Busing and Beyond: Creating a Holistic Approach to Undergraduate Teaching and Learning with Archival Collections

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Busing and Beyond: Creating a Holistic Approach to Undergraduate Teaching and Learning with Archival Collections

By Professor Pat Reeve, History Department and Julia Howington, Director, Moakley Archive and Institute, Suffolk University

Project Overview
Suffolk University faculty, archivists, and librarians formed a collaborative team in 2015 to develop and disseminate open educational resources (OERS) based on the research collections held by Suffolk University. Archivists and librarians provided reference assistance, bibliographic instruction, research guides, technological support, and digitization services. The curricula were designed to develop students’ information literacy skills and allow them to take advantage of — and navigate the challenges of — a complex and sometimes overwhelming information landscape. In the next phase of the project, the team will develop and test additional OERs, evaluate the effects of student and faculty engagement with OERs, and create guidelines and recommendations for further OER use, expansion, and development at Suffolk and beyond.

Sample OERS (Open Educational Resources)
Using historical documents from Congressman Joe Moakley’s papers related to court-ordered busing in Boston, Professor Reeve created a variety of assignments and classroom exercises for her undergraduate history methods course, “HST 200: Gateway to the Past: The Historian’s Practice.” Supplemented by lectures, readings, and discussion, Reeve used the assignments sequentially to ensure that students mastered historical thinking skills and then directly applied them to a capstone project. (See the course’s developmental sequence below.)

- **What History Matters, and Who Decides? Introduction to Archival Research:**
  students examined course catalogs at the Archives to document and explain changes in the history curriculum over time (.pdf)

- **Document Analysis Assignment:** students analyzed a historical news clipping (.pdf)

- **Mapping Data: Creating and Interpreting Historical Maps:** students studied population change over time in Boston and its effects on the school desegregation debates (.pdf)

- **Digital Exhibit Project:** capstone project in which students developed and narrated a historical argument on the OMEKA exhibit platform, example [Boston Massacre Exhibit](#)

- **HST 200 LibGuide:** compilation of relevant research resources [link]
Why OERs?
The team wanted to create open source tools that would be available for use or re-use by instructors within, and external to, Suffolk University and by faculty in other fields.

Some of the benefits of creating and using OERS:
- Fosters innovations in teaching and learning, many of which are more collaborative & participatory;
- Reduces overall cost of books and materials for students;
- Provides access to education opportunities for students who otherwise could not afford or access learning materials.

Incorporating primary sources in the developmental instruction of historical literacy

Overview: The following charts illustrate the process of integrating primary sources into an undergraduate-level historical methods course. The overall goal is to teach and engage students in the “procedural and cognitive action relevant to the use of primary sources” so that they develop a predisposition to inquiry and can frame and “solve historical problems and elaborate their own narrative.”[1] Foundational to the design and delivery of the course is the idea that students seeking to investigate and explain the past must be historically and information literate. Thus HST 200 integrates the instruction of competencies listed in charts 1 and 2.

Chart 1: Relevant Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>According to the Historical Thinking Project, a historically literate individual is able to:</th>
<th>According to the Association of College and Research Libraries, an information literate individual is able to:</th>
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| 1. Establish historical significance.  
2. Use primary source evidence.  
3. Identify continuity and change.  
4. Analyze cause and consequence.  
5. Take historical perspectives.  
6. Understand the ethical dimension of historical interpretations.[w] | Determine the extent of information needed.  
1. Access the needed information effectively and efficiently.  
2. Evaluate information and its sources critically.  
3. Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base.  
4. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.  
5. Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.[3] |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Primary Source Analysis</th>
<th>Students will:</th>
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| Step 1: Students will analyze 1 primary source. | 1. Characterize the source and identify who created it and when, where, and why.  
2. Summarize the author’s thesis and main points.  
3. Identify the historical context in which the source was created and the intended audience.  
4. Assess the author’s authority, biases, and the reliability of her perspective and claims.  
5. Evaluate the significance of the source for our understanding of the past. |

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<th>Phase 2: Secondary Source Analysis</th>
<th>Students will:</th>
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| Step 1: Students will analyze a secondary source: | 1. Follow the procedures described in step 1 to analyze each source.  
2. Identify and explore the points of agreements and disagreements among the sources.  
3. Interpret the significance of their agreements and disagreements for our understanding of the past.  
4. Discuss best practices for reconciling contradictory evidence. |

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<th>Step 2: Students will analyze and compare 2 or more primary sources (addressing the same historical phenomenon).</th>
<th>Students will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Identify the author and the publication site and date.  
2. Summarize his thesis, main points, and purposes in writing.  
3. Identify the scholarly context in which the author wrote and his intended audience.  
4. Assess the author’s authority, biases, and the reliability of his perspective, claims, and evidence.  
5. Evaluate the significance of the source for our understanding of history as a discipline and the past. |
Step 2: Students will analyze and compare 2 or more secondary sources (addressing the same historical phenomenon).

Students will:
1. Follow the procedures described in step 1 to analyze each source.
2. Identify and explore the points of agreements and disagreements among the sources.
3. Interpret the significance of their agreements and disagreements for our understanding of the past.
4. Discuss best practices for reconciling contradictory evidence.

Phase 3: Synthesis of primary and secondary sources to interpret and explain the past

Students will:
1. Frame a research topic and question.
2. Identify the extent and types of information needed to answer the question.
3. Locate, gather, analyze, and evaluate the collected sources.
4. Identify and explore the points of agreements and disagreements among the sources.
5. Synthesize the primary and secondary source arguments to develop a narrative that addresses key historical actors, events, and developments.
6. Explain historical causation and historical continuities and discontinuities.
7. Describe the significance of their argument for our understanding of the past.

