

Joint Task Force on Primary Source Literacy
Preliminary Report of the Subgroup on Other Guidelines
December 11, 2015

Executive Summary

The other guidelines subgroup looked for organizations, guidelines, and statements on literacy standards in six areas: historians, genealogists, museum educators, K-12 educators, rhetoric and composition educators, and art historians/visual studies. Most other areas and organizations do not have formal guidelines like those we will develop; however, some do provide helpful guidance.

Of particular interest to the Joint Task Force are several issues and resources:

- The most common learning standards for K-12 education is the [Common Core](#), though it is by no means national - while many states have adopted these skill-based (NOT content-specific standards), some have not. Common Core is most relevant to the JTF because it encourages the use of “complex texts” in English Language Arts, including non-fiction and primary sources (especially historical documents) and because students are expected to “ground arguments in evidence.”
- Some discipline-specific K-12 standards, namely the [National Core Art Standards](#), may serve as a good model for the JTF’s standards.
- Museum educators focus solely on *alignment* with local and state K-12 standards (often, but not always, Common Core).
- There are numerous resources in the field of history with examples of teaching with primary sources. While these usually do not include best practices explicitly, they serve as good examples of how those from outside our field are addressing and teaching primary source literacy.
- The AHA History Tuning Project’s 2013 [History Discipline Core](#) includes core concepts and learning outcomes for students studying history, including historical empathy, contextualization, conflicting narratives, and incorporating multiple sources into work.
- Shifts in writing education emphasize students’ ability to “ground arguments in evidence,” “capacities of different environments,” and matching work to the appropriate platform.
- Connections with visual literacy, particularly the ACRL guidelines, which emphasize cultural and historical factors of production, how production constructs and influences meaning, and evaluation of conventions and their meaning

Historians

Organization of American Historians (OAH)

- Website: <http://www.oah.org/>
- Contacts (staff directory): <http://www.oah.org/about/contact/staff/>

The largest professional society dedicated to the teaching and study of American history. Did not find best practices or guidelines relating to primary source literacy or teaching. Includes a link to TeachingHistory.org, an educational clearinghouse organized and maintained by the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University. This site may be useful to our JTF as we craft guidelines for primary source literacy.

The TeachingHistory.org site has a Best Practices section with a sub-section on Using Primary Sources (<http://teachinghistory.org/best-practices/using-primary-sources>). Unfortunately this simply provides links to a bunch of resources on using primary sources, and not really to best practices. The following linked resources seemed like potentially the most useful to our work:

- <http://canadianmysteries.ca/en/keyConcepts.php> - 3 exercises for introducing students to primary sources.
- <http://www.learner.org/interactives/historical/index.html> - online game from Annenberg Media aimed at introducing students to using primary sources.

American Historical Association (AHA)

- Website: <https://www.historians.org/>
- Contacts: The AHA Teaching Division seems like the most logical intersection of our work with this organization. Here's what the AHA website says about the Teaching Division:

The Teaching Division collects and disseminates information about the training of teachers and ensures that teaching concerns are addressed in AHA activities and publications. This division studies and encourages innovative methods of instruction, works to foster cooperation among faculty, and oversees the presentation of teaching-related prizes.

The Teaching Division oversees:

- The inclusion of teaching concerns in AHA activities and publications.
- Efforts to promote and improve teaching of history in the curriculum at all levels.
- The study, encouragement, and promotion of novel methods of instruction, and the development of new forms of cooperation among faculty at various levels of instruction.
- The dissemination of information about teaching and developments in history education at all levels, especially through AHA teaching pamphlets.

Information about the Teaching Division and those associated with its administration:
<http://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/governance/divisions/teaching>

The AHA History Tuning Project's 2013 History Discipline Core (<http://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning/history-discipline-core>) includes core concepts and learning outcomes for students studying history, including historical empathy, contextualization, conflicting narratives, and incorporating multiple sources into work. Numbers 3 and 4 in this document seem particularly useful for our work on primary source literacy guidelines:

- Understand the complex nature of the historical record (i.e., understand the wide range of sources available).
- Generate significant, open-ended questions about the past, and devise research strategies to answer them (i.e., determining the primary vs. secondary nature of sources begins with questions and evolves in dialog with questions).

The iterative, intertwined nature of good, interesting historical questions and sources is a key concept that library-focused articulations--the RUSA *Information Literacy Guidelines and Competencies for Undergraduate History Students*, for example:

<http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/infoliteracy>--often miss. The RUSA guidelines, referenced as they are almost exclusively in library literature, make a crucial error in asserting that identifying tools, finding sources, understanding their primary vs. secondary nature happens first. The whole notion of asking historically interesting, significant questions doesn't come up until 4.1 in the RUSA guidelines. Looking at this issue from the perspective of historians and history educators is a useful corrective for that, and refocuses on the evidentiary nature of sources rather than the bibliographic skills that enhance finding them in library databases. A person literate in the world of primary sources doesn't start in a vacuum. One core, key factor that makes a source primary or secondary (as opposed to just an interesting document) is approaching it with a question(s) that it can help to answer.

In addition to the AHA's History Discipline Core articulation, the organization has published, for the last 50 or so years, the monthly *Perspectives on History* (<https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history>), which provides "news and information about the historical discipline" and covers areas such as "teaching, computers and software, history in the media, museum exhibitions, and archives and research." Back issues are searchable and there are many fascinating articles that deal tangentially or obliquely with the topic of using or teaching with primary sources, though nothing that explicitly articulates guidelines, principles, best practices, or competencies. The following list highlights articles that we thought, while exploring this resource, might be of particular interest for our JTF work. JTF-PSL members may want to dip back into this resource with more specific purpose as we move forward with articulating guidelines for primary source literacy.

- American Historical Association, "Encouraging Research Excellence in Post-Secondary Education," October 2000:
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-2000/encouraging-research-excellence-in-postsecondary-history-education>

A nicely formulated overview of historical research and pedagogical goals for educators teaching it. This seems like it would be quite useful for our entire JTF group to read and think about.

- Nancy Shoemaker, "Where Is the History Lab Course?," January 2009:
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2009/where-is-the-history-lab-course>
An insightful analysis of the problems with large historical survey courses and the need for more research-focused seminar courses that engage students with primary sources and making their own analyses and arguments based on hands-on work with sources. Uses a University of Connecticut course as an example.
- Carole Srole, "Scaffolding Research Skills in a Nonresearch Class," January 1998:
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-1998/scaffolding-research-skills-in-a-nonresearch-class>
A nice overview of strategies for getting students in a class not focused on developing research skills to focus on sources, primary and secondary, and the way they're employed by writers.
- Kelly Schrum, et al., "Primary Sources with a Purpose: Learning from Teaching American History Grants," March 2007:
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2007/primary-sources-with-a-purpose-learning-from-teaching-american-history-grants>
Focus is on working with teachers to develop primary source activities that develop skills such as analyzing and unpacking a source, placing it in historical context, and drawing conclusions. One interesting insight relevant for our work is the observation that it was really difficult for teachers to move from thinking about adapting activities for students to actually engaging as "adult learners" with encountering primary sources. "The methodology of noticing and questioning provided a comfortable formula that began to inspire confidence and allow for interesting historical thinking and questions." This highlights the important and often overlooked (by librarians at least) notion of the key role of questions in engaging with sources, primary and secondary. Primary source literacy guidelines, to be useful, must engage with the primacy of asking questions.
- D. Antonio Cantu, "The Role of Journal Writing in Historical Thinking," September 2000:
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2000/the-role-of-journal-writing-in-historical-thinking>
Especially in the "Integration Techniques" section, 3. Primary Document Analysis Journal, where Cantu articulates concisely the importance of systematically recording observations and conclusions about
- John Buchkoski et al., "Creating and Administering a Primary Source Analysis," January 2015:
<http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2015/creating-and-administering-a-primary-source-analysis>
"Our goal was to construct new pedagogical tools that integrated more primary source analysis into our survey courses." Provides an interesting rubric for grading essays that incorporates the analysis and use of primary sources.

- William W. Freehling et al., “Toward a New Graduate Reading Course,” February 2001: <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/february-2001/toward-a-new-graduate-reading-course>
Article structured as interviews with a history prof and two graduate students attempting to address graduate students’ desire for courses that focused less on historiography and more on history, on “cultivat[ing their] own understanding of the evidence.”
- Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, “What Does It Mean to Think Historically?,” January 2007: <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically>
Articulates 5 “habits of mind” that characterize historical thinking for an initiative designed to strengthen teacher training: change over time, context, causality, contingency, and complexity. Good overarching framework for considering the purpose behind a focus on primary source literacy.

American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)

- Website: <http://www.aaslh.org/>
- Contacts (staff directory): <http://about.aaslh.org/aaslh-staff/>

Organization for history professionals, primarily at the state and local level. Primarily focused on history museums and writing, historical administration, and the act of interpreting. Includes resources for teaching docents and teachers, with focus on museum and historic-house settings. Nothing specific to teaching with primary sources found.

American Studies Association (ASA)

- Website: <http://www.theasa.net/>
- Contacts (staff directory): <http://www.theasa.net/about/page/staff/>

Oldest and largest scholarly association devoted to the interdisciplinary study of U.S. culture and history in a global context, with a focus on original research, innovative and effective teaching, critical thinking, and public discussion and debate. Did not find any documents or guidelines specific to the topic of using or teaching with primary sources.

Learning Historical Research

- Website: <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>

While not an organization, this website created by University of Wisconsin-Madison environmental historian William Cronon and some of his graduate students could be a valuable resource for the JTF-PSL as we move forward with our work. Cronon’s focus on the centrality of “asking good questions” (<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/questions.htm>) is an important reminder for us and others in the library/archives professions that primary sources are primary not because of some *a priori* factor that researchers should be able to identify, but

because of the questions that lead researchers to the sources and the interrelationships that the sources and questions have for an overarching research project.

Genealogists

Although the list of genealogical societies in the U.S. is impressively large (https://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=List_of_Genealogical_Societies), genealogical societies do not seem to have developed guidelines or best practices for teaching with or using primary sources that differ substantially from those developed within other disciplines. For example, some genealogy guides simply repurpose tools developed elsewhere (e.g., <https://www.sassyjanegenealogy.com/primary-source-analysis-tool/>). As characterized in a “Genealogy--Getting Started” website hosted by the PBS show *History Detectives* (<http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/technique/genealogy-getting-started/>), genealogical use of primary sources seems much more focused on extracting basic details about people, typically family members. This seems like a less useful perspective for our work on articulating guidelines for primary source literacy.

Museum Educators

Museum Education Roundtable (MER)

- Website: <http://museumeducation.info/>
- *Journal of Museum Education* <http://museumeducation.info/jme>
- Contact/Source: Ng-He, Carole. “Common Goals, Common Core: Museums and Schools Work Together.” *Journal of Museum Education* 40.3 (October 2015): 220-226. <http://museumeducation.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/jme.40.3.ng-he.pdf>

MER does not have any standards because museum educators focus on **alignment** with Common Core (Ng-He, 221) or other state/local or discipline-specific standards (223) such as the Next Generation Science Standards and the National Core Art Standards. Museum education is relevant to JTF because of the focus on objects / works of art (221). In archives and special collections focused on K-12 instruction, alignment with Common Core (or other local standards) would be key.

American Alliance of Museums, Education Committee (EdCom)

- Website: <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/professional-networks/edcom>

“We aren’t aware of any literacy standards specific to museum education. To the best of my knowledge, most museums use local state standards if they are trying to **align** K-12 programming to curriculum. Sometimes they’ll go for national standards for national programming directed at a school audience. They tend to shy away from standards for general use instead focusing on their individual collection.” - Email dated 11/17/15

EdCom's "[Something in Common](#)" addresses alignment with Common Core. Their "[Standards Regarding Education and Interpretation](#)" addresses professional standards and not literacy standards.

Other Organizations

There is a useful directory of museum education professional organizations at <http://www.museum-ed.org/organizations/>. It lists national, regional, and research-focused groups.

K-12 Educators

Common Core Standards

- Website: <http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/>

Common Core has been adopted in many states, but not all ([see map](#)). *US News and World Report* offers a decent [third-party guide](#) to the controversy around Common Core.

Common Core emphasizes skill-based and inquiry-based instruction. The standards are not content-specific and aim to be student-centered. The standards revolve around "the 4 Cs" - creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communications.

The main relevance for the JTF is that the use of "complex texts" in English Language Arts now includes non-fiction and primary sources (especially historical documents) and students are expected to "ground arguments in evidence." In many places, this is a major shift for ELA teachers, and archives can help address this change. (see <http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts/>)

Discipline-Specific Standards

National Core Art Standards

- Website: <http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

****This standard may serve as a very good model for the JTF.**** It acknowledges a spectrum of literacy, from philosophical foundations to lifelong goals. It organizes anchor standards by processes (creating, performing, responding, etc.), and it splits up performance standards for different age groups.

Next Generation Science Standards

- Website: <http://www.nextgenscience.org/>

Not very applicable to JTF as a whole, but may be useful to repositories with scientific collections trying to reach K-12 STEM audiences.

Rhetoric and Composition

Council of Writing Program Administrators

- Website: <http://www.wpacouncil.org/>
- Outcomes for First-Year composition: <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>
 - main relevance is their interest in “capacities of different environments” and matching these to appropriate rhetorical situations

Conference on College Composition and Communication

- website: <http://www.ncte.org/cccc>
- has policies on a variety of things, including writing on digital platforms, but nothing on writing with sources: <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions>

Organizations without standards or useful information

- Rhetoric Society of America
 - website: http://rhetoricsociety.org/aws/RSA/pt/sp/home_page
- MLA
 - website: <https://www.mla.org/>

Discipline-Specific Standards

ACRL research guidelines for Literatures in English

- website: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/researchcompetenciesles>
- mostly focused on identification of materials, rather than use, and therefore of little interest to JTF

Good potential contact information

Mailing Lists for Rhetoric and Composition

- website: http://rhetoric.eserver.org/organizations/mailing_lists/

Art Historians/Art Educators/Visual Literacy

None of the visual resources associations have guidelines for either visual literacy or working with sources. The Visual Resources Association has guidelines for metadata and other cataloging policies, and many organizations have guidelines for exhibition and citing of art, but nothing relevant to this committee. Organizations consulted are listed below.

International Visual Literacy Association

- website: <http://ivla.org/new/>,

Visual Resources Association

- website: <http://vraweb.org/>

ARLIS

- website: <https://www.arlisna.org/>

College Art Association

- website: <http://www.collegeart.org/>

Discipline-Specific Standards

ACRL Visual Literacy standards

- website: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/visualliteracy>
- While the format adheres to that of the old ACRL information literacy guidelines, these are much more expansive and relevant to the work of JTF. Of particular interest may be the areas in which the guidelines address cultural and historical factors of production, how production constructs and influences meaning, and evaluation of conventions and their meaning. (See particularly sections 2, 3, and 4.)

Visual Literacy whitepaper

- website: <http://www.images.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/education/pdfs/visual-literacy-wp.pdf>
- Despite its corporate roots, this whitepaper might serve as an example of how to construct a definition of a literacy.