

Triage:

Special Collections Instructional Services in the Age of COVID-19

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Part I:
Developing a Rapid Response
to Current Instruction Partners



Archival Instruction at Mississippi State University Libraries, Spring 2020

- Multiple upper-level research skills classes embedded in the archives.
- Multiple instructors incorporating archives visits and primary sources into their classes and class projects.
- Instructional time remaining in the semester at the point of disruption: six weeks
- Time to reconfigure instruction: 7-10 days.



Strategic Response

- Faculty discussed the challenges of reconfiguring instruction as a group and developed a list of possible solutions.
- Divide and conquer: Special Collections faculty split task of contacting instructors in different academic departments to offer support and possible solutions, such as rapid digitization of resources or existing digital collections at MSU or other institutions.
- Worked collaboratively with instructors and students in research skills class to identify specific scanning needs, establish deadlines, and deliver scans.



Strategic Response (cont.)

- Worked collaboratively with colleagues in Digital Preservation unit to coordinate digitization of material, and used widely-available and easily accessible platform (Google Drive) to organize delivery of scans.
- Utilized material scanned for other instructional purposes but not posted publicly to respond to requests for support received after library was closed and Special Collections resources were inaccessible to faculty and staff.



Part II:
Rapid Digitizing of Materials
before Library Shutdown



Putting the Plan into Action

- Coordinated scanning activities between 3 team members in Digital Access and Preservation Unit (DPAU) and Special Collections.
- Initially sought to scan per DPAU's guidelines (in accordance with FADGI).
- Changed course after first day.
- What new plan looked like:
 - Utilizing camera
 - Utilizing scanner on department copy machine
 - Lowering resolution on scanners
 - Scanned to JPEG instead of TIFF



Coordinating with Students

- Created Google Drive to deposit materials in. Each student had identifying folder. Total 1,190 items digitized.
- Special Collections team member notified students and faculty that scans were ready.
- Followed up with students in the days before stay at home order was in place to confirm no additional scans were needed.
- Faculty instructor's feedback at the end of semester:
 - "...acknowledge the wonderful and really quite extraordinary assistance members of your faculty & staff provided to students...HI 3903 is a required course for majors; most of the students enrolled were graduating seniors. The efforts of your staff were thus instrumental in ensuring that these students could pass the class and graduate."



Part III: Planning for the Future



Make Contact

- Contact instructors with a history of utilizing special collections.
 - Serve as an embedded librarian in Canvas?
 - Create orientation/instructional videos for students to view at their own pace?
 - Attend live virtual instruction sessions?
 - What materials will students absolutely need to be successful?
- Meet as a unit to assign roles.



Make Materials Available

- If Special Collections faculty are allowed on campus:
 - Make digital surrogates of collections requested by the instructor and/or students.
- If Special Collections faculty are not allowed on campus:
 - Provide instructors and students with a list of digital repositories.
 - Mississippi State University Libraries Digital Collections
 - Digital Repositories for Book History Teaching & Research
 - Digital Public Library of America
 - Beinecke Digital Library
 - World Digital Library
 - HathiTrust
 - Internet Archive



Provide Support

- Conduct reference interviews virtually or by phone.
- Tour students around virtual spaces.
 - Screensharing!
 - Show them how to use our digital collections as well as other digital libraries.
- Be willing to provide support to students at other institutions.



Thank you for your time and attention!

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