

Follow-up to Proposal for Instructional Exercises: “The Surrogate Is Not Enough”

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From: **Anne Bahde** <abahde@rohan.sdsu.edu>

Date: Mon, Jan 30, 2012 at 12:28 PM

Subject: Re: SAA Publications Proposal

To: Peter Wosh <pw1@nyu.edu>

Cc: "Mattie Taormina, via an autoresponder" <taormina@stanford.edu>, "Smedberg, Heather" <hsmedberg@ucsd.edu>

Dear Peter,

Please forgive the delay in our reply—professional life does get busy this time of year! We respond generally to SAA’s response *in blue italics* about our proposed book of instructional exercises below, and our specific comments in response to the Publications Board are inserted *in blue italics* under the original comments from the Board. Please also note that there are several attachments to the email.

Again, we thank you and the Board very much for your time and for considering our proposal. We are thrilled that you think it worthy of consideration and thank you and the board for the thoughtful comments.

Best,

Anne Bahde, Heather Smedberg, Mattie Taormina

To further illustrate the type of publication we have in mind, we are attaching a mock up of a sample exercise in the format we envision for the book. To illustrate our approach to soliciting contributions, we’ve included a draft email “blast” and letter to contributors. We feel these documents may help us better characterize both the type of product and the format that we see working for this project.

We see this project as a valuable resource to archivists, and to special collections librarians who deal with materials in a variety of formats: archives, manuscripts, rare book collections, and media. We see the potential pool of contributors and audience as extending beyond SAA and ACRL alone. In terms of our core audience, however, we did envision librarians/archivists who tend to associate with either SAA or RBMS. In fact, there is much overlap between the membership of the two groups—indeed, many of us think of ourselves as one large group, but must choose an affiliation because we can’t afford to join and participate in both. It was in this spirit that we were excited to learn of SAA’s potential interest in creating joint publications with ACRL and alluded to that interest in our submission documents. Given the two audiences-- archivists and librarians--that we see for this project, a joint publication between the two primary organizations for these professionals seemed ideal. We certainly are open to submissions from museums and historical societies, so the inclusion of AASHL is an interesting idea to consider; however we are not sure how complicated a joint publication with more than two publishers might be. Perhaps there are other ways to involve other groups of archivists and museum professionals in the process.

Although we realize that many of the submitted exercises might have a K-12 focus, we do not see this group as our main focus. We would be delighted to learn from the field that our book was being used for K-12 or History Day education, but we really see this book as a tool in aiding practitioners in their formal archival literacy instruction efforts.

1) First, although the resource itself will be unique, there are many other models out there. The National Archives, the Library of Congress, the National Park Service, the American Social History Project, and many individual repositories have such sources available on their web sites. In addition, there has been a growing secondary literature concerning the ways in which archivists have partnered with teachers – from elementary through graduate school – on various educational programs. Some consideration of this literature and guide to such resources should be incorporated into the volume.

1) We see the compilation aspect of this book as one of its strengths. We envision a one-stop, ready-reference publication with a variety of exercises all in one place. We do envision an introduction that may explain scope and mention other models with a selected bibliography on instruction with primary sources if that is seen as desirable/useful.

2) Second, the proposal and the case studies focus especially on incorporating ACRL literacy standards into the exercises. Although this is useful, it also seems a little narrow and somewhat out of keeping with the types of standards that educators are interested in meeting. K-12 educators in particular need to link such programs to their state standards and testing, which it will be difficult for this book to address. In the museum world, for example, if exhibit content does not explicitly address content standards for particular age groups, teachers are unlikely (and in many cases cannot) bring students into the museum. There are other potential partnerships that you should consider for the proposal beyond ACRL. The American Association for State and Local History is one possible collaborator, and it might also help to include some perspectives from education faculty with expertise in preparing lesson plans as well as subject specialist faculty who are interested in integrating archival material into their courses/curricula. Perhaps it might be useful for you to obtain some critical reviews of the potential case studies from such specialists at an early stage of the process.

2) Upon further thought and consideration of the board's comments, we would like to drop the idea of standards altogether. One of our editors has a B.S. in Secondary Education and History so we toyed with the idea of adding this component to the book, but in the end, we felt that including standards would overrun the book's core strength. Standards are too variable and ever-changing so we feel it is best to steer clear of this moving target. We see this as a book by librarians/archivists and for librarians/archivists. We recognize that classroom teachers and university professors are expected to meet certain standards, and librarians should be cognizant of those standards, but it is in collaboration with the classroom teacher that an archivist may wish to adapt certain exercises to meet the specific criteria required by their state/university/etc.

Since we cannot anticipate and tie in the many, varied standards that the book's audience may need to address, we instead seek exercises from our colleagues that are pedagogically sound, engage critical thinking skills and that stimulate an interest in primary source materials, without necessarily conforming to a strict lesson-plan format based on any particular standards. Leaving off this aspect will pare down the book's scope and make for a more useful resource to practitioners.

3) Third, the project should appeal to archivists and educators in historical societies, public libraries, and government archives as well as in college and university settings. Since the authors all operate in college/university archives, it will be important to involve other contributors from diverse repositories in the preparation of case studies so that the project has a somewhat broader scope and realizes its potential.

3) *We very much agree and indeed do plan to put a call to a broad range of professional groups.*

4) Fourth, the issue of scope also arose in another context. Some board members worried that the proposal might be attempting to do too much. As one reviewer observed “attempting to create a book that provides examples that explore both ‘archival intelligence’ and ‘artifactual literacy’ for audiences as divergent as K-12, college students, donors, and the public, in 25-40 examples and in under 120 pages seems difficult to do well.” It may be that you are attempting to do too many different things here, and breadth (though generally a good thing) may make the final product too scattered and diffuse to engage any one topic or audience. Archival intelligence and artifactual literacy are too very different things, and does it make sense to incorporate them in the same book?

4) *We do not think it over-ambitious to include exercises focusing on either artifactual literacy, or archival intelligence, or both. As librarians we are definitely expected to teach both approaches to our classes, often incorporating a bit of each into our own exercises (perhaps in some cases focusing more on one aspect than the other, depending on the professor’s objectives, etc.). We would not want practitioners to have to buy two books. We think it appropriate and necessary to consider exercises that focus on either or both models of artifactual literacy and archival intelligence.*

5) Fifth, the reviewers are hoping for more innovative exercises that include unique approaches to materials. Your third case study concerning digital surrogates seems like an especially good model here. Though the first two case studies reflect classic educational exercises that have been adopted by high schools and colleges throughout the nation, they do not seem particularly innovative or new. They apply generally established frameworks that exist in most history classrooms, with an archivist doing the selection. Potential purchasers will be looking for something new, and when you develop criteria for selecting cases that fact needs to be kept in mind. Similarly, in terms of case study format, you might want to think about adopting more of a “lesson plan” rather than an “exercise” model, and perhaps provide sample templates into which archivists could substitute their own subject matter for the samples. Indeed, characterizing the content as “lesson plans” or “case studies” rather than “instructional exercises” might be a more constructive approach. It also might be useful to include some sample discussion questions, as well as feedback from the case study creators about what worked in the classroom and what failed to generate enthusiasm. Some reporting and assessment of how these strategies actually fared in a real world situation would be great.

5) *We too are hoping for innovative ideas from our colleagues, and once we solicit contributions from rare book and manuscript librarians, archivists, museum professionals, etc. We anticipate we will receive a combination of tried-and-true exercises along with some new and innovative approaches to instruction. Both of these will be of great use to someone new to special collections/archival instruction, as well as the seasoned librarian/archivist instructor. Further, having the standard exercises featured will allow a range of flexibility one could have in choosing what exercise fit best with the need at hand.*

In conversing with our colleagues at both RBMS, AAM, and SAA, we know that innovative teaching is going on in the field. It is our goal to collect this professional knowledge in one place. Hopefully, this would then prevent teaching librarians and archivists from feeling like they must re-invent the wheel and shake up and add to our existing instructional repertoires.

We should also clarify that although we value published case studies, we want to create a book of practical exercises that professionals may use as-is or adapt as necessary for use in their particular

special collections library/archives instructional setting. Since we will not be doing case studies, and we feel that the term "lesson plans" might intimidate librarians/archivists who have not had formal education in instruction, we are leaning towards the term "exercises" which our non-Special Collections/Archives colleagues use in describing their teaching efforts. We are open to discussing which term will best match our intentions, clearly explain the contents of the book to the buying market, and encourage contributions, but we don't think "case studies" is a good fit.

6) Sixth, although all board members acknowledged the value of having this book available in both print and online formats, there are some challenges at present to producing and marketing a robust online version. SAA cannot currently provide and maintain the type of online resource that will allow for the type of interactivity and regular updating that would take full advantage of an online publication. This situation should change within the next few years, but we would propose that this book initially appear as a traditional print volume, with the possibility of converting or reconceptualizing it as an online publication a couple of years after it appears.

6) Given the exciting potential of online features which might allow for the audience of this book to contribute further exercises, refine submissions, and give feedback comments, we feel that an online component would be very attractive to us. The possibility of converting or reconceptualizing the book as an online publication a couple of years after it appears is agreeable to us. Should it not be feasible for SAA to pursue an online component of the book, would the editors and contributors retain any right to investigate an online version? We recognize this is part of a larger conversation on author and contributor rights and look forward to learning more.

7) Finally, the time frame, based on our experience, is extraordinarily optimistic and not realistic. Since you will need to advertise for case studies, work with multiple authors, have some review and back-and-forth before accepting them, and perhaps broaden out your network of partners and contributors, summer 2013 seems like a much more realistic goal.

7) We were unsure the timeline, so the board's comments are useful.

On 10/25/11 6:50 AM, "Peter Wosh" <pw1@nyu.edu <<http://pw1@nyu.edu>> > wrote:

Dear Anne, Mattie, and Heather-

Apologies for the delay in responding. The Publications Board has reviewed your proposal for a book on "Instructional Exercises in Special Collections and Archives," and I am happy to provide you with some feedback. Generally, board members felt that this would be a valuable, timely, and important contribution to the profession. It fills a significant gap in the archival literature and also meets a real programmatic need. Archivists increasingly are using their collections in classrooms on a regular basis and there is no other guide of this nature that tries to accumulate such a range of different exercises in one place. This struck the board as a unique and marketable resource that could be applicable to archivists at a variety of institutions. At the same time, board members did raise a number of issues that we hope you can respond to and consider. I am listing them below in no particular priority order.

[*Note from Teresa: To shorten this handout, the list has been removed here since it's already above in author's response.*]

That basically covers the comments. Once you have had a chance to think about and consider them, we would appreciate a response, after which – assuming that everyone is on the same page – we can issue a letter of intent to move forward.

We also want to thank you for submitting such a thoughtful and important proposal. This topic should interest a wide range of archivists, and we look forward on working with you to produce the book! All the best, and please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Peter

Peter J. Wosh
Director, Archives/Public History Program
History Department
New York University

Sample Exercise 3

Discipline: History, English, Journalism,
American Studies, Anthropology

Equipment: Computer, Overhead Projector

Material Type: Newspapers

Audience: Undergraduate / Graduate



THE SURROGATE IS NOT ENOUGH

*Contributor: Mattie Taormina,
Head of Public Services, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives*

Summary of Exercise:

This activity is ideal for younger students who have grown up in a digital world, or graduate students in the humanities using digital primary sources for their research. The connection between the artifact and the importance of the information derived from that artifact is clearly made for students. This exercise teaches students not to devalue the unique sensory information found solely with the original source.

Learning Objectives:

Students learn how digital scans of primary sources do not always provide all the information about that source.

Intended Audience and Relevant Disciplines:

High school students or undergraduates. History, English, Journalism, American Studies, Anthropology, Government

Collections, Materials, and Preparation Required:

Materials

Computer attached in an overhead projector. Large flatbed scanner or a digital camera.

Collections

Original, full length newspaper from an historic event that almost everyone knows: President Kennedy's assassination, the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire. (We chose the bombing of Pearl Harbor). Hopefully your copy is not "pristine" but has a little bit of wear, staining, creasing, fading.

Preparations

Put the original newspaper on a table but cover it up so it is hidden. Make a scan of the front page of the paper either with a large flatbed scanner or digital camera and project this image onto the screen.

Description of the Activity:

Begin asking your students about what they think the paper represented in the digital scan feels like, what they think it smells like, what the stains are from, is there evidence of wear based on the creasing, etc. How is the font color and thickness, page format and placement of the stories the same/different than today?

Then bring them around the table and have them look at, smell, handle the original. Discuss: Did it fit their conclusions that they made from the digital scan? What new information are they getting? Are the creases deeper than the scan let on to? Is the color more vibrant? Can they tell what the stains are now? How are our modern eNewspapers different? How are they better or worse?

Check for Understanding:

Usually the discussion we have about the marked differences between the scan and the original underscore their comprehension.

Variations, Including Web 2.0 Elements:

A variation could be to show a photocopy made from the newspaper and then also show the same paper from microfilm and then show a scan of the same paper online via an iPad or mobile device.

DRAFT of email blast calling for submissions. Will be sent to RBMS, SAA, AALSH and AAM listservs

Calling all Special Collections Librarians, Archivists and Museum Professionals Who Teach!

Have you ever found yourself in any of these situations:

- A professor asks you to teach a class last minute on a subject or format you are not wholly familiar with?
- A group of students much younger or older than your primary clientele approaches your repository asking for an in-depth tour/class session?
- Due to diminishing staff levels, you are suddenly assigned to cover classes when you previously didn't have this responsibility?

Given the increased demand for primary source instruction, many of us are finding ourselves in these positions. We want more than a "show and tell" with our primary resources. Maybe you wish to branch out from the traditional show-and-tell model but lack the time to develop more student-centered activities that engage students' critical thinking skills. Additionally, the new types of materials being acquired--video games, floppy disks and hard-drives, LPs, technology related artifacts--do not always lend themselves to rare books and manuscripts exercises traditionally used in the past. Digitized content is changing how researchers use primary sources, and how we teach these concepts. While these changes have occurred, the training needed to manage these changes is not always possible to find. To address this need we are editing a new volume of easy-to-adapt, creative class exercises that our peers have implemented successfully.

That's where you come in! We seek submissions for an SAA publication on innovative, hands-on classroom exercises using primary resources. We encourage practitioners from all walks to submit a tried-and-true exercise they have used in a class focused on teaching with rare materials and/or teaching archival literacy. All formats (maps, born-digital, books, manuscripts, ephemera, etc.) are welcome, as are all age-specific classes (middle school, undergrads, donors, alumni, etc.).

If you have an exercise you would like to submit, please email us at [EMAIL ADDRESS]. The book's editors are Anne Bahde (San Diego State University), Heather Smedberg (UC San Diego), and Mattie Taormina (Stanford University). Please note that the deadline for exercise submissions is [DATE].

We know you're all doing wonderful things with students, and this is a great opportunity to share what you're doing with colleagues.

Thanks in advance,
Anne Bahde, Heather Smedberg, Mattie Taormina

Mock letter for contributors

Dear Contributor,

Thank you for agreeing to be part of our book on teaching with special collections and archival materials. This is a wonderful opportunity to share your hands-on exercise with a larger audience and we thank you in advance for participating.

Since your exercise is part of a multi-contributor collection, it is best to adhere to the format found on the online worksheet when writing so that the exercises provide the reader some sort of cohesion:

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dHp0V2dvSm5Td2xvTmZYZVhGMDZjU1E6MQ>

Lastly, here are some small housekeeping items to keep in mind before you submit your exercise:

Illustrations. Since visuals always make a book more interesting, please consider submitting images along with your exercise. These could include largely illustrative/photographic, tabular/diagrammatic, or a mix, and in full color or black and white. Authors wishing to include illustrations will be responsible for providing good-quality copies of those illustrations, and for clearing all reproduction rights and permissions fees required by the copyright holder. Images should be [size and type] and sent separately either on CD or via email to [person's name].

Handouts. If you have any suggested handouts you wish to submit, please email them to [EMAIL ADDRESS]. Make sure to include your name and institution so that we can match it with your submitted exercise.

We look forward to reading your completed submissions on [DATE]. Thank you again and happy writing!

Best,

Anne Bahde, Heather Smedberg, Mattie Taormina