

# ARCHIVES VS THIS GENERATION OF STUDENTS

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# THE QUEST TO ANSWER A KEY QUESTION

What can we learn about first year university students' feedback on using archives?

During the standard ENGL 102 (Enrichment in English) library session students went to the archives to discover the special collections.

Later in the semester, students were given a comparison and contrast essay assignment where they had to:

- explore old photos of AUB or the old student documents/newsletters/issues of Outlook (the university student magazine) or the old posters of campus activities and events.
- find current photos of AUB, current student documents/newsletters/issues of Outlook or current posters of campus activities and events.
- identify trends, interests, unearth concerns, trace influences or reach certain conclusions about changes over the years.

# THE STEPS

While working on the assignment, students:

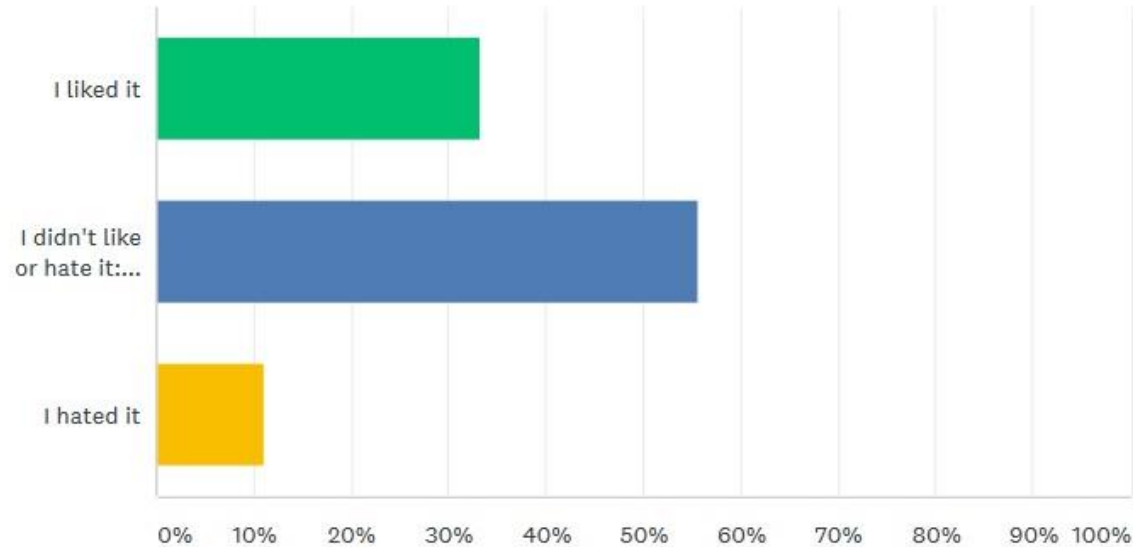
- went to the archives
- sought help from the team at the archives
- accessed the archives online via the library's website

After the assignment, students were surveyed.

The majority expressed high levels of frustration since they found the archives “hard” to search.

This Community Idea Exchange shares the findings of the survey to raise questions about how archives can be more search-friendly for a generation used to Googling and accessing information in seconds.

# HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ARCHIVE ASSIGNMENT?



| ANSWER CHOICES                      | RESPONSES |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| ▼ I liked it                        | 33.33% 9  |
| ▼ I didn't like or hate it: neutral | 55.56% 15 |
| ▼ I hated it                        | 11.11% 3  |

# WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF THIS ARCHIVE ASSIGNMENT?

## STUDENT RESPONSES:

“Actually using the archives was extremely difficult.”

“Research in the archives.”

“Categorizing points of comparison in a way that relates to both AUB past and present. Searching for the desired archive because there are a lot of archives and it wasn't easy to go through all the archives.”

“The fact that the library online did not really help with the research.”

“The challenge was finding archives containing the topic you're exactly introducing. In other words, for me it was a challenge to find pictures of AUB's campus that show exactly what I wanted to talk about.”

“Proper access to the archive inside AUB but mostly outside.”

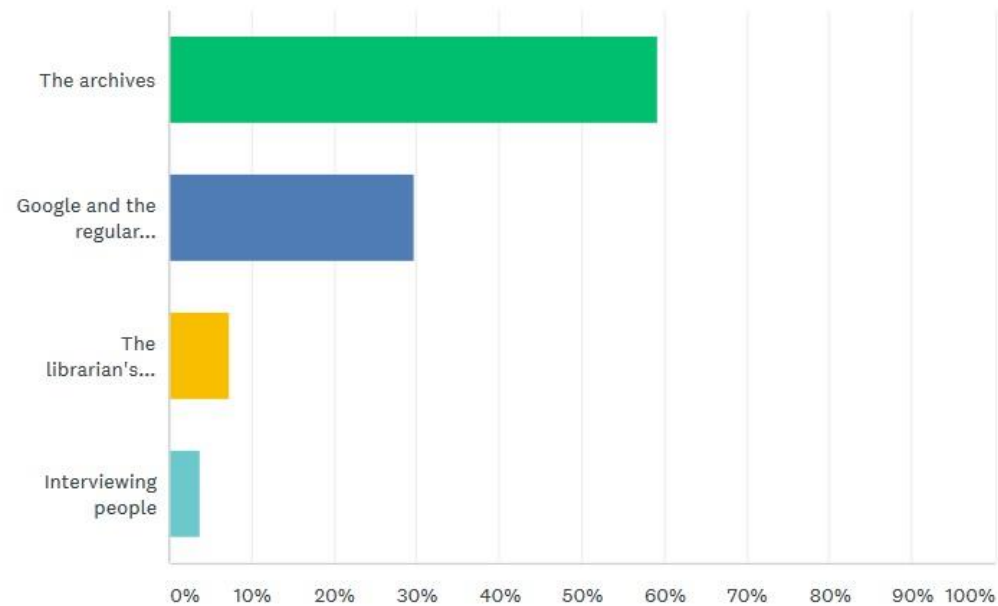
“To find what we really want while searching.”

“The archives weren't very organized, and it's hard finding the information needed.”

“It needed a lot of thinking and research.”

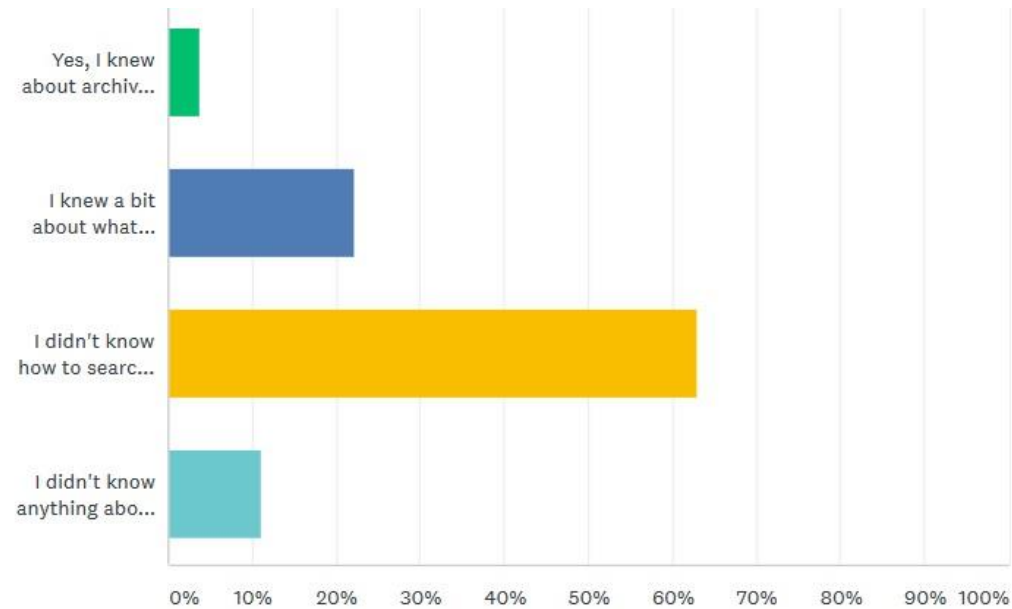
“Facing problems in finding the required information because of lack of help provided by librarians.”

# WHAT RESOURCES HELPED YOU FIND THE INFORMATION YOU NEEDED THE MOST?



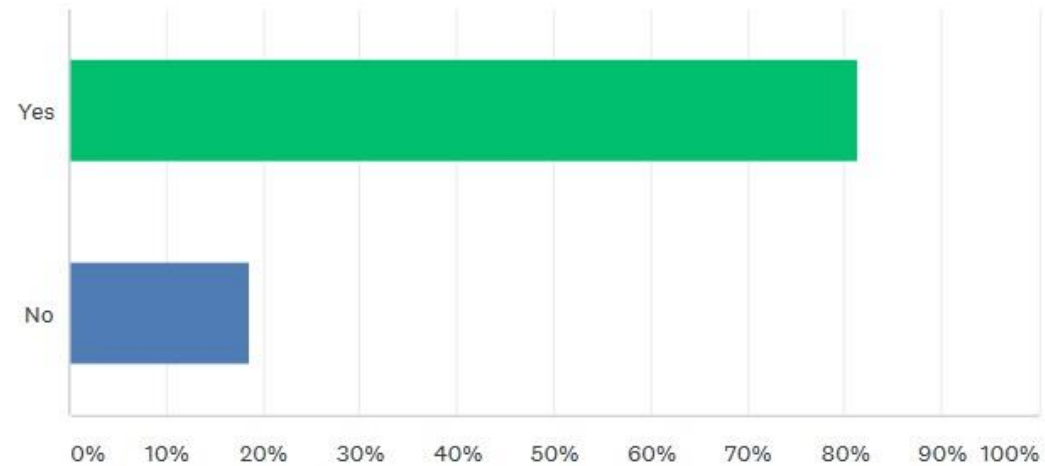
| ANSWER CHOICES                         | RESPONSES |
|--|-----------|
| ▼ The archives                         | 59.26% 16 |
| ▼ Google and the regular internet      | 29.63% 8  |
| ▼ The librarian's guidance and support | 7.41% 2   |
| ▼ Interviewing people                  | 3.70% 1   |

# DID YOU KNOW ABOUT ARCHIVES BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT?



| ANSWER CHOICES   | RESPONSES |
|--|-----------|
| Yes, I knew about archives and how to search them before the assignment                                    | 3.70% 1   |
| I knew a bit about what archives are and how to search them before the assignment, but not in great detail | 22.22% 6  |
| I didn't know how to search archives before the assignment, but I knew what archives are                   | 62.96% 17 |
| I didn't know anything about archives and how to search them before the assignment                         | 11.11% 3  |

# DID THIS ASSIGNMENT IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO FIND INFORMATION FROM THE ARCHIVES?



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|----------------|-----------|
| Yes            | 81.48% 22 |
| No             | 18.52% 5  |



# IF YOU WERE A TEACHER DESIGNING AN ESSAY TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO ARCHIVES, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

The Same:

“Do the same thing that DR. Jasmin did and visit with the students the archive center at AUB to get more information from the staff to search about our topics.”

“The same thing.” (several students responded this way)

# IF YOU WERE A TEACHER DESIGNING AN ESSAY TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO ARCHIVES, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

More Guidance:

“I would take them to the archives again and spend more time showing them how to gather information.”

“I would ask the librarians to take care of them.”

“Preparing a detailed power point presentation along with essay examples that illustrate how to use the archives and old sources in writing an essay.”

“I would do an example of this essay with them: we would choose a topic, we would search the archives together, we would make an introduction and a conclusion.”

# IF YOU WERE A TEACHER DESIGNING AN ESSAY TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO ARCHIVES, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Assignment (straightforward and no analysis needed):

“Not a compare contrast essay, its hard finding topics related to then and now.”

“Instead of an essay I’d ask to get me something interesting from the archives and explain why they found it interesting.”

“Give them presentation assignment where they will have to present pictures and old things found on the archives based on the topic.”

“Specify a certain topic which is supported with plenty of details.”

# WHY WOULD YOU PICK THE APPROACH YOU DESCRIBED ABOVE?

The Dark Side:

“Because many of the students (like me) didn't know anything about the archives department.”

“It was hard finding information and linking it to today's life.”

“Because it will teach the students how to use the archives not causing a harder approach to research.”

“Because the archives is a very large library, and students may get confused and uncertain on what to search for and notice what are the important information.”

“Because I faced several problems while writing especially in finding the information I need.”

“It's hard to pick a topic, because it might turn to be hard to find information about it.”

“Archives aren't interesting or beneficial anyway.”

# WHY WOULD YOU PICK THE APPROACH YOU DESCRIBED ABOVE?

The Light Side:

“I think it's the appropriate way to let students discover archives and how to search for them.”

“Because comparing the past to the present is a good way to use archives and actuality in parallel.”

“I feel it is the best way introduce the archives and how to use them to the students.”

“Because I liked the subject the teacher gave us.”

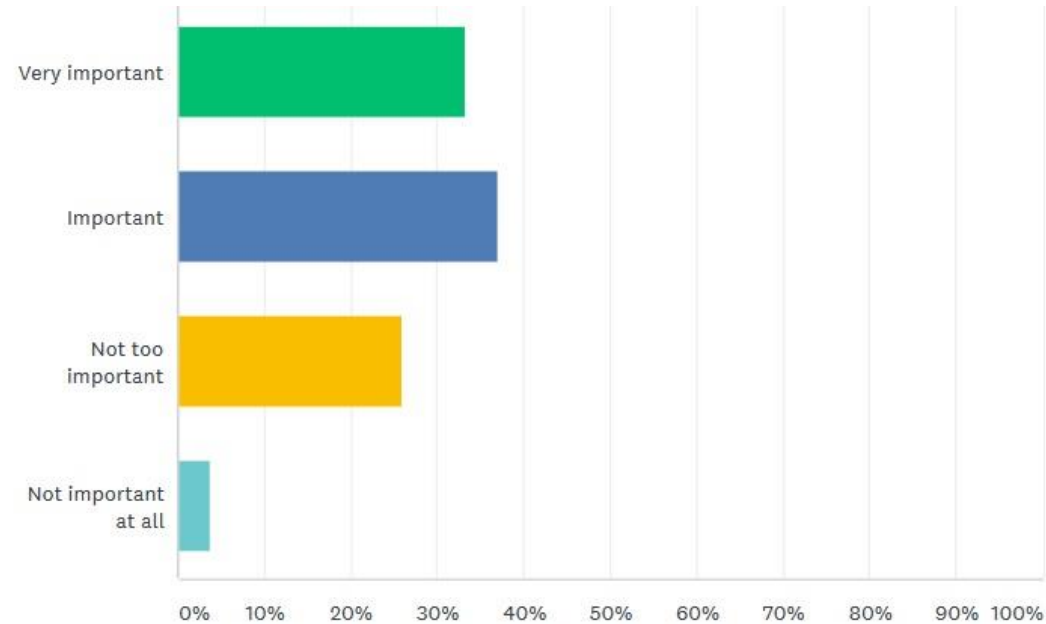
“I feel it is the best way introduce the archives and how to use them to the students.”

“Because it helped me to know how to search in the archives to find the information that I need.”

“Students understand more with examples.”

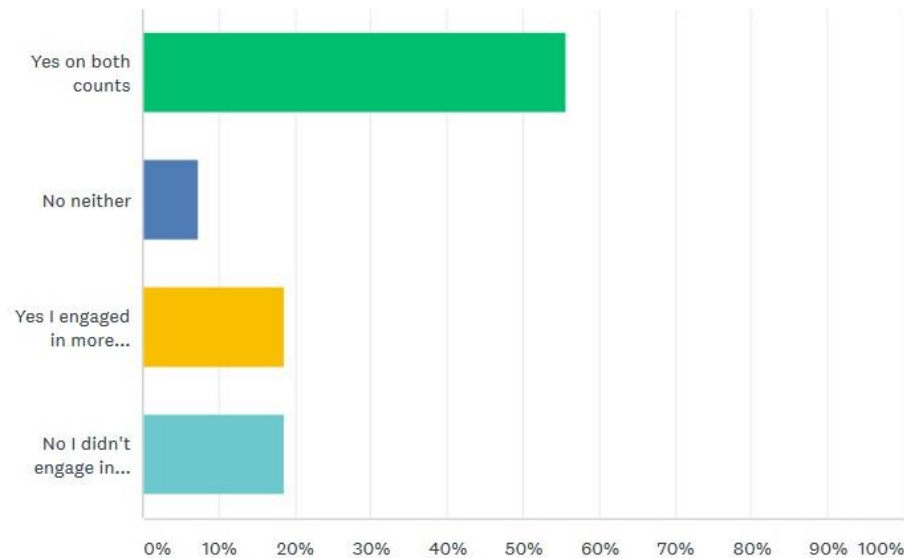
“Archives are a good way of unlocking history.”

# HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR STUDENTS TO USE ARCHIVES?



| ANSWER CHOICES       | RESPONSES |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Very important       | 33.33% 9  |
| Important            | 37.04% 10 |
| Not too important    | 25.93% 7  |
| Not important at all | 3.70% 1   |

# DID THIS ASSIGNMENT PROMPT YOU TO ENGAGE IN CRITICAL THINKING MORE THAN YOU NORMALLY WOULD? DID IT ENCOURAGE YOU TO TRY TO COME UP WITH "BIG IDEAS/MAIN TAKEAWAYS" WHEN COMPARING AND CONTRASTING?



| ANSWER CHOICES  | RESPONSES |
|---|-----------|
| Yes on both counts  | 55.56% 15 |
| No neither  | 7.41% 2   |
| Yes I engaged in more critical thinking but am not encouraged to come up with "big ideas/main takeaways" when comparing and contrasting.          | 18.52% 5  |
| No I didn't engage in critical thinking more than usual but I now think more about the "big ideas/main takeaways" when comparing and contrasting. | 18.52% 5  |

# WHAT DID USING THE ARCHIVES REVEAL TO YOU? HOW DID IT IMPACT YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS? WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE/RESEARCHERS USE ARCHIVES? WOULD YOU EVER USE THE ARCHIVES AGAIN? WHY OR WHY NOT?

The Dark Side:

“I wouldn’t because of its lack of organization.”

“I would not use the archives again because I feel like I got more information online than I did from the archives.”

“Frankly I found the process of searching for archives very complicated and not useful at all. It could be better if archives were more easy to manipulate.”

“It revealed it was hard and takes more time than gathering information nowadays. I wouldn’t unless I have to.”

“I really disliked the whole process because the archives weren’t accessible easily. I would never use the archives ever again (unless I was forced to).”

MANY students had similar comments.



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The Light Side:

“Using the archives reveals the importance of using such archives and old sources which helped me in my research process. As a result, it facilitated the research process in writing the essay. In my opinion, people/researchers use archives so that they can get information and facts that will enrich their writings. Yes, I would use the archives again since they are very beneficial and effective references.”

“It has been a good experience using the archives and I would use it again since it is very useful to me such that it exceeded my expectations.”

“It helped me rely on real material and not only on the internet and on google. Yes, I would use the archives again.”

“Using archives revealed some information that I didn't know about. People use archives in order to know the difference between past and present life. I would use the archives again because they reveal new information about the past.”

“It reveals the importance of the past events and how people through the passing decades manage to improve their life. Using archives helped me to enrich my research with facts and credibility which is a great cause for people to use archives. And I would like to use them again not only for my assignments but also to get more information.”

“It revealed that AUB focuses on maintaining its history for future use. I enjoyed using the archives because it was a new method of research for me and it helped my motivation. Because some of the information found in the archives cannot be found online. Yes. It is a great method to gather information related to Lebanon and AUB.”

# QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING?

What can we do to make archives more accessible to students used to googling everything?

- Full digitalization with thorough tagging/indexing? Should students be involved in this? Or just librarians?
- Structured and formal student training?
- Making archive use more common in classes? Creating 'easy' assignments rather than ones that involve critical thinking and analysis as a first step and then 'up' the challenge?
- ????