

Archival Literacy for History Students: Identifying Faculty Expectations of Archival Research Skills

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Abstract:

Although finding, interpreting, and using archives is inherent in the study of history, no standard identifies the archival research competencies college history students should possess. The purpose of this study is to identify history faculty expectations of undergraduates regarding their archival research skills and, based on those expectations, to create a list of archival research competencies that could be incorporated into the history classroom or introduced by the archivist in archival literacy sessions. The study includes viewpoints of different stakeholders, a review of course syllabi, in-depth interviews with history department faculty at a large public research university, and comments from faculty and recent graduates on a draft list of archival competencies for history students. The practical recommendations encourage the implementation of the competencies for both history faculty as well as for archivists involved in teaching archival research skills to students. This article represents a preliminary report based on the authors' completion of the first phase of their research. In the second phase, currently underway, history faculty, university archivists, and selected academic librarians at a representative sample of other institutions will provide comments on the list of competencies developed in the first phase. These comments will be considered for a revised list of competencies that will be published at a later date.