



PART III
Creating Multicultural Classrooms

Collaborations Between Multicultural Educators and Archivists: Engaging Students with Multicultural History Through Archival Research Projects

Natalia Fernández
Oregon State University

When multicultural educators and archivists collaborate to design projects that engage students with multicultural history through archival research, students can learn in-depth research skills with primary source documents, creatively share their knowledge, and, on a broader level, engage with their local community history. The projects shared in this article serve as examples of how partnerships between multicultural educators and archivists can occur, the types of projects that can be developed and how they are implemented, and students' responses to their work. The three student projects, including a display, a history guidebook, and an oral history project, are intended to offer a variety of ideas to inspire multicultural educators to reach out to their local archivists to develop archival research projects of their own. And, to promote effective and fruitful partnerships, also included are lessons learned as well as tips for successful collaborations between multicultural educators and archivists.

Archives and Multicultural History

To archive is “to transfer records from the individual or office of creation to a repository authorized to appraise, preserve, and provide access to those records” (Pearce-Moses, 2005). There are a variety of archival repositories including historical societies, university archives, and government archives. Archival collections may include an individual’s personal and/or professional papers as well as an organization’s records. Materials within archival collections can include textual documents, photographic materials, and audio/visual content. Depending on the archives, collections may include records that date back several centuries as well as documentation of the early 21st century.

I am the archivist of the Oregon Multicultural Archives (OMA) at Oregon State University (OSU). The OMA’s mission is to assist in preserving the histories and sharing the stories that document Oregon’s African American, Asian American, Latino/a, and Native American communities. My work predominantly involves collection development. I build relationships with community members across the state and encourage them to donate their materials to the OMA. However, I also collaborate with professors to develop archival research projects for their classes that relate to the multicultural history of the state and university. There is much to learn about peoples of color in Oregon, both how the

Correspondence should be sent to Natalia Fernández, Oregon State University, 121 The Valley Library, Corvallis, OR 97331. E-mail: natalia.fernandez@oregonstate.edu

state tried to explicitly exclude and implicitly discriminate against minorities, as well as how those peoples overcame and persevered against social injustices. Oregon's histories include the genocide and tribal termination of Native American communities, slavery as well as exclusion and miscegenation laws, and a number of anti-immigration policies and practices, especially against Asian American peoples and the Latino/a community (Nokes, 2013 ; Xing, Gonzales-Berry, Sakurai, Thompson, & Peters, 2007). Each term, a number of professors bring their students to the OMA for an introduction to the archives and to learn about these multicultural histories. I typically lead a discussion regarding the significance of primary sources, the need to question and challenge the historical record, and the importance of students' role as critical researchers who need to understand their own biases during their research process. After an explanation of how archives organize collections and make them accessible, I invite students to look through the materials I have displayed for them, and they work in small groups to review the records, ask questions, and share the new information they have uncovered. During these typical class sessions, I enjoy providing students with an introduction to archives and the possibilities of archival research. However, these sessions only last for about one hour and lack in-depth engagement with the materials in terms of investigative and critical thinking, and most professors have no plans for an archives-based assignment as a part of their courses. There is great potential for the use of OMA collections in the classroom to engage students with multicultural history, so I am now proactive in developing ideas for possible collaborations with professors to create archives-based research projects.

Archival Instruction and Student Engagement

Archival instruction is grounded in theory, is evidence-based, and continues to evolve with practice and assessment. Archivists strive to use the most effective pedagogical strategies possible and develop appropriate learning objectives and activities for different audiences (Bahde, Smedberg, & Taormina, 2014). We emphasize various forms of knowledge in our teaching, including domain or subject knowledge, an understanding of the topic being researched, and artifactual literacy, the ability to interpret and analyze primary sources. For us, "archival intelligence" encompasses the knowledge of archival principles, practices, and procedures; the development of effective search strategies to explore research questions; and an understanding of the relationship between primary sources and their surrogates (Yakel & Torres, 2003). And, many of us apply inquiry and object-based learning theories to "teach students how to think,

not what to think" (Rockenbach, 2011, p. 308). Archivists conduct research studies that demonstrate the positive impact archival instruction can have on student learning, including critical thinking and research skills gained, as well as an increase in students' confidence levels to apply them (Daniels & Yakel, 2013 ; Krause, 2010). We document examples of student engagement through archival research assignments and term-long archivist/professor partnerships (Mitchell, Seiden, & Taraba, 2012) as well as develop exercises focused on active learning and object-centered hands-on activity that "not only teaches new knowledge and new skills, but also opens students' eyes to a new way of thinking" (Bahde et al., 2014, p. xvii). In addition to the evolution of our instruction design, archivists continue to refine their teaching methods and activities through a number of techniques and models that evaluate students' skills learned through affective, cognitive, and behavioral assessment (Bahde & Smedberg, 2012).

As part of my own work, I brainstorm how I can better connect with professors to encourage more collaboration beyond an archives orientation. I want students to really delve into the research process of uncovering primary source documents, and I want them to be able to share their findings in creative ways beyond just writing papers. As part of my job, I work on curating exhibits, creating promotional materials, and conducting oral histories. I not only enjoy the creative processes of these types of activities, I also like that they are product oriented for public consumption and that they enable archival materials and the histories they document to be more visible and accessible. With some adaptation and professor collaboration, I now develop archival research projects as class assignments. As examples, I will describe the assignments for a 2012 and 2013 honors college seminar on Oregon's racist history as well as two student projects for a first-year experience course, in 2013 and 2014, regarding multiculturalism in the state of Oregon with an emphasis on the university's multicultural history.

The Archival Research Projects

The three types of projects I will describe include display curation, mini-essays compiled into a campus history guidebook, and oral histories with reflection essays published in an online book format. The display curation is for the honors college seminar, and the other two projects are for the first-year course.

In Oregon we are on the quarter system. Our terms are 11 weeks including a finals week. The courses with which I collaborated during 2012–2014 were both 2 credit classes (3–4 credit classes are more common); a 2 credit class means 2 hours a week of class time. The honors college seminar was open to all ages; there were four students

enrolled for both terms. The first-year course, called a U-Engage class, was open to all first-year students, and included 21 the first year and 15 the second year. The majority of the students had no previous archival experience, and only a handful of them were aware of what archives were when they began the classes.

For each project, I will share a class overview and learning outcomes; the collaboration process and relationship between myself and the multicultural educators; the methods used to engage students on the archival research process and how the class shared the knowledge learned; and student responses. Notably, while these projects are for university students, they can be applied to high school or even middle school students with modifications to fit the students' knowledge levels.

Project 1—Display Curation of Oregon's Sundown Towns

Class Overview and Learning Outcomes. Oregon's racist history includes the existence of Sundown Towns. Sundown Towns were towns or cities in the northern United States, including Oregon, that had written or unwritten laws that forbade people of color, especially African Americans, from remaining within city limits after dark. As part of the honors college seminar class, the students read Dr. James W. Loewen's book *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*, participate in a day-long research field trip to archival repositories for tours and hands-on archival research experience, and conduct their own research on the racial history of an Oregon town of their choosing. Together, the students then co-curate a small display to showcase their findings. The course is designed as an exploration to give students a foundational understanding of both past and present racism in Oregon and the nation.

The learning outcomes for the students are to:

- Understand the origins of the current racial demographics in Oregon,
- Learn how to access relevant primary source material,
- Synthesize research into a report and display for a non-academic audience, and
- Understand their cultural knowledge and perspectives.

The Collaboration Process. In 2012, Jean Moule, faculty member in the College of Education, invited me to co-facilitate her Sundown Towns class, specifically because of my archives expertise and knowledge of Oregon's multicultural history. Although Moule had already developed the course, she was open to my suggestions, which included a deeper focus and explanation of archival repositories and the materials they contain, as well as a project for the students to co-curate a small display for

the library. For us, an essential piece of our collaboration process includes a discussion of our strengths, weaknesses, and areas of interests as we divide the workload for the term. We have co-taught the class twice, and intend to continue teaching it together, so we assess our work to make modifications as needed for our next class.

Student Engagement and Sharing the Knowledge Learned. To begin the class, the students discuss the *Sundown Towns* book. We then take a class field trip to a local archive (our field trip the first year included visiting two coastal archives and the second year visiting the state archives). The students spend the next few weeks conducting research on their selected town, and at the end of the term they submit their findings to Dr. Loewen's website to add to and expand his ongoing national research endeavors. The second year we expanded the class and invited a local author to discuss his research process. We also added several "choice" activities to expand the students' knowledge; these included viewing a film on the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon and attending a local multicultural history tour. Moule leads the book discussions, and we both assist students through the archival research process. I lead the students in the co-curation of the display and provide the display case and materials. I also share best practices for exhibit curation, including determining your intended audience, finding the balance between visual and textual content, and being consistent in both tone and style. The students share their research with one another, brainstorm the ways to most effectively inform and educate the public, and design the display.

Student Response and Final Project. At the end of the term, the students complete two brief, short-answer questionnaires, one regarding the research process experience and the other specific to the display curation project. The students share their thoughts on the significance of archives and how the process of archival research impacts them.

- "I had the opportunity to conduct interviews and research in real archives, which was a completely new experience. . .[and] made the process more real."
- "I learned about why the archives are important and what sort of data and materials they store. I thought it was fascinating to look through historical documents and discover material which has possibly been neglected for years, a small fact adrift in the ocean of history."

Since the exhibits developed each year are only on display for about two months, to document the students' work, I photograph their projects and write blog posts (for details see <http://tinyurl.com/sundown-towns-2012> and <http://tinyurl.com/sundown-towns-2013>).

Project 2—Campus Tour Guidebook Featuring OSU’s Students of Color Histories

Class Overview and Learning Outcomes. “Untold Stories: Histories of People of Color in Oregon” is a first-year experience course co-taught by Janet Nishihara and Kim McAloney. It focuses on a statewide multicultural history, but since one of the course goals is to connect students to campus, we developed an assignment that features the university’s multicultural history. The students write short non-fiction essays on campus locations, featuring stories that highlight the impact and contributions of OSU’s students of color at the university. At the end of the term, I compile all their research into a campus history guidebook.

The class learning outcomes, including the archives project, are for students to:

- engage in inquiry (including developing a research question; collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information; and understanding citations),
- practice critical analysis and consider diverse perspectives,
- engage in active and self-directed learning, and
- develop a sense of belonging and contributing to a diverse community.

The Collaboration Process. I work with the professors to review the syllabus, discuss details of the project, set dates for an archives orientation, and determine assignment deadlines based on a reasonable research timeline. Because I am not a co-instructor for the class, active communication throughout the term is essential. They let me know if students have questions or comments regarding the assignment, and if need be I ask them to contact students on my behalf. I give them feedback on the final assessment of the project, but they determine the final grades.

Student Engagement and Sharing the Knowledge Learned. In the weeks after the archives orientation session, the students divide into pairs to work on their projects. The topics researched include celebrating the lives of the first female and male African American graduates, documenting student-led protests, recounting the establishment of the campus cultural centers, detailing the desegregation of the men’s basketball team, and finally, honoring the Japanese American students who were forced to leave their studies during World War II. I meet with each student pair for about an hour to clarify the assignment expectations and offer research advice. The students gather, analyze, and synthesize their research findings; write essays that average 500 words; select images to include in the guidebook; and learn how to properly cite their sources. With the assistance of a

graphic design student, I compile the information into a guidebook available both in print and online for the students as well as the campus community to enjoy.

Student Response and Final Project. The end of term assessment is informal and open-ended; the professors ask the students to give feedback regarding their “takeaways” from both the archives project and the class as a whole. Students reported:

- “This class has taught me to ask questions and to break down stereotypes and barriers that might keep me from knowing others better.”
- “The knowledge we have discussed in class about the history of minority students at OSU has influenced who I am because this information has allowed me to place myself in a context where I understand the importance of my presence on campus as a minority student.”

In order to encourage a broader awareness of the students’ work, I make a PDF version of the campus tour guidebook available online via an OMA blog post: <http://tinyurl.com/osu-guidebook-2013>

Project 3—Oral History Project Featuring OSU Faculty and Staff of Color

Class Overview and Learning Outcomes. In 2014 I collaborated with the “Untold Stories” professors for a second time. Although the course content was similar to the previous year, we decided to develop a new assignment for students to conduct oral history interviews with faculty and staff of color. The project enabled students to gain new and useful skills such as conducting interviews, using specialized equipment, transcribing interviews, and writing a reflection of their knowledge learned. At the end of the term, the interviews are archived and made accessible to the public, giving the students the opportunity to add new voices to the historical record.

The class learning outcomes for the students were to:

- explain in your own words the processes, methods, and evidence that disciplines such as Ethnic Studies or History might use to explore and address a real-world, contemporary problem or answer a compelling question;
- demonstrate strategies to explore real-world problems, questions, and challenges inside and outside the classroom; and
- articulate interests and academic and personal challenges you have as first-year student at OSU and identify the appropriate campus resources and opportunities to contribute to your educational experience, goals, and campus engagement.

The Collaboration Process. The professors and I identify a number of potential OSU faculty and staff of color with whom we have existing relationships to interview and send them invitations prior to the beginning of term. We frame our request noting that their stories will be added to the OMA, to the historical record, and are beyond just a learning experience for the students. Based on those who respond, we develop a list of interviewees for students to work with in pairs of two or three. For interview consistency, I develop a set of questions but leave a “topics” section open for students to research and determine topics most appropriate for their interviewee. Based on our experience the previous year, we adjusted the timing of the archives orientation session and set earlier deadlines to have more time to review the students’ work and provide feedback.

Student Engagement and Sharing the Knowledge Learned. Like the previous year, after the archives orientation, I meet with each student group individually. Because these are first-year students without experience with this type of project, I assist with the interview scheduling and am present at each interview. The students ask interviewees about their experiences at OSU regarding diversity and inclusion, then write interviewee bios, interview summaries, and short reflective essays on what they learn. I compile the information into an online book using PressBooks, a simple book publishing software. I also add the interviews and transcriptions to the OMA and make them available through the e-book.

Student Response and Final Project. The last class includes student presentations and a discussion for the students to reflect upon their learning experiences.

- “I learned that here at OSU and everywhere else you go, there is racism. And there’s been a lot of change to racism, and it’s definitely decreased, but there’s still a lot going on and there’s still a lot that we can do to help prevent it. And, that there’s a lot of groups here on OSU that we can join to try to improve that.”
- “I learned the importance of reflection and application of what you’re learning. We went through decades and decades of history to get to the point and realize what we can do as an individual to better reflect that history and to use it in present day to help our life and to help people around us.”

A benefit to this particular project is that both the oral histories and the e-book publication are digital; project information and a link to the e-book is available via the OMA blog: <http://tinyurl.com/osu-pressbook-2014>

Project Challenges and Limitations

Upon discussion with my collaborators, we acknowledge that there are issues to consider when developing archival research projects that highlight multicultural histories. Issues such as understanding that our students’ experiences and perspectives are framed within the context of OSU, a predominately White institution; knowing that our methods of assessment rely mostly on self-reporting to determine the students’ growth and understanding of multicultural issues, and a more in-depth process may be needed; and, overall, ensuring that the multicultural histories are not just studied, but truly celebrated with an appreciation of the people who lived and shared them. While these and other types of issues are beyond the scope of this article to discuss in depth, I encourage multicultural educators and archivists to use collaborative archival research projects as an opportunity to engage in conversation about them and brainstorm ways to address them in their courses.

The topics researched include celebrating the lives of the first female and male African American graduates, documenting student-led protests, recounting the establishment of the campus cultural centers, detailing the desegregation of the men’s basketball team, and finally, honoring the Japanese American students who were forced to leave their studies during World War II.

Tips for Multicultural Educators Collaborating with Archivists

The following are a set of tips drawn from my conversations with professors regarding our experiences as collaborators for archival research projects:

- Contact your university’s archives and/or your local historical society—archivists know their collections best and can assist you to develop meaningful and relevant assignments appropriate for a variety of age groups.

- Build trust with one another—thoroughly discuss your goals and determine if your teaching philosophies are a good match.
- Share your knowledge as multicultural educators—your local archivist may not be trained in multicultural education pedagogies; share literature that will help them understand your teaching methodologies and perspectives, and be sure to discuss issues such as those listed in the “project challenges and limitations” as well as any other concerns you may have.
- Conduct research ahead of time—familiarize yourself with the material and learn the difficulties of the research process to be able to share them with students.
- Be flexible with expectations—have high standards, but be realistic.
- Set the students up for success—be sure there is something there to research! Failure may be a part of the learning process, but make sure the level of discovery is adequate for the assignment.
- Design thoughtful assignments—develop activities to help students learn skills for expanding their networks for information.
- Make assignments, including a rough draft, due early in the term—plan for plenty of research time, but also allow time for review, ideally with peer review, and feedback.
- Retain the student voice, but edit when necessary—especially with historical research, be sure to fact check.
- Celebrate the research process, not just the product.
- Share the knowledge learned! Plan for a mechanism, print or online, for students’ work to be shared with your local communities.

Conclusion

My future plans include continued collaborations with both the “Sundown Towns” and “Untold Stories” professors. The more we work together, the more our relationships grow and deepen, and the more we trust each other to make adjustments to our plans and

develop new ideas. I hope to engage in partnerships with other professors to begin embedding archival research projects into their courses, and I encourage other multicultural educators to develop partnerships with archivists to do the same.

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