

Gauging Student Perspectives: Using survey data to understand student perceptions of archives

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Abstract: The University of Southern California (USC) Libraries maintains a robust instruction program emphasizing use of archival resources available through Special Collections and the Digital Library. In Fall 2018, three archivists at USC (Giao Luong Baker, Rachel Mandell, and Suzanne Noruschat) embarked on a research project whose goal was to gauge student perception and use of these resources. The project's aim was to better understand students' perspectives, including the degree to which they see themselves and their communities documented in the libraries' online and physical archives. More than simply a measure of what students learned in a one-shot instruction session, the study aimed to reveal—through surveys administered to students both before and after they engaged with archival materials as part of a class assignment—if there were changes in students' perceptions, frequency of use, and levels of interest in archives. The presentation addresses the methodology employed for implementing the surveys, shares some preliminary findings, and proposes how this study could be developed further to reveal useful data about students' levels of engagement, confidence, and interest in using archives and digital libraries.

This study stemmed from a chapter in a forthcoming ACRL publication. The chapter, titled "Validation in the Archives: Digital Library Strategies to Diversify Digital Collections in Support of First-Generation College Students," was authored by Giao Luong Baker and Rachel Mandell, who are also co-principal investigators with Suzanne Noruschat.

About the Authors:

Giao Luong Baker leads the operations of the Digital Production Center at Duke University Libraries. This specialized unit is dedicated to creating digital surrogates of primary resources for the purposes of preservation and digital access. Previously, Giao worked at the University of Southern California Libraries, where she oversaw digital imaging operations from 2007-2017 and left USC as the Strategic Digital Initiatives Librarian in 2018. Giao holds an MLS from the University of North Texas and an MPL from the University of Southern California.

Suzanne Noruschat is Southern California Studies Specialist in Special Collections at the University of Southern California Libraries, where she oversees the Regional History Collection. From 2012-2017, she was Architectural Records Archivist in Manuscripts and

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