Interacting with History: Teaching with Primary Sources. Edited by Katherine Lehman. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015. Index. Softcover. $46.00.

Past or Portal? Enhancing Undergraduate Learning through Special Collections and Archives. By Eleanor Mitchell, Peggy Seiden, and Suzy Taraba. Chicago: ACRL, 2012. Softcover. $60.00.

In January 2016, a question was posed to the Society of American Archivists' Listserv[1] about the role of archivists in developing content to enhance student curricula. The discussion that followed highlighted one of the most important issues facing archivists who collaborate with classroom educators—the ability to actively and effectively engage teachers and their students. Although few subscribers participated in the thread, responses invigorated what is often a rather stagnant conversation on the role of both archivists and archives in advancing the use of primary source materials in educational settings. Two publications address the concerns of those who contributed to the SAA Listserv thread, as well as those in archival and classroom settings, by recommending a range of collections, different material types, and course development options for increasing use of historical documents to support models of learning: *Interacting with History: Teaching with Primary Sources* and *Past or Portal? Enhancing Undergraduate Learning through Special Collections and Archives.* Although geared toward slightly different audiences, the basic premise of each text is the same—using original objects as pedagogical tools to enhance student research skills while also developing innovative means of delivering contextual information.

Interacting with History: Teaching with Primary Sources is a work edited by Katherine Lehman detailing the ways in which Library of Congress (LC) resources can be utilized for school staff and student development. Focused on K–12 educational programs, each of the six chapters reads as a bibliographic guide to web-accessible LC resources around which classroom projects and modules can be designed. Developed as a way to "teach students to analyze and interpret [primary sources] and how to integrate the resources into historical inquiry units" (p. x), *Interacting with History* is a good starter manual for educators who want to incorporate primary sources into their curricula but who have either limited experience or resources to do so. Because much of the easy-to-read text centers on predefined web-accessible LC collections, the burden of identifying and selecting materials and implementing instructional design techniques to enhance existing curricula is reduced. Additionally, the text provides the added benefit of including peer educators' firsthand experiences working with LC's collections, thus serving as examples of how these collections and curricular programs can be implemented.

Chapter 1, "Welcome to the Library of Congress," provides a detailed overview of the LC's institutional history and then-current (2014) website. This introduction serves as the foundation for subsequent chapters on identifying the library's course-appropriate resources (chapter 2: "Teaching Resources from the Library of Congress"); securing external classroom support (chapter 3: "Professional Development and Support for Classroom Teachers Available through the Library of Congress"); providing anecdotal evidence of successful classroom activities (chapter 4: "Action Lessons: Interacting with History"); and connecting teachers to archival and primary sources in their local

communities (chapter 5: "Discovering Local History Resources in Your Own Back-yard"). Each chapter includes a reasonable number of images, screen captures, and text blocks to emphasize resources discussed in text. On the positive side, images and text blocks contribute to the volume's accessibility by allowing readers to skim breakout materials and images for pertinent information. On the not-so-positive side is the inherent variability of web resource design. As part of this review, I randomly selected URLs published in the text to view online. Fortunately, a year and a half after publication, the published text and online versions were mirror images. Aside from the basic considerations of updating or enhancing web content and design, I wondered—how long will these examples serve as the LC's primary "go-to" resources for curricular engagement? I also wondered why a book so heavily focused on web resources had not also been published electronically. As the print monograph and collection pages age, the potential exists for disconnected content; an e-resource would have worked well to facilitate access to materials that may eventually become legacy resources.

Another concern is whether educators will consider using this resource if they are developing projects that do not rely on Library of Congress materials. For the nascent K–12 innovator, *Interacting with History* might serve as a "teacher's manual" of sorts, providing the questions and answers for those still wrapping their heads around modules and courses using primary source materials. But for those interested in taking things to the next level, it may be challenging to think outside of the boxes so carefully curated by the LC. This is where the end of chapter 2 (pp. 27–32) might prove beneficial for both newbies and not-so-newbies, as the summary provided demonstrates how easily primary source materials can be incorporated into curricular programs. In six pages, chapter author Sara Suitor briefly details the steps necessary for using primary sources in the classroom. Additionally, each step includes a set of questions to consider when selecting materials and creating assignments. Similarly, suggestions for moving beyond the LC's resources to develop one's own course ideas are available in chapters 3 and 4, which provide additional tidbits for finding project partners and using Web 2.0 applications, respectively. These sections contribute greatly to the overall usefulness of the text, which is somewhat limited at best.

Past or Portal? Enhancing Undergraduate Learning through Special Collections and Archives by Eleanor Mitchell, Peggy Seiden, and Suzy Taraba takes a different perspective on incorporating archival and primary source materials into student curricula. Whereas the core value of *Interacting with History* rests in its applicability to teachers in classroom settings, *Past or Portal?* considers the coeducational roles of archivists and undergraduate instructors in increasing student engagement with historical documents. Contributions from roughly 50 US colleges and universities comprise this weighty volume, which "attempt[s] to address the need for models that offer best practices, creative approaches, and solutions to commonly experienced challenges" (p. x) for using archival and primary source materials as pedagogical literacy tools. The text is divided into four sections ("The Artifact," "The Pedagogy," "The Program," and "The Work"), each of which comprises a laundry list of case studies. Case studies range in length from about 5 to 10 pages—including references, bibliographic notes, or suggestions for further readings—and are presented alphabetically by institution within each section. While it is unlikely

the authors intended readers to digest *Past or Portal?* linearly, the alphabetic presentation of nearly 50 case studies is tedious; as a reference tool, the book would be easier to use if sections were organized by project type or by assignment/course difficulty. As presented, readers cannot anticipate what each new case study will reveal, and they may lose time reading about irrelevant projects. Additionally, although section titles clearly indicate the subject matter covered, sections overlap significantly with no apparent method or formatting tool for highlighting the main topic of each study. Thus, it is difficult to determine how certain studies were selected for and distributed across the four sections. Also, as many of the generic details are the same (e.g., material selection, librarian/archivist role, etc.), paring some studies down to one or two pages summarizing a few key points—such as the methodology driving a course outline or how the program increased use of special collections materials—would have worked well.

Stand-out studies in this volume include those emphasizing specific outcomes or bearing cautionary tales, such as the University of Pennsylvania's "Crazy for Pamela in the Rare Books Library: Undergraduates Reflect on Doing Original Research in Special Collections" (pp. 53–70), which provides a course syllabus and transcripts of students' project reflections; New York University's "Computing in the Humanities @ NY Libraries" (pp. 119–24), which demonstrates the project's alignment with professional standards and competencies; and Augustana College's "Faculty Buy-In: Encouraging Student Use through Faculty Stipends" (pp. 195–99), which addresses issues of support, retention, and assignment changes among teaching faculty. Other strong studies cover the process of collaborative decision making among students and project assessment. The volume represents a great diversity of classes, subject areas, and disciplines that incorporate archival and primary source materials in both innovative and challenging ways. Overall, *Past or Portal?* is a solid work that can be used to generate creative ideas for experiential learning that are both feasible and can be evaluated for long-term effectiveness.

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NOTE

1. Danna Bell to archives@forums.archivists.org, January 4, 2016, Costs for a Local History Project.