

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 11 Issue 1

June 2017

Book review

Omar, D. 2017. Book review of Prom, C. J. and Hinchliffe, L. J. (Eds.) 2016. *Teaching with Primary Sources*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 11(1), pp.242-243.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/11.1.2215>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike licence.

"By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited."

Chan, L. et al. 2002. Budapest Open Access Initiative. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Accessed: 18 November 2015].

Prom, C. J. and Hinchliffe, L. J. (Eds.) 2016. *Teaching with Primary Sources*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists. 204pp. 978-193166692X. £23. Pbk.

Davina Omar, Head of Academic Support, University of West London. Email: Davina.omar@uwl.ac.uk Twitter: [@DavinaOm](https://twitter.com/DavinaOm)

Teaching with Primary Sources is part of the [Trends in Archives Practice series](#) which is aimed at both students and practising archivists providing information and practical help on specific topics. Within the book, there are three separate 'modules' written by different experts who work for American universities. This does mean that the examples and sources described within the book are American centred so the reader may need to do some research on some of the terms/examples mentioned to fully understand the context. The book covers teaching primary sources both in a Higher Education context and within Secondary Education. This comprehensiveness is valuable but it would have been helpful to separate this information more to allow the reader to focus on the education sphere they needed.

The book is a good length and each module provides enough detail to enable the reader to gain an understanding of the topics. Although aimed at students and practitioners, it is most useful for archivists who are very new to Information literacy (IL) teaching rather than archivists who have run sessions for a number of years. The information covered is very practical and introductory in nature, especially in the last two modules, The modules can be read independently of each other. The introduction is written by Lisa J. Hinchliffe and sets the scene of how important it is for archives to embrace teaching and learning and the growing trend to this area. She introduces the concept of primary source literacy and the key aspects within it.

Module 9 'Contextualising archival literacy' is written by Elizabeth Yakel, University of Michigan and Doris Malkmus, Penn State. This module is the most theoretical of the three and discusses the overall landscape, assessment, standards and concludes with planning for the future. The chapter is sub-divided into the above areas but could have benefited from even more signposting as there is so much information covered.

The introduction to the chapter is very helpful in covering the different literacies involved and setting the scene for the future sections. This is followed up by a history of archival instruction and then a look at the landscape and stakeholders. The latter section is separated out by education level which makes it easier for the reader to hone in on the key information for them. The following sections of the module do become slightly more practical in nature as they cover the skills being taught and assessed but would have benefited from more highlighting of this practical material. The standards section is mostly only relevant to an American audience and understandably, so is the future directions section. Overall, the module is very valuable to read to get a grounding in the issues of teaching primary sources in archives but does require the reader to persevere at times due to the dense amount of information being covered.

Module 10 'Teaching with archives: A guide for archivists, librarians and educators' is written by Sammie L. Morris from Purdue University, Tamar Chute from Ohio State University and Ellen Swain from University of Illinois. This module is more practical in nature but can be read independently to the previous module as the topics and challenges are introduced again. This is helpful if you are reading this module in isolation but if you have read the previous module, it can feel repetitious at the beginning. The module covers planning, partnerships and design. It is a very clear module to read and highlights useful resources to look at for further information and examples.

The planning and preparation section of this module offers detail on how to arrange a teaching session for the archive, including issues about space. The subsequent sections, forming partnerships and communications, offer the most value to the reader in helping to understand how the archivists teaching forms part of the wider education of students. This is followed up by separating out the type of teaching roles an archivist could adopt depending on the other requirements of the role. The rest of the module is very practical advice on developing the classes and is followed up by a useful recommendations list. The appendices offer links to further reading and some examples of documentation used in classes. The entire module is very easy to read and understand and each section builds on the one before.

Module 11 'Connecting students and primary sources: cases and examples' is written by Tamar Chute, Ohio State University, Ellen Swain, University of Illinois and Sammie L. Morris, Purdue University. This is different to the previous module as it reports on the results of interviews with practising archivists, academics and a secondary school teacher. They have very helpfully themed the results of the interviews and split up the module into these sections. This makes it a clear module to read and it, like the previous module, can be read in isolation.

There is overlap in subjects with the previous modules but this does not detract from its usefulness as it is offering helpful insight based on the results of the interviews. It is structured into similar sections to Module 10 so the reader can pick and mix between the modules and read the sections that are most relevant to them. The module includes a lot of practical advice, directly from the interviews that had taken place, and there are several appendices to the module featuring more examples. What is also good to see is that the module covers an example of when a teaching session did not go as well as planned. It is refreshing to see an honest example of this and it is so beneficial for the reader to help understand the challenges.

All three modules cover in depth the topic of teaching primary sources in archives and allow the reader to see the different challenges involved in running teaching sessions. The book highlights the importance of the relationship with the overall organisation and how crucial it is to get this right but also concentrates on how to run the sessions in practice. Although each module can be read in isolation, if the reader is a novice to this area, it would be sensible to read the modules in the order they appear. A more experienced practitioner will find it possible to navigate to only the sections that they would like to read. After reading the book, the reader has the knowledge they need to consider implementing teaching sessions at their institutions.