LISTENING TO USERS

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the concept of common ground as it applies to researchers using primary sources. It examines common ground through two activities central to making sense of archives and locating sources: defining what an archives is and identifying and using access tools, and through one type of venue for explicitly establishing common ground: user education. Overall findings indicate that common reference points are often lacking between researchers and archivists. Archivists may also be assuming that users understand more about archival operations and access tools than is warranted. As a result, archivists may be overestimating the expertise of users and their ability to transfer knowledge from one repository to another. Finally, the author urges archivists to enter into a dialog on the purpose, scope, and content of archival user education offerings and work toward the development of a more fully delineated educational curriculum for users of primary sources.

Introduction

> It wasn't a very positive experience ... I kind of gave up on that whole project, because I just, I felt totally like I didn't know what to do. Because I never, I don't know anything about archives ... I don't know if it was because I was looking for a photograph versus ... written source documents or if that was why it was so hard. But it, I haven't been back. And they didn't really, they didn't really want to help me ... it wasn't some major research project; I was just some neighborhood person looking for a picture of my house.[1]

How do researchers make sense of archives and archival access tools? Or perhaps a better research question is, What are the frameworks in the user's head concerning locating and using primary sources? These questions are central to both better reference service and to the design of more effective access systems. The answers to these questions involve how common ground and shared understandings are not just created, but negotiated between archivists and researchers. Without common ground, there is little basis for learning, transfer of that knowledge to other projects, and trust.

Herbert Clark defines common ground as "the sum of ... mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions."[2] Common ground can be difficult to build when shared assumptions about the situation, the meaning of artifacts, and knowledge about language and terminology are not established. As the introductory passage demonstrates, the consequences of not establishing common ground are frustration on the part of the user and negative feelings about the archives. While both researchers and reference archivists bear responsibility for establishing common ground, it is perhaps in the best interest of the archivist to reach out to users and to explicitly establish that common ground exists. The result of this would be not only an initial reference interview that probes the user's questions and helps the researcher to refine his or her inquiry,[3] but also a reference interview that creates common ground by establishing a shared understanding of archival practice, procedures, and particularly a common framework for how artifacts such as bibliographic records and finding aids work as an access system in the repository.

The present study reports on a series of interviews with archival users done in the summer and fall of 2001. The study examines three areas central to making sense of archives and locating sources: 1) defining what an archives is, 2) the identification and use of access tools, and 3) one type of venue for explicit "sensemaking": user education (either during the reference interview or in a more formal classroom setting). Overall findings indicate that common reference points are often lacking between researchers and archivists. Archives, manuscripts, and particularly primary sources abound in a variety of places such as microfilm reading rooms, so even the concept of what an archives is and does may be vague to researchers. Archivists may also be assuming that users understand more about archival operations and archival terminology than is warranted. As a result, archivists may be overestimating the expertise of users and their ability to transfer knowledge from one repository to another. Even among more experienced users, the need to reinforce knowledge and to explicitly inform users that access systems are modified seems to be warranted. Barbara Craig has noted, "While we must remove the 'mystery' which cloaks archival research, we must not at the same time purge the unique character of archival information."[4]

Literature Review

Examinations of users have been a theme in the archival literature for decades. Paul Conway's seminal article "Facts and Frameworks" sets out a methodological agenda for getting at different types of information about use and users, both within the framework of normal archival routines and practices and through means external to those processes.[5] User studies have employed a variety of data collection methods and sources to understand use patterns, user behaviors, and user needs. One approach has been to rely on existing data sources that allow for unobtrusive research. For example, Jacqueline Goggin and Fredric Miller used modified citation analysis methods to examine usage patterns within their collections.[6] Analysis of reference inquiries and the archivist's responses has yielded useful research data for Wendy Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, Kristin Martin, and William Maher.[7] The findings of these studies have provided us with a means of categorizing these data and they uncovered patterns of use and inquiry

that have had generalizable implications for reference services. Interestingly, Duff and Johnson categorized the third largest group of queries in their study as "user education queries." User education queries lacked a clearly defined question and were deemed to need general instruction about the types of records held at an institution and how to locate these records. The response to this type of query goes beyond question negotiation.

More interventionist user studies in archives include surveys of users, such as Kristina Southwell's recent work examining how researchers learned about the collections at the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma.[8] This builds on current and previous survey work examining specifically how researchers locate collections by Helen Tibbo and several of her master's students at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill.[9] Tibbo's work is multi-institutional and, as such, demonstrates that the trends in the use (and nonuse) of different search tools identified in surveys of individual institutions hold for larger statistically significant samples. In addition to identifying how researchers locate collections, user surveys have been employed in archival settings to collect a variety of other data concerning users: from institutional profiles of user communities to user satisfaction assessments that resulted in information for improving archival services (hours, copying, etc.). These surveys have also collected qualitative data about users' reactions to archival services and have uncovered researchers' attitudes, behaviors, and assumptions.[10]

While the research on archival users has yielded some results that have been incorporated into practice, other archival literature on reference services also provides an understanding of how common ground can be developed between archivists and researchers. Of particular importance are the articles on question negotiation and archival user education. Question negotiation as a component of the reference interview has long been a part of the archival literature. Linda J. Long's article clearly delineates the theory behind and the benefits of question negotiation. Tibbo has extended this discussion into the digital era.[11] Although neither Tibbo nor Long mentions common ground directly, the underlying point of this process is to create a common understanding and meanings between reference personnel and the researcher.

Methodology

The present study is also interested in how researchers identified archives and collections. But, it is more interested in the underlying conceptions and sensemaking involved in the archival research process and how researchers think through their search problems. In light of this research question, a qualitative interview methodology was selected. This research reports on the findings of a series of interviews with users of archives that took place in the summer and fall of 2001. Twenty-six individuals ranging from undergraduates to professional scholars were interviewed. Subjects were recruited through various archives and manuscript repositories and academic departments at the University of Michigan. As such, all interviewees had some college education; most had at least a bachelor's degree. While self-selected, this sample represents archival users with a wide variety of research experience, research topics, and venues for consulting primary sources.

Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol that employed an adapted critical incident methodology. The protocol appears as Appendix A. Subjects were asked to discuss their current or most recent research project involving primary sources. Queries pressed subjects to discuss how they conceptualized the research question, located the repository holding the records or manuscripts, and navigated within that (or those) repository. The interviewer also questioned subjects about how they learned to do archival research and their overall technological skills. Interviews lasted approximately one hour each. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software that allows for the coding and extraction of major themes and the comparison of these across multiple documents.

Subjects

Information about the subjects is provided to contextualize the actual findings. As noted previously, the interviewees represented a diverse cross section of academic users of primary sources; 21 of the users did primary source research for academic projects. This is not surprising given how subjects were recruited. Four of the interviewees did archival research principally for their jobs and four for avocational reasons such as genealogy or searching for information on a house.[12] Interviewees were also ethnically diverse: 20 were white, three African-American, two Hispanic, and one Asian. The sex distribution was evenly split: 13 men and 13 women. Although interviewees were not asked their age, the median age of interviewees was judged to be in the late 20s. One interviewee was an outlier. This gentleman was in his late 70s and had consulted over 20 archives and conducted multiple projects in the United States and in both eastern and western Europe.

Experience using archives is probably a more key factor in differentiating among the subjects. Interviewees were asked several questions to elicit this information. The two questions that provided the most reliable data concerned the number of archives visited and the number of research projects conducted in archives. Subjects consulted a total of 115 different locations housing primary sources. This should not be interpreted as 115 different formal archival agencies, as will be described later. The term "consulted" includes both actual research visits to formal archives and interactions with archives personnel using telephone, snail mail, and E-mail. The average number of archives consulted was 4.4. This number implies a more experienced subject pool than was true. A better understanding of experience using archives is the median number of archives visited: 2. A total of 9 individuals in the study consulted only one archives (this was the mode). It also should be noted that several individuals used no formal archival institutions (although they did use primary sources). In terms of overall research projects per subject, the average number was 3, the median, 2. Topics of research ranged from biographical inquiries to more broadly defined questions about the evolution of social

movements. Additionally, subjects were seeking records in a variety of different media, including paper, photographs, and architectural drawings.

Findings

Understanding Archives

> Interviewer: How many different archives have you done research in?
> Subject: Can you define archives for me?
> Interviewer: Why don't you define archives for me?
> Subject: Okay. Archives seems to be a special kind of library in which materials are stored that include primary sources that need to be handled with some care, perhaps don't circulate because they're valuable, and maybe there's only one copy of them.[13]

A number of archival theorists have joined Jacques Derrida in thinking about the meaning and significance of "archives."[14] A less metaphysical and more practical conundrum was experienced by some of the interviewees. Actually vetting subjects to interview in the study led to an interesting finding concerning the degree of uncertainty among college-educated people about what archives are. Subjects were unsure if they had ever been in an archives or if they had ever used primary sources. One potential interviewee had requested items from the main library's off-site storage facility and considered that to be an "archival" request. Another subject stated, "I don't know if this counts as a primary source, I don't know what 'archive' technically means."[15]

Perhaps some of this confusion derives from the fact that primary sources are not necessarily in formal institutions or departments designated as archives, manuscript repositories, or special collections. Several individuals interviewed used primary sources on microfilm. Other researchers found and were able to use primary sources not yet in the custody of archives; a number of these documentary collections were in the homes of private citizens.[16] One subject tracked down organizational records not yet formally transferred to the archives (if they were even slated to be transferred).[17] The resourcefulness of researchers to track down records and manuscripts in the "archival underground" surprised me. This ability to do research with primary sources without ever encountering an archives or an archivist may be undermining archivists' abilities to establish an identity and to position ourselves as the core professional group to address issues concerning primary source materials.

The existence of alternative options for doing research in primary sources, perhaps even in competing agencies, is not always benign. One researcher noted that she preferred to use the microfilm copies of primary sources in the library's microfilm reading room because the readers were better and the copies cheaper.[18] Another subject was irate that a manuscript curator had not informed her that one of the books she had been using was also available through the regular library on campus.

> After I got to the end point of finding them realizing that actually one of those books was available through the [name] library just as a book you

> could check out ... but that was frustrating because I thought I had to go to this special collection that has limited hours, you can't Xerox, like there were a lot of problems related to that.[19]

While users may reluctantly expect to have to follow restrictive policies for unique materials, they become frustrated when they feel that an archivist has withheld information and they have not been provided with a full disclosure of the alternatives.

Misconceptions of archives extend to misunderstandings by users on how to identify and locate primary sources. This is partially a result of the inability to conceptualize archives. If one is unable to conceptualize archives, there is an ensuing uncertainty on the part of users as to the boundaries of the search for primary sources. One interviewee was interested in political records and began in a government documents section of a research library.

> I actually didn't quite know where to go for the ... Senate stuff ... and then I realized it was there [in the archives]. [I] ... went over ... to the library and thought that the government stuff would be over here.[20]

This uncertainty and real unfamiliarity concerning where primary sources are housed makes archivists and users very dependent on others: librarians, paraprofessionals sought in increasingly self-service microfilm reading rooms, as well as the current owners of records. Archivists are dependent on these individuals to assist users and point them to the archives or manuscript repository when it is really needed. Users are dependent on others to help them utilize primary sources and to lead them to actual archives if and when it is required. A bad experience with primary sources—either inside or outside a formal archives or special collections—can frustrate users and make their experience using primary sources unpleasant.

Finding Aids

> Interviewer: Have you looked at any of the finding aids at the [archives] for this project?
> Subject: You need to tell me what finding aids are.[21]

One of the interviewing challenges was to negotiate language or archival terminology with the interviewees. This was required to both clarify the questions being asked and to ensure that I would understand the response to questions users were answering. Finding aids were a particularly hard concept to explain without giving away part of the answer. Interviewees variously used the term "guidebook"[22] or "guide"[23] to signify the document genre archivists refer to as a "finding aid." At one point one interviewee and I resorted to a physical description of the finding aids to verify common ground and the same frame of reference.

> Interviewer: Now did you use the finding aids for the [personal] papers ...
> Subject: Yeah [hesitates], meaning the black books that are there?[24]

A number of interviewees also commented on the strangeness of the term: "Even the language, "finding aid," is still foreign to me. Finding what, you know."[25]

If the term "finding aid" is unclear, the ability to use finding aids effectively is also elusive. One interviewee who felt confident using finding aids likened them to "a giant telephone directory ... It seemed to me pretty intuitive. In terms of how you use it and just kind of searching for key words and such. It seemed pretty straightforward."[26] Other interviewees found the finding aids to be less useful. Many of these criticisms seemed to stem from the fact that their searching paradigm was library based and the finding aids violated their expectations.

> ... folks who are designing these print or on-line finding aids do need to take another step back because to me it isn't, it's not even intuitive what's going on. We think of libraries as places where we find what we're looking for, whatever it is ... And I mean, so we grow up with that and we have that model at least in this culture. Finding aids to me still don't fit into that model and make a whole lot of sense ... So, I don't know if I'm suggesting any new organization but to me, whatever organization is used needs to be better presented up front, somehow. And whether that's, whether you can figure out a way for that to come forward in the first five sentences that the staff use to greet a new visitor? That would be ideal. Or whether you somehow put it on a card that lies on top of the shelf where the finding aids are or that greets you on the Web site. It needs to be very much abbreviated, but a big picture needs to be painted right away.[27]

Still other interviewees were much more reflective about finding aids and made very pertinent suggestions to improving this documentary genre.

> I like ... as much specificity as possible. I find it very important, because it helps me be very narrow when searching. I guess too also annotated information ... that too could also help me to deduce, how people [represented in the records] were interpreting information at that time ... And I think having it on-line is essential. I think that's really important.[28]

Users' conceptions of archival access tools varied greatly. While there are no generalizations from this study, the range of frameworks and approaches to using card catalogs, finding aids, and on-line tools is significant because archivists tend to view these tools as monolithic and may not anticipate the multiplicity of ways they are used.

Card catalogs and their electronic counterparts, on-line public access catalogs (OPACs) and integrated library systems (ILSs), as they are now known, are very much part of archival access. One user preferred physical card catalogs because they were more forgiving of spelling errors: "... what I liked with the old system of card catalogs is you didn't have to have the spelling correct necessarily. You could sort of find that stuff in a cross listing and compared with the [Integrated Library] system where you have to get everything exactly right ..."[29] Another interviewee noted the inability to get a broad overview of an entire collection through the card catalog and preferred the finding aid,

"... their card catalog is huge but it's just a whole lot of cards. Yeah, if you had a finding aid, especially on-line, of course you could get a real detailed idea that, 'We have 75 drawings of Greek Revival buildings or whatever.' Whereas in a card catalog you just sit there and flip through all the cards."[30] Particularly evident was the inability of inexperienced archival researchers to make the cognitive association between the representation and actual primary sources: "I just never got past looking at the card catalog ... [I was] either overwhelmed by information or like confused by what I was reading and it didn't, it wasn't like your typical [library] card catalog."[31] Interviewees also commented on the advent of electronic access to finding aids. One interviewee discussed the interface between the analog and digital finding aids, noting that each served different purposes: the digital finding aid featured better searching capacity, while the analog finding aid helped during the actual research process by "filtering" information in the records.

> I think most of their finding aids [are] on-line, and then when I got there and saw them all on a bookshelf about this size; that helped too just to be able to see how big is this that ... I saw on-line ... So that was really nice to be able to see the two things like that. But then to actually open it up I certainly used the text there to help me filter through it all.[32]

Discussions of finding aids often encompassed the entire range of search tools used to identify primary sources. This study is in no way as rigorous as those mentioned above by Southwell and Tibbo, among others. However, my interviewees confirm that word of mouth—colleagues, friends, professors—are a prime source of information about primary sources, followed closely by citations or footnotes. Use of the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* (either in hard copy or on-line), bibliographic databases (Online Computer Library Center or OCLC and Research Libraries Information Network or RLIN), and CD-ROM tools (*ArchivesUSA*) was extremely low, averaging only two respondents each. Likewise, researcher use of on-line finding aids through such services as *Archival Resources* was low. This is particularly frustrating since a portion of the interviewees used RLIN and OCLC for other purposes. In fact, one interviewee had actually cataloged exhibition catalogs in RLIN at one point, but did not know it could be searched for primary sources.[33] However, 11 individuals regularly consulted archival Web sites before they contacted or visited the institution and made use of any on-line finding aids, if available. Most significant, 13 interviewees used ILSs extensively. These findings also support conclusions by Tibbo about these ILSs being gateways.[34] The earlier quotation identifying the paradigm of the library was reinforced in other interviews. This model of searching was very ingrained and automatic. Furthermore, this raises particularly interesting issues concerning earlier adoption of Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) by archives and special collections and whether those institutions that now implement Encoded Archival Description (EAD) have an incremental advantage in terms of attracting users. What some users have found at institutions that have implemented both MARC and EAD is that they can search the very

familiar library catalog and move seamlessly into on-line finding aids. For those interviewees who had experienced the combination of MARC and EAD, they noted a more seamless and transparent access system.

User Education

> For the novice user, we must replace the mystery of the finding aid with a delight in working with records; for the sophisticated client, mystery must be replaced by respect for the evidence that archival documents can provide.[35]

User education is a natural place to begin the process of building common ground. Archival user education can take place during the one-on-one reference interview or in educational sessions offered by a repository. Although basic manuals such as Pugh promote these sessions, little has been written about the actual curricular content of user education classes.[36] While a substantial number of case studies on the use of primary sources in the classroom have been written, none have provided a detailed account of the archival user education curriculum used during this process.[37] While quite valuable, these articles focus primarily on assisting students in the interpretation of primary sources, not the use of archives as an institution or the search and selection of primary sources. This statement is not meant to belittle the importance of archivists supporting the use of primary sources in the classroom because primary sources are often used to help develop critical thinking skills. The concern here is that a broader delineation of the scope and content of the archival user education curriculum is not occurring in the literature. Additionally, there has been no empirical work evaluating the outcomes of different types of archival user education classes or curricula.

This lack of knowledge about what goes on within the archival user education classroom and the lack of standards for evaluation contrasts with the lively discussions on the purpose, content, and scope of user education in libraries, particularly within college and university libraries. Library user education experienced a remarkable transformation throughout the twentieth century. College librarians have seen their role evolve from that of passive participant in the learning process to a more active teaching role.[38] Since the 1970s, a shift has occurred to emphasize sources of information rather than mechanics of a particular library system. In the last 15 years, the content of that teaching has transformed from bibliographic instruction for resources, indexes, catalogs, and materials in physical libraries to a focus on information literacy for information sources internal or external to the library. This transformation has entailed redefining the entire purpose of library user education.[39] No longer is the focus on curated and preselected sources in the library. Library user education curricula can now include such modules as the interpretation and evaluation of information sources, technological skills to access those sources, and assisting students to develop research questions and strategies.[40] Along with this movement has been a desire to evaluate the effectiveness of library user education programs and to target learning outcomes more strategically.[41] This wide-ranging, outwardly looking, strategic incorporation of library user education into the

educational mission of colleges and universities could serve as a model to assist archives in reconceptualizing their own researcher education efforts.

The previous two sections of this article identified a number of questions that provide a basis for this archival user education discussion. One question is the value and timing of introducing researchers to the more conceptual basis of archives and special collections versus the more practical instruction on "How does the access system work here?" Balancing the need for higher-level conceptual knowledge and lower-level practical information was debated among the interviewees. This debate also needs to take place among archivists: should we be training users to complete their current project in our repository or should we be educating users to think about primary sources and to identify, search for, and use primary sources more generally? Clearly, in an environment when the one-shot archival orientation class is the norm, practicality wins out. But what if archivists thought about user education as a process and in curricular or modular terms? What are the essential building blocks required to create the greatest amount of self-sufficiency possible in researchers using primary sources?

The reference interview is an ideal time for one-on-one user education. In addition to imparting the basics of being a well-behaved archival user, this is an opportunity to begin to introduce higher-level concepts and the overall "big picture" as Interviewee #1 noted. The "intake interview," as another interviewee referred to the reference interview, may be the only opportunity for the reference archivist and the researcher to interact closely. It should not be wasted as a "teachable moment." Multiple interviews mentioned eavesdropping on these reference interactions.[42] The interviewees all commented that it was at times obvious that the researcher did not comprehend all the information. Furthermore, they noted the speed at which the reference archivist talked. This is a cautionary note: what a reference archivist may do hundreds of times a year and has become rote can be totally new information for users. Techniques to help build common ground in a reference interview are cited by Tibbo and include restating things to users to confirm both the archivist's understanding of their question and to elicit from users their understanding of what the archivist has told them. This type of verification does take time, but can be a building block for future interactions.[43]

> You tend to when you're in that job [reference archivist] think people understand more than they do. They don't really talk to the people like they absolutely know nothing about an archive. I sometimes feel like maybe those people leave without finding what they should have found.[44]

To take full educational advantage of initial reference interviews, archives might consider separating the duties of the reference archivist monitoring the reference room from the initial interview process. While this is staff intensive, it may alleviate bottlenecks at the reference desk.

Archival user education is also a lifelong process. "I think after awhile they [reference archivists] just assume I know the ropes or I should know the ropes. And I should know the ropes except that I forget the ropes."[45] Reference archivists may assume that longtime and experienced users "know the ropes" as the quotation above indicates, but information about rarely used access tools and sources needs to be reinforced. More importantly, longtime users need to be explicitly informed about new access tools such

as the existence of both local finding aids on-line[46] as well as new nationally networked tools for locating sources. As noted previously and as is apparent in the work by Tibbo and Southwell, access tools such as *Archival Resources* and *ArchivesUSA* are just not widely known. Furthermore, focusing user education on the here and now (e.g., this repository and this project) often means that access tools for primary sources nationally are not covered.

Just as formal archives and special collections are not the only places where researchers locate and use primary sources, formal repositories of manuscripts and records are not the only ones doing archival user education. Two of the interviewees spoke about actual reference librarians "helping" them locate primary sources. (I say "actual" because most of my interviewees referred to reference archivists as reference librarians.) In one instance, the reference librarian pointed the person to *ArchivesUSA* but not to *Archival Resources*, both of which were available at the institution. This indicates reference librarians are a key group that may also need some archival user education because they are often a first line of inquiry and can lead researchers to or distract them from primary sources.

Interviewees were asked if they had any type of formal orientation to archives and what type of experience this was. For many, their archival user education was not memorable. The concepts and skills demonstrated were not embraced and few interviewees were able to transfer them to later projects. The descriptions of these archival orientations focused on the skills and, at times, the rules of the archives. Little was said about higher-level frameworks or constructs such as provenance. I began asking interviewees if they had ever heard of the term "provenance" and only two were familiar with it. Of those two people, only one was able to define the term. Interviewees were also asked what type of archival user education they would prefer. Had the method been a focus group, an interesting discussion would have ensued. Interviewees were split on the importance of practical and conceptual information as well as the level of the practical information (e.g., how to use the finding aids versus "these are our rules for copying materials"). This content issue is key and perhaps it is also time to rethink the one-size-fits-all approach to archival user education.

Users do bear some of the responsibility for letting archivists know when they are having a problem. I found a widespread reluctance on the part of users to ask reference librarians questions. There seemed to be three reasons for this phenomenon. First, some users felt a need to figure things out for themselves and took pride in their ability to do so even, as one admitted, when this was not logical and wasted time. Other users were anxious and they felt that their questions as well as their actions would make them look dumb and that the reference archivists would think they were idiots.

> It's one of those psychological barriers for me to go into, especially an archive I'm not used to. And even though I've been at the [archives] numerous times I still am a little shaky about, "I'm going to do something wrong. I just know it." [47]

Finally, some users regarded reference archivists as overworked and were reluctant to ask questions, particularly when there were others in need of assistance.

The quotation by Barbara Craig opening this section is a bit misleading. Mystery, delight, and respect are often commingling feelings for novice and experienced users alike. Reference archivists need to acknowledge a greater level of confusion on the part of all users and consciously dispel the mystery. No matter what the level of expertise of the researchers, the awe and an abiding appreciation for the record were apparent.

> I found this little invitation to a cotillion from about 1845 and it had a little ribbon in it. It was just fantastic. And some of those little objects other than the letters themselves that pop up in some of these folders just make you almost want to weep because the accident of their being both preserved and then kept in the library ... 160 years later that's very thrilling.[48]

Conclusions from Listening to Users

Building common ground between researchers and archivists is an ongoing process that needs to be continually reestablished and refined. Unlike libraries, where the paradigm for assistance, access tools, and rules have been inculcated into clients since grade school, archives are in some ways a *tabula rasa* for researchers. Their expectations are in many ways determined by first contacts. The onus is on archivists to establish themselves (ourselves) as the *primary* primary-source professionals and to define archives more broadly within the extended research community. This can be done through archival user education as well as by reaching out to other units that manage primary sources, such as microfilm reading rooms, and to other units that do user education, such as reference departments. The latter group is particularly important because they are often gatekeepers for access to both primary and secondary reference sources and often do the selection of the high-priced access tools (e.g., *Archival Resources* and *ArchivesUSA*) for an entire institution. Reference librarians are also vital because archivists can learn much from existing models of library user education.

Common ground is enacted in the effective use of the variety of access tools available. Unlike the earlier study of finding aids by Michael Stevens, the interviewees in this study used finding aids (guidebooks, guides, the black books) heavily.[49] It is in finding aids that users' representations of archives meet archivists' representations of collections. If these two cognitive representations intersect enough, the user is able to locate and utilize the archives and to identify primary sources that may hold the answer to his or her inquiry. If these representations diverge, the access tools are useless for the researcher. Creating finding aids that are true boundary objects is key.[50] Researcher after researcher noted the intricacies of access systems and it is apparent that finding aids are not the transparent tools for users that archivists intend. One user who had already completed several research projects using primary sources still noted, "I'm not sure I still understand that system"[51] when asked about his understanding of finding aids.

Finally, archival user education needs to come out of its black box. We need to have a better understanding of what goes on in user education sessions and what types of evaluation are done following these sessions. This could lead to a series of best prac-

tices for various populations (genealogists, college freshman, etc.) as well as a reevaluation of both content and scope for archival user education. In terms of lifelong learning, a researcher's ability to transfer knowledge from one archives or manuscript collection to the next and between separate research projects is critical if archives are to build up an expert, committed clientele that can support the archives in other ways. Rethinking the basis of archival user education may also help us integrate it into the educational curriculum at earlier stages, the benefits of which have been advocated both inside and outside of the archival profession. Beginning education on using primary sources earlier can only help future users of records and manuscripts and will initiate the ongoing process of building common ground.

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Study Title: Creating Boundaries not Barriers: Improving Researchers' Access to Primary Sources

1. Describe your current research/most recent project using primary sources.
2. What methods are you using to locate information about this subject?
3. What means have been most successful?
4. Describe your experience using archives and primary resources.
5. At approximately how many archives have you done research?
6. Could you describe how you use access tools?
7. What training have you had to locate and work with primary sources?
8. What type of preparation do you do prior to entering the archives?
9. Do you use the Internet to gather information about archives?
10. Describe your use of Web-based information.
11. What would you say is your most reliable type of access tool?
12. What source do you use most often to identify primary resources?
13. How did you find out about [name] repository?
14. In your own words, describe what an archival finding aid does.
15. Have you ever examined archival finding aids on-line?
16. What is your opinion of these sources for information concerning archives?
    a. Colleagues
    b. Reference archivists
    c. Footnotes/citations
    d. Guides to archival collections
    e. National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC)
    f. Finding aids (paper form)
    g. Finding aids (on-line)
    h. Archival Web sites
    i. Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN)
    j. *Archival Resources*
    k. Online Cataloging Library Consortium (OCLC)
    l. Local Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACS)
    m. *ArchivesUSA*
    n. National Inventory of Documentary Sources (NIDS)

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NOTES

1. Interview #7, lines 35–46.
2. Herbert Clark, *Using Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 93.
3. Standard texts and articles have focused on the question negotiation aspect of the reference interview. For example, see Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992): 41–53, and Linda L. Long, "Question Negotiation in the Archival Setting: The Use of Interpersonal Communication Techniques in the Reference Interview," *American Archivist* 52 (winter 1989): 40–51. Even in the virtual environment, Helen R. Tibbo also emphasizes "clarifying the question," although many of her techniques for making up for the lack of physical conversational cues (such as tone of voice and body language) are also classic cues used to verify common ground. Helen R. Tibbo, "Interviewing Techniques for Remote Reference: Electronic versus Traditional Environments," *American Archivist* 58:3 (1995): 294–310. While question negotiation is important, I would also suggest that the educational aspect of the reference interview may be just as important.
4. Barbara L. Craig, "What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in Perspective," *Archivaria* 31 (winter 1990–1991): 137–138.
5. Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives," *American Archivist* 49:4 (1986): 393–407.
6. Fredric Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History," *American Archivist* 49:4 (1986): 371–392, and Jacqueline Goggin, "The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Use of Black and Women's Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division," *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986): 57–67.
7. Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "A Virtual Expression of Need: An Analysis of E-mail reference Questions," *American Archivist* 64:1 (2001): 43–60; Kristin E. Martin, "Analysis of Remote Reference Correspondence at a Large Academic Manuscripts Collection," *American Archivist* 64:1 (2001): 17–42; and William J. Maher, "The Use of User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986): 15–26.
8. Kristina L. Southwell, "How Researchers Learn of Manuscript Resources at the Western History Collections," paper presented at the Midwest Archives Conference, May 3–5, 2002, Minneapolis, Minnesota. See published version of Southwell's research elsewhere in this issue.
9. Helen R. Tibbo, "Primarily History: Historians and the Search for Primary Source Materials," Proceedings of the ACM IEEE Joint Conference On Digital Libraries, July 14–18, 2002, Portland, Oregon. <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=544220.544222> See also Megan E. Phillips, "Usage Patterns for Holdings Information Sources at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Manuscripts Department" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997), and Shayera D. Tangri, "Evaluating Changes in the Methods by Which Users of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Manuscript Department Learn of the Holdings of the Department" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000).
10. Other surveys include Paul Conway, *Partners in Research: Improving Access to the Nation's Archive. User Studies at the National Archives and Records Administration* (Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1994); and "Research in Presidential Libraries: A User Survey," *Midwestern Archi-*

vist XI:1 (1986): 35–56; and Ann D. Gordon, *Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage: The Report of the Historical Documents Study* (Washington, D.C.: NHPRC, 1992).

11. Linda J. Long, "Question Negotiation in the Archival Setting: The Use of Interpersonal Communication Techniques in the Reference Interview," *American Archivist* 52:1 (1989), and Tibbo, "Interviewing Techniques."
12. This totals 29 because several of the researchers did either academic or work-related primary source research as well as genealogical research.
13. Interview #23, lines 26–34.
14. For example, see Terry Cook, "Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives," *Archivaria* 51 (spring 2001): 32; Brien Brothman, "The Pasts that Archives Keep: Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records," *Archivaria* 51 (spring 2001): 48–80; Eric Ketelaar, "Archivalisation and Archiving," *Archives and Manuscripts* 27:2 (1999): 54–61; and Tom Nesmith, "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives, *American Archivist* 65:1 (2002): 24–42. Among other works, these articles reference Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
15. Interview #25, lines 17–18.
16. Interviews #4 and #20.
17. Interview #17.
18. Interview #26, lines 41–43.
19. Interview #25, lines 90–94.
20. Interview #18, lines 92–95.
21. Interview #23, lines 112–113.
22. Interview #13.
23. Interview #27.
24. Interview #18, lines 55–61.
25. Interview #1, lines 609–610.
26. Interview #6, lines 178–180.
27. Interview #1, lines 562–575.
28. Interview #6, lines 212–220.
29. Interview #20, lines 37–39.
30. Interview #12, lines 380–383.
31. Interview #7, lines 93–96.
32. Interview #3, lines 178–183.
33. Interview #27.
34. Tibbo, *Primarily History*, 5.
35. Craig, 138.
36. Pugh, 41–53.
37. For example, see Marcus C. Robyns, "The Archivist as Educator: Integrating Critical Thinking Skills into Historical Research Methods Instruction," *American Archivist* 64:2 (2001): 363–384; Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, "An Exploration of K–12 User Needs for Digital Primary Source Materials," *American Archivist* 61 (1998): 136–157; Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, Y. Kafai, and William Landis, "Integrating Primary Sources into the Elementary School Classroom: A Case Study of Teachers' Perspectives," *Archivaria* 48 (1999): 89–116; Ken Osborne, "Archives in the Classroom," *Archivaria* 23 (1986–1987): 16–40; Laurie Lounsberry McFadden, "Making History Live: How to Get Students Interested in University Archives," *College and Research Libraries News* 59:6 (1998): 423–425; James W. Hopkins and Duane Reed, "Teaching historical methods through the archives. United States Air Force Academy," *Colorado Libraries* 19 (summer 1993): 35–37; and Patricia L. Adams, "Primary Sources and Senior Citizens in the Classroom," *American Archivist* 50:2 (1987): 239–242.
38. Evan Farber, "College Libraries and the Teaching/Learning Process: A 25 year Reflection," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 25:3: 171–177.
39. Virginia M. Tiefel, "Library user Education: Examining its Past, Projecting its Future," *Library Trends* 44:2 (fall 1995): 318–339.
40. Judi Repman and Randal D. Carlson, "Building Blocks for Information Literacy," *Education Libraries* 25:2 (2002): 22–25; Wenxian Zhang, "Developing Web-enhanced learning for information fluency: a liberal arts college's perspective," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 41:4 (2002): 356–63;

and Sonia Bodi, "How do we bridge the gap between what we teach and what they do? Some thoughts on the place of questions in the process of research," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28:3 (2002): 109–114.

41. For example, see Peggy L. Maki, "Developing an Assessment Plan to Learn about Student Learning," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28:1–2 (2002): 8–13; Elizabeth Wall Carter, "'Doing the best you can with what you have:' lessons learned from outcomes assessment," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28:1–2 (2002): 36–41; and Katherine K. Dunn, "Assessing information literacy skills in the California State University: a progress report," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28:1–2 (2002): 26–35.
42. Interviews #12, #13, #25, #26, and #27.
43. Tibbo, "Interviewing Techniques for Remote Reference," 305.
44. Interview #12, lines 413–416.
45. Interview #26, lines 183–184.
46. Interview #14.
47. Interview #18, lines 436–438.
48. Interview #26, 472–476.
49. Michael Stevens, "The Historian and Archival Finding Aids," *Georgia Archive* 5 (winter 1977): 64–74.
50. The concept of "boundary object" comes from Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, Translations, and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39," *Social Studies of Science* 19 (1989): 387–420. A boundary object is an artifact or document that has meaning in two communities and part of the meaning converges in order that the two communities can communicate across any cultural, intellectual, economic, etc., divides. For a fuller discussion of boundary objects in the reference process, see Elizabeth Yakel, "Thinking Inside and Outside the Boxes: Archival Reference Services at the Millennium," *Archivaria* 49 (2000): 140–160.
51. Interview #3, line 151.