

An Archives Curriculum for Liaison Librarians

KIMBERLY ANDERSON AND RAYLA TOKARZ

Abstract:

Academic archivists and liaison librarians frequently work with the same instructors, researchers, and departments. However, archives are often opaque to liaisons. Many find archival materials difficult to traverse and explain -- archival principles and methodologies are largely unknown. Liaisons find themselves in the position of trying to connect users to archival resources but without being able to determine if a relevant resource exists and without being able to instruct researchers on its use. Many university libraries simply refer all archives-related questions to the archivists, but the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries opted instead to better prepare liaisons to incorporate archival materials in their existing instruction and reference work.

In the spring and summer of 2020, a liaison librarian and an archivist developed a peer-learning curriculum designed to foster a community between departments and to develop new skills for liaisons in teaching with primary sources. Archivists led sessions on topics including archival terminology, discipline-specific primary resources, and evidential value. Each session consisted of a presentation and/or activity, targeted discussion, and accompanying resources. Liaison librarians attended the virtual sessions and created plans for incorporating primary sources within their future library instruction sessions. Liaison Librarians increased their confidence in their ability to search archives and Special Collections staff discovered how collections can be used in new ways and for multiple disciplines.

This poster will describe the curriculum and demonstrate the efficacy of this approach to foster community and to increase the research and instruction skills of participants when using primary sources.

About the authors:

Kimberly Anderson is the Director of Special Collections at the University of Nevada, Reno. She earned her PhD in information studies and her MLIS with a specialization in archives from UCLA. She received a BA in humanities with a minor in anthropology from Northern Arizona University. Anderson has worked in university archives, special collections, graduate archival education, a rare books library, law libraries, and police records. She studies critical archival practice, its historical development in North America, and the means by which it is learned and adopted.

Rayla Tokarz is the Information Literacy Librarian at the University of Nevada, Reno. She received an MLS from Indiana University and a BA in Music with a minor in classical studies with Latin emphasis. She is interested in information literacy and organizational communication in academic libraries.