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ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH PRIMARY SOURCES



Eleni Mouskeftaropoulou
mouselen@act.edu

Bringing Anatolia College Archives into the classroom



Agenda

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Theoretical Framework: The Educational Landscape and Learning Theory

- ❖ In 1998, the **Carnegie Foundation** commissioned ***“Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities”***, a report focused on improving undergraduate education, also known as **the Boyer Report**.
- ❖ **Research-based learning** and **inquiry-based learning** are strategies suggested for teaching students early in their undergraduate careers.
- ❖ As the report notes, first year students should be exposed to a learning environment in which they ***“deal with topics that will stimulate and open intellectual horizons and allow for opportunities for learning by inquiry in a collaborative environment”***.





Theoretical Framework: The Educational Landscape and Learning Theory...(cont.)

- ❖ A key component of inquiry-based learning is assigning meaningful roles for students within the inquiry process. Creating roles for students gives them a sense of responsibility and helps to model the desired learning outcome.
- ❖ Resulting in part from the **Boyer Commission Report on Undergraduate Education**, universities began to teach undergraduates with primary sources and to encourage undergraduates to perform original research.
- ❖ Learning theory and cognitive development studies show that students are ready early in their college career to engage with unmediated primary sources. Archivists and librarians can work with faculty to create assignments and active learning exercises that highlight their collections, and, more importantly, foster students' cognitive development and critical thinking skills.





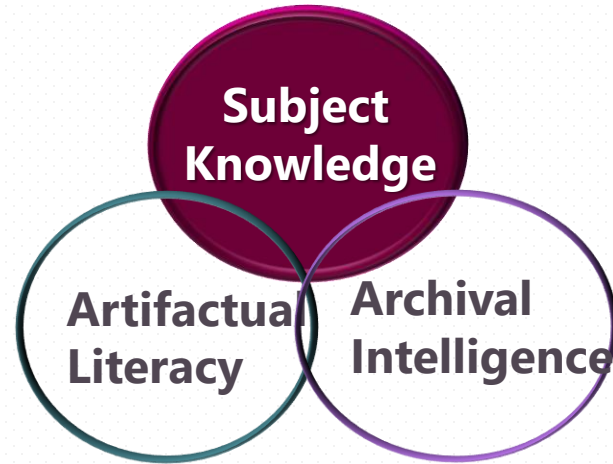
Theoretical Framework: The Educational Landscape and Learning Theory...(cont.)

- ❖ The **Society of American Archivists' Guidelines for College and University Archives** develop this idea: "*Academic archives should also serve as an **educational laboratory** where students may learn about: a particular subject; the different types of available resources; the proper procedures and techniques for using primary archival resources in their research projects.*"
- ❖ **Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres** (2003) assert that "*three distinct forms of knowledge are needed to work effectively with primary sources,*" which consist of **domain (subject) knowledge**, **artifactual literacy**, and **archival intelligence**.
- ❖ **Marcus Robyns** (2001) points out, "*students get a range of instruction from their professors but when encountering original documents for the first time, they are rarely fully prepared*".
- ❖ Archivists must join with faculty as partners in building the foundation that supports the growth of "**independent learners**"

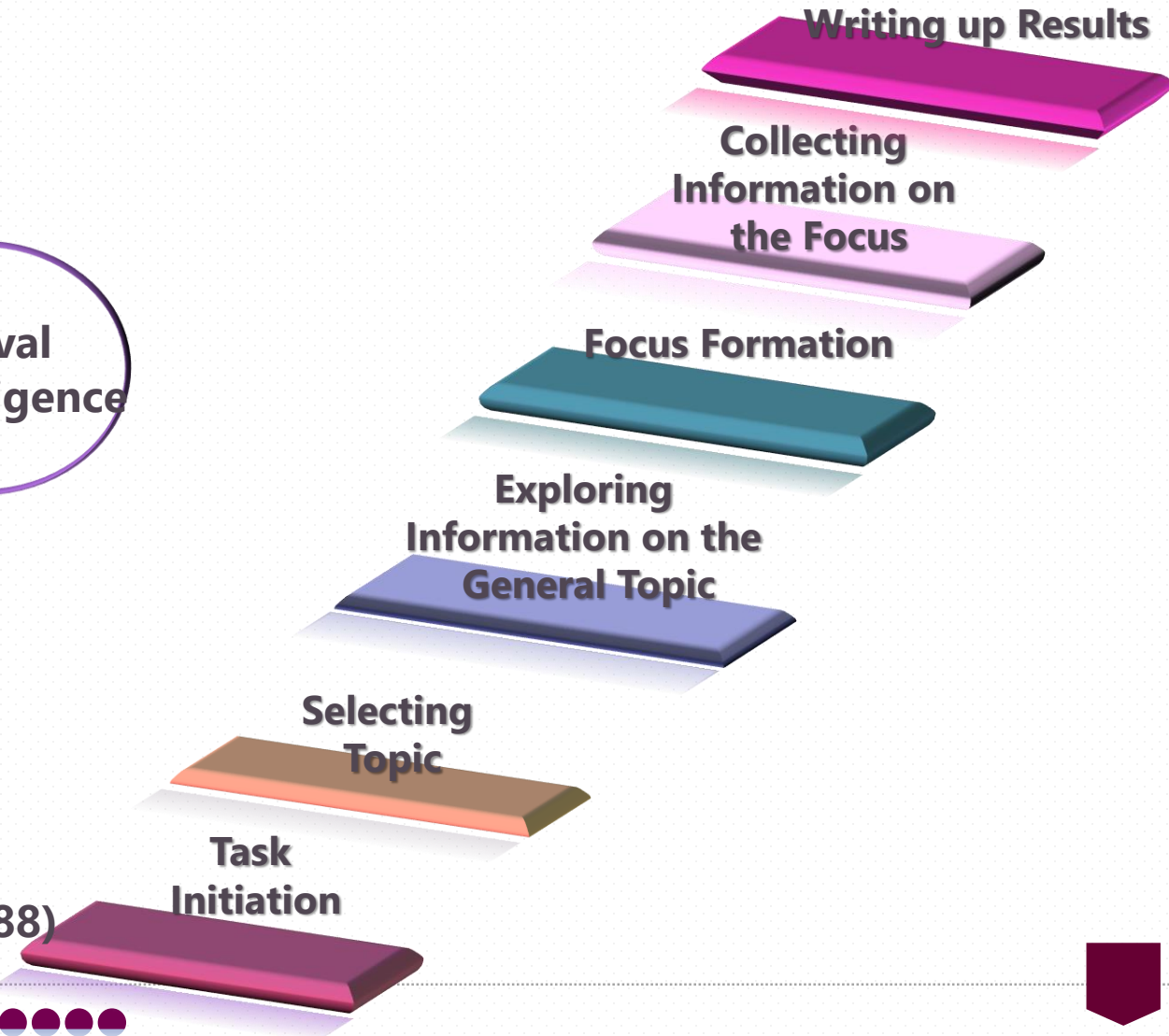


Theoretical Framework: The Educational Landscape and Learning Theory...(cont.)

Archival User Expertise Model (Yakel and Torres 2003)

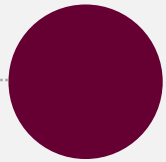


Six-stage Library Search Process Model (Kuhlthau 1988)





Bringing Anatolia College Archives into classroom- Case study



School year (2017-2018) at Anatolia College marked the beginning of a collaboration between Anatolia College Archives faculty, archivist and students, an initiative taken by Anatolia College Archives in an effort to sensitize faculty, students and staff at Anatolia College over the significance of preserving and showcasing the school's legacy and history.

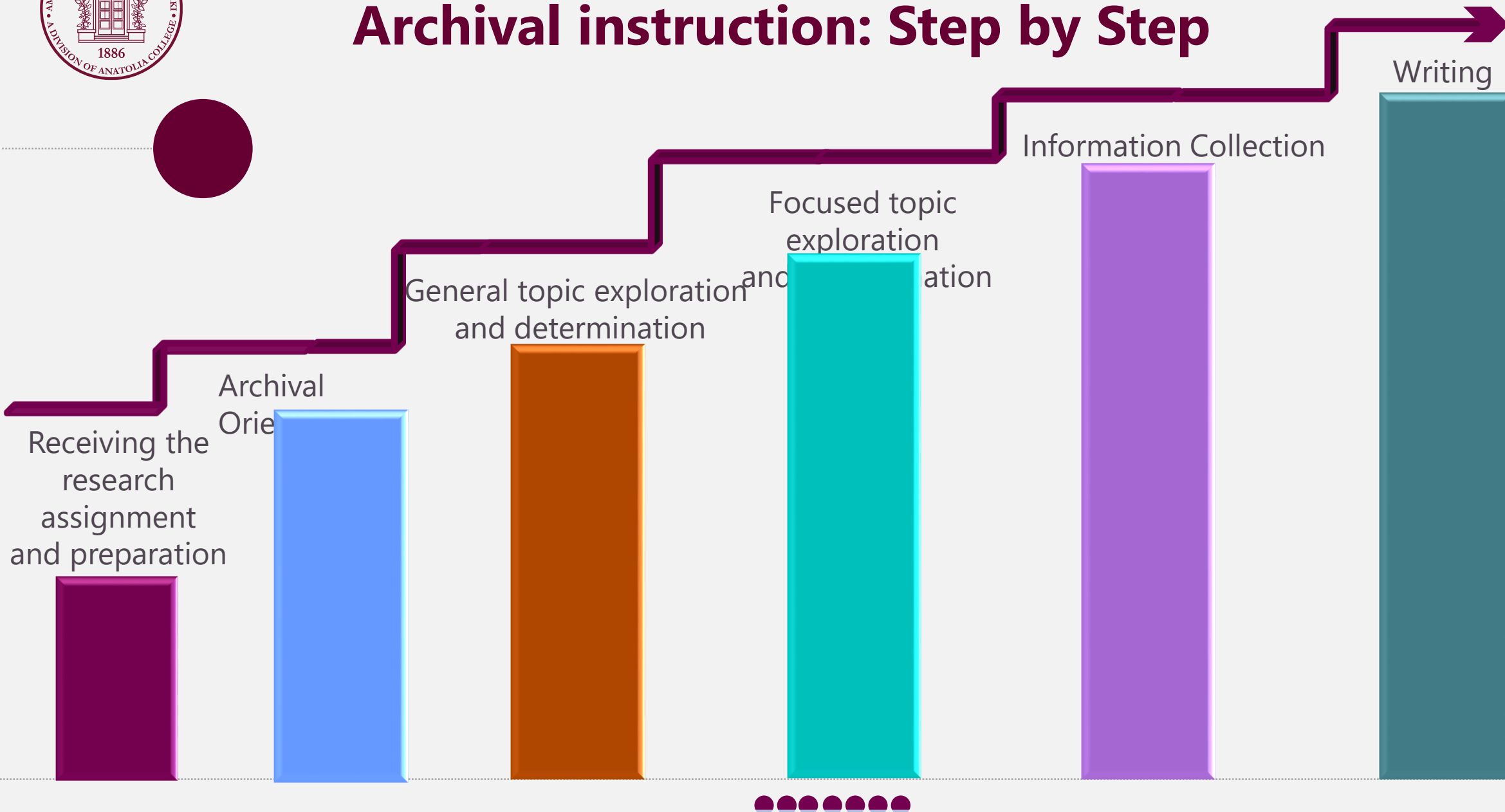
The Bissell Library at ACT has been rethinking its core service model related to faculty and student support.

This case study investigates how undergraduate students develop their archival knowledge and research skills, how this development is embedded in the different stages of any research project, and what roles the instructor of the class and the reference archivist assume throughout a semester.





Archival instruction: Step by Step

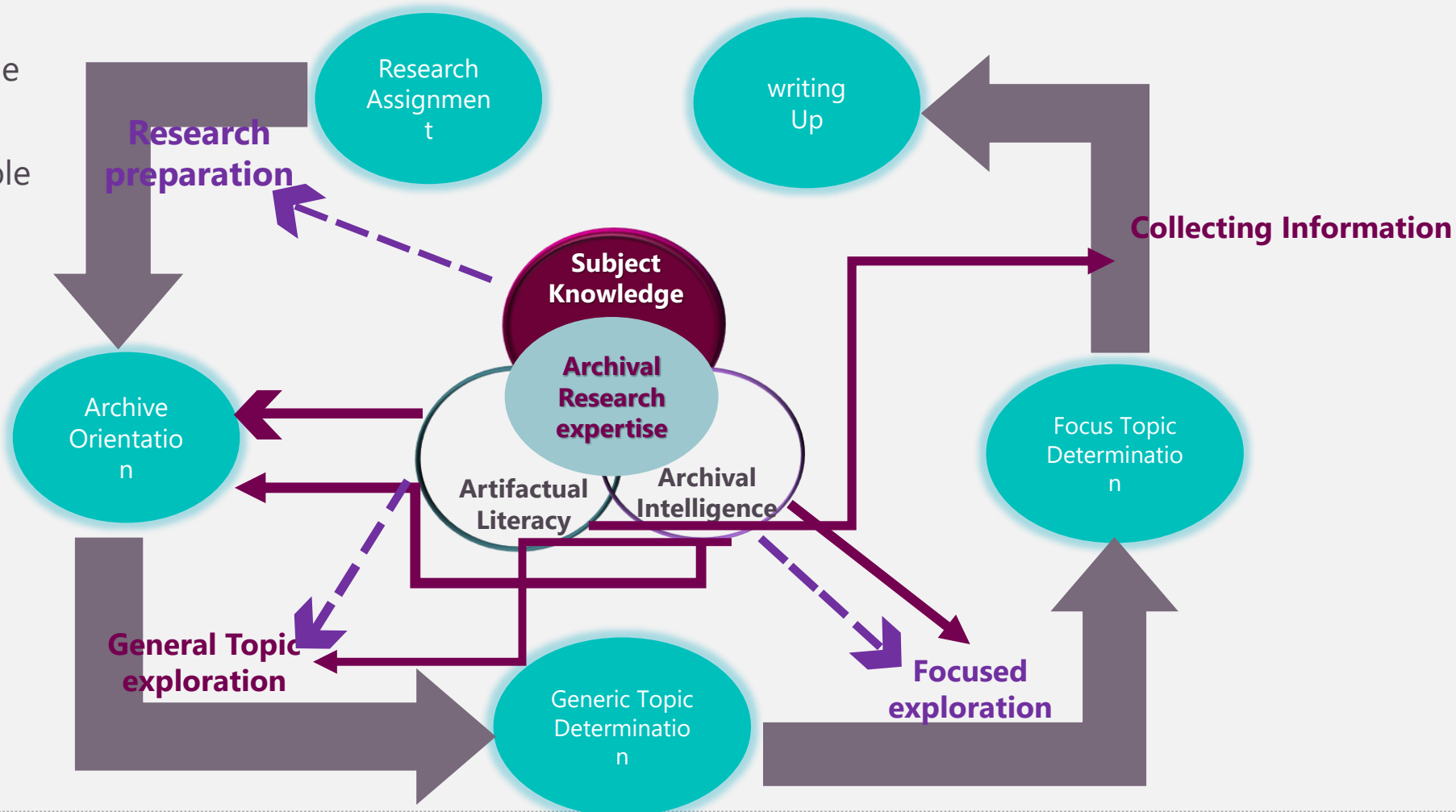


Students Archival Research Activity (SARA) model

(Zhou 2008)

Archivist as leading role

Instructor as leading role





Research Assignment and Preparation

- ❖ At the beginning of the semester, the instructor gave the students the research assignment and research preparation was identified at the first stage of the student research process
- ❖ From the class description students knew they would learn about a former President of Anatolia College, Carl Compton (1891-1982). The Anatolia College has been blessed in having a very few educators who brought truly uncommon gifts of character and ability. Carl Compton is remembered as the person who most perfectly personified the College's highest ideals.
- ❖ Students were also aware that they were required to complete a research paper based on primary sources.
- ❖ In the resulting course assignment students designed and created an online exhibition using OMEKA web publishing platform





Research Assignment and Preparation (cont...)

- ❖ Using primary sources proved to be a big challenge for the majority of the students in this class.
- ❖ Instructor and reference archivist build a strategy to develop students' interest in archival research and to cultivate the relevant skills.
- ❖ Students prepared to do research by reading works on archival principles and practice and brainstorming about the given paper topic.
- ❖ How and what did the students do to prepare for research???
- a) taking the class to gain subject knowledge
- b) brainstorming on the given topic
- c) best way to keep up with class and the research project was to prepare some general ideas on the topic before the archival orientation , so they could start to explore this general topic right from the beginning





Archival Orientation

- ❖ Is the turning point at which students first visit the archives and start to interact with actual primary sources.
- ❖ Collections used in the orientation were examples relevant to the focus of the class namely Carl Compton
- ❖ Archivist developed a list of the collections for use in the orientation
- ❖ a one-hour orientation is the only time the reference archivist systematically introduce basic archival knowledge, specific holdings of the archives, and archival search skills.
- ❖ For this class, the orientation introduced the history of the Anatolia College, its holdings, and the archival concept of provenance; differentiated primary sources and secondary sources; interpreted handwritten letters; and demonstrated search strategies in the college's Integrated Library System (ILS) and Institutional Repository (Dspace)



Archival Orientation (cont...)

- ❖ The reference archivist played the leading role in interacting intensively with the students during the orientation, offering them two forms of knowledge— ***artifactual literacy and archival intelligence***.
- ❖ Instead of giving a formal presentation of archival instruction, she demonstrated by example, presenting the students with real boxes of collections and her on-the-spot interpretation of them, teaching students online searching skills through a computer demonstration, and getting students to participate in the handling, reading, and interpreting of original materials.
- ❖ reference archivist was encouraging the students to think critically and to be aware of context as they read original records during the exercise, and thus to develop their ability to interpret primary materials and assess their value.
- ❖ In preparing students for the general topic exploration and topic selection stages, the orientation is a critical turning point.



General Topic Exploration

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- ❖ Students move to dealing directly with their research topic
- ❖ Instructor required them to start thinking about the topic and questions as they first examined primary sources.
- ❖ The students, however, felt uncertain about how to do this as they were used to starting with secondary sources. Students' feelings at this stage of the research process as **"uncertainty and apprehension."**
- ❖ they used both computer- and paper-based finding aids to search for new collections.
- ❖ Searching for, identifying, and selecting primary sources were less precise and more intensive than the students imagined. Students needed to explore archival collections at a more general level just to find those that pertained to their topics.
- ❖ During this period, the students started to build their ability to interpret records, understand archival concepts, and gain search skills.





General Topic Exploration (cont...)

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- ❖ To discover an interesting collection, students needed to know how to pursue discovery using archival descriptive tools, how to develop a strategy to narrow down a broad topic, and how to refine searching skills.
- ❖ During the selection of materials, they also needed to learn to interpret the original records.
- ❖ This process indeed involves the two forms of knowledge and **skills—archival intelligence and artifactual literacy**—that **Yakel and Torres** identify in their archival user expertise model.
- ❖ The reference archivist supported the students as they explored the archival materials on-site.
- ❖ Individual/group interactions between each student/group of students and the reference archivist also started at this stage.
- ❖ Soon we understand that there is need this interaction to be scheduled more often so both instructor & archivist decided to meet every week for an hour with all the groups of students in order to clarify any questions and concerns from the students.





Focused Exploration, Information Collection, and Writing Up the Research

- ❖ After the students determined their general research topics, they entered the stage of focused exploration, deciding on specific topics for their research papers.
- ❖ The students in this case study, having gained experience exploring the archives during the general topic exploration (History of Anatolia College, Biography of Carl Compton, etc) , felt increasingly optimistic and clear about their directions.
- ❖ Students started working simultaneously on the focused exploration and collecting information (e.g. taking notes) stages. Students divided into 5 groups and each group made aspects of the life of Carl Compton, this amazing person and educator known in our school and beyond. By reading students came to realise which aspects and stories of this wonderful person they would shed light to.
- ❖ During their focused exploration, the students mainly worked on one collection and spent more time checking the materials in specific boxes. After they finally decided on their specific research topics, they gathered information through intensive note taking from the records.





Focused Exploration, Information Collection, and Writing Up the Research (cont...)

- ❖ To some students, the turning point of focused topic determination proceeded directly to the next turning point—writing up.
- ❖ The ability to interpret the primary materials and assess their value to their research topics became important as the students focused their explorations and collected information.
- ❖ They needed to understand the records, think critically, and develop their contextual knowledge.
- ❖ Students interacted with the archivist in class in an iterative process in every week scheduled hour because they had to submit their research paper proposals for feedback.
- ❖ Most of the students' on-site research activities at the archives continued when they started to write up their research results, students asked (by email and often booked an appointment) archivist to confirm information or to gather more supporting evidence when they came up with new ideas.





Student-curated online exhibit

- ❖ In the resulting course assignment, students designed and created an online exhibition based on the theme of the course, which was to shed light to different aspects of a unique person Carl Compton, whose openness, sincerity, modesty, fairness, and an unwavering commitment to serve others characterized his compelling personality.
- ❖ Students worked with the remarkable collection at the Anatolia College Archives & Special Collections to explore how the theme of the course is revealed through historical moments and figures.
- ❖ Students assumed the role of curators, each selecting documents and audiovisual material around which they created a narrative about the theme.
- ❖ These student-curated mini-exhibits work together to form a larger online exhibit, organized around the theme.





Student-curated online exhibit (cont...)

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- ❖ Central to this assignment was an inquiry-based exercise that took place during class time involving instructor and reference archivist
- ❖ The goal of the session was to introduce students to the course assignment (create an online exhibition) and to the potential collections from which they could choose objects.
- ❖ Archivist began by describing what it means to be a curator—the process of defining a thesis for an exhibit, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion involved in object selection, and the need to create a narrative thread through the exhibition text.





Student-curated online exhibit (cont...)

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- ❖ Archivist walked students through the design of an exhibit, modeling the curatorial process by using the OMEKA web publishing platform.
- ❖ The class broke into five groups of five students and examined a specific online exhibition which was created by the reference archivist in the past using OMEKA tool.
- ❖ They were given some time to explore the exhibit and to answer questions about its effectiveness.
- ❖ The students were also asked, as curators, to critique the choice of objects as they related to the exhibition's stated thesis. The final component of this peer-based exercise required students to report their findings to the class, giving them some experience and confidence that they could apply to their own curatorial and design work.





Student-curated online exhibit (cont...)

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- ❖ Following this class session, students received guidance from the reference archivist in using finding aids and viewing collection materials.
- ❖ Instructor required students to make at least one visit to the collection to spend time with the actual objects, making careful selections before these objects were digitized.
- ❖ The students created wall labels for the digitized objects in their online exhibit, which required some research using secondary literature, but the students worked primarily with the source documents to produce the exhibit text.





Conclusions

- ❖ The key for student learning was having students interact with primary source objects in the archives to aid their understanding and retention of the course material.
- ❖ The theory of object-based learning (OBL), an inquiry method, inspired the instructional design of the assignment and in-class exercise. OBL is defined as learning that is done through direct interaction with objects.
- ❖ The creation of the online exhibit expanded the students' authority beyond that of the traditional term paper, because their audience was not just their professor, but their fellow classmates and others in the Anatolia college community who viewed the online exhibit.
- ❖ Through this assignment, students participated actively in the intellectual and aesthetic process of creating an online exhibit, in their own learning process, and in the learning process of their peers.





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