic at hand.

The second project would move students from archival analysis to archival production. That is, after composing their rhetorical analyses, students would build digital archives of their own, assembling sources related to their specific research topics. Working on this project, students would continue to think about the rhetorical properties of selection, exigence, narrative, collaboration, and constitution, yet now for the purpose of creation and composition. No doubt, some teachers may hesitate to take on such a production-oriented project. There are, however, a number of options here, even for those teachers without high levels of expertise in digital making. The already mentioned Omeka, for example, "was first developed to help archivists and scholars publish their work online," but it "has evolved into a valuable tool for students and educators" ("Tech"). As such, Omeka offers two platforms, one of which does not require users to have their own server space. Omeka's website also includes a range of helpful pedagogical resources, including actual examples of student-developed archives and guides to getting started ("Tech"; "Use"). Whatever platforms students use to build their archives, the emphasis for this project would be on making purposeful rhetorical decisions about selection, exigence, narrative, collaboration, and constitution. Students would thus leverage their finely tuned archival literacy to build archives of their own.

Of course, actual production of a digital archive in project two would likely complicate the analyses students composed in project one. For instance, while reading archives to examine the rhetorical constitution of identity is indeed an intellectually rich activity in and of itself, the process of constituting identity through archive building would likely trouble these understandings, as students would realize how the constraints of digital platforms, the availability of materials, and their own digital composing abilities greatly shape this process. For this reason, the third project in the sequence asks students to reflect critically on project two, the archive-building project. In a reflective memo directed to the teacher, students would meditate on their archival composing process and respond to questions such as these: How easy or challenging was it to create a

digital archive in keeping with your initial intentions for selection, exigence, narrative, collaboration, and constitution? In what ways did your technological abilities and/or platform constraints enhance or complicate your plans? How and with what rhetorical effects did you thus revise those plans? How has this process shed new light on the five rhetorical properties considered in class? And, finally, what else have you discovered or learned about the rhetoric of digital archives—beyond the five properties—through this process of reading, using, and building archives? As students responded to these questions, they would reflect on the meaning they were trying to make through the digital archives they built, as well as the ways this meaning was realized in their finished products, thus enriching their rhetorically based archival literacy.

Whether teachers develop similar assignments and introduce students to the rhetorical concepts and questions we have raised or go in other directions more suited to the courses they teach, we hope we have persuaded teachers to pause before asking students to conduct research with digital archives. Instead of jumping in and using these sites for research from the start, students should first learn about digital archives' rhetorical complexity by analyzing a variety of these sites and even possibly producing archives of their own. Indeed, digital archives are multidimensional rhetorical entities that shape research and meaning making. Certainly we should invite students to conduct research through these archives, in hopes they find "they have much to contribute" to our "scholarly community" (Hayden 418). But just as significantly, we should teach students to understand how digital archives function as "dynamic site[s] of rhetorical power" (Morris 115). It is in this way that students might identify their own rhetorical power as critically literate users of and potential contributors to digital archives.

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Notes

1. In rhetoric and composition, see Alexander and Rhodes; Anderson and Enoch; Brereton; Connors; Donahue and Moon; Enoch; Glenn and Enoch; Hawhee and Olson; Kirsch and Rohan; Morris; Ramsey et al; Rawson.

2. See also Brand, Kendall, and Saunders; Buehl, Chute, and Fields; Clarke and Lee; Devos et al.; Grobman; Krause; Morgan; Purdy and Walker; Stephens and Thumma; Weber, Kramp, and Maserjian.

3. See also Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson, and McLeod; Cushman and Green; Graban, Ramsey-Tobienne, and Myers; Parrika; Wernimont.

4. For examples of scholars taking up this discussion see Miller; Norcia; Purdy; Rice.

5. See also Cunningham; Jimerson; Krause and Yakel; McGann; Menne-Haritz; Samouelian.

6. These sites might also be digital counterparts to physical exhibits in which artifacts are on display. See, for example, Columbia University's "Francis Perkins: Woman behind the New Deal."

7. The Women and Social Movements site is not defined as an exhibit by its creators, but it does display a selected set of primary documents and then builds a narrative around them, like many digital exhibits do.

8. For Sklar and Dublin's discussion of how the site came to be, see "Keeping Up."

9. Theimer elaborates on this definition of archives 2.0, deeming these sites "participatory archives" and defining them as "an organization, site or collection in which people other than archives professionals contribute knowledge or resources, resulting in increased understanding about archival materials, usually in an online environment" ("Exploring"). For discussions about the collaboration often involved in digital archival projects, see Enoch and Gold; Carter and Dent; Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson, and McLeod.

10. As Theimer explains, this publicizing involves a radical reorientation for the archivist. For archives to become participatory endeavors, and for the public to become engaged in the archives, "functions like outreach, including reaching out to new users on the web and in person, should be considered *primary* functions, not secondary ones" ("Future").

11. The IDEAL program at the University of Iowa is also conducting cutting-edge pedagogical work with these archives. See "Archives Alive."

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