

From “Wow” to Wondering

**PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO ALIENATING AWE IN THE SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES CLASSROOM**

Taylor F. Henning, taylor.henning@fsu.edu

Rachel C. S. Duke, rachel.duke@fsu.edu

July 30, 2025



Wonder as an obstacle



- Etymology of “wonder”
- Knowledge gap
- Wonder paralysis
- Causes:
 - Visual impact
 - Age or fragility
 - Unfamiliar formats, languages, or scripts
 - Prestige – financial value, historical significance, rarity
 - Aura of authenticity

Solutions to wonder paralysis

- **Trends in primary source education:**
active-learning principles and
objectives-based instructional design
- **Self-Identification:** relation serves as a
stepping stone towards critical thinking
- **Facsimiles:** Gateway to the original
object, lessens trepidation
- **Pre-work:** recognition leads to
commentary and conversation
- **Class community:** students join together
in excited and productive conversation
- **Cede expertise:** shifts power to students
who have agency to “know” about the
object

Thank you!