A New Role in the Archives and Special Collections:

The Challenge of Providing Research and Instructional Support to Graduate Students, Faculty and Other Researchers

Olga Perkovic
Research and Advanced Studies Librarian
perkovi@mcmaster.ca
May 25, 2012
Session Outline

- Background and New Role
- McMaster’s Archives and Research Collections
- Similarities and Differences
  - Instruction
- Supporting Faculty and Graduate Students
- Future Considerations
- Future Challenges
- Presentation Take-Aways
- Questions and Discussion
Background and New Role

1995  Reference Librarian (Reference Dept.)
2004  Reference Librarian/Instruction Coordinator (Reference Dept.)
2007  Liaison Librarian (Teaching, Learning and Research/21st Century Fluencies Depts.)
2011  Research and Advanced Studies Librarian (Collections Division)
      -"transitional" year
MCMASTER’S ARCHIVES
AND RESEARCH COLLECTIONS
McMaster’s Archives and Research Collections

- Mission Statement
  - Teaching and Outreach
- Collections
  - Strengths
- Staffing
- User Space
- Organizational Review, Executive Summary, Dec. 2011
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
Similarities and Differences

• Physical Organization
• Subject Analysis or Indexing
• Terminology and Concepts
• Access and Use
• Research Tools
• Research Support
• Instruction
  – Classroom Observations

Image credit
Instruction: Classroom Observations

• Similarities
  – Faculty collaboration
  – One-shot class
  – Using primary sources
  – Critical thinking skills

• Differences
  – Using secondary sources
  – Instruction space
  – Session objectives
  – Active learning
Active Learning: One Example

- History 2HI3: Historical Inquiry, Fall 2009
- Exercise: Look at different years of *The Liberator* and compare the changes in masthead and advertisements over time (typeface, font, etc.)
- Years: 1839, 1845, 1856, 1859
- Professor prepared students beforehand
- Students came in small groups; faculty, archivist and myself present
- My observations
Two new books!

Cotton and Sharron, 2011

Mitchell, Seiden and Taraba, 2012
SUPPORTING FACULTY AND GRADUATE STUDENTS
Graduate Students

• Barrett explores to what extent humanities graduate students might constitute a unique user group (Barrett, “Information-Seeking Habits,” 324.)

• Results indicate that graduate students are more a group constituting “a unique series of stages.” (Ibid., 330).

• Significance to librarians
  - graduate students are not relying on librarians in the more formative, early stages of their programs but in later stages and to track down specific works (Ibid.)
  - Barrett concludes that “it would seem prudent for librarians to increase their profile and relevance among graduate students as a means of investing themselves in the research habits of future humanities faculty members.” (Ibid.)
FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES
Future Considerations

• The introduction of both primary and secondary sources into general library instruction sessions; consider the model proposed by Sutton and Knight (2006)

• The incorporation of active learning exercises with primary sources as one way to help students develop critical thinking skills
Future Considerations

• The increased interest in and use of primary sources
  – Broadening and expanding user base
• The possible alignment of Department policies with the university’s mission and vision
  – Experiential learning
• Library staff transitioning into new roles
  – Librarians with archival responsibilities
• Archivists’ new and expanding roles
  – Outreach strategies
  – Archival user education
Future Challenges

- April 30, 2012, Federal Government announced funding cuts to Library & Archives Canada (LAC)
  - Elimination of the budget for the National Archive Development Program; $1.7 million supporting 800 local archives for 26 years
- Reduced staff: 20%
- Departmental library closures
- Decentralization of collections
- Limited digitization: 50% staff cuts
- CAUT campaign [Save Library & Archives Canada](http://www.savellibraryarchives.ca)
Presentation Take-Aways

• Visit the Archives and Research or Special Collections at YOUR institution
• Initiate discussions with the archivist and/or the special collections librarian
• Take note of recent archival and library literature
  – Overlapping topics e.g. promotion and outreach
  – Increased collaboration among librarians, archivists and faculty
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
Questions and Discussion*

1. Have you used primary sources in instruction? In what way?
2. Can you foresee any future use of archival materials in your work? In what way?
3. What instruction and research services using archives and special collections will best support the undergraduate and graduate programs at your institution?

*Discussion questions adopted from Cotton and Sharron, “Engaging Students,” 121.
Bibliography


Bibliography


Bibliography


Further Readings

THANK YOU!