Engaging the Archives: Promoting Undergraduate Learning with Archival Sources
Patricia Garcia, Assistant Professor, School of Information
Terry McDonald, Director, Bentley Historical Library

This research project is a joint collaboration between faculty and staff from the School of Information and the Bentley Historical Library on the University of Michigan campus. One of the key initiatives of the Bentley is to increase the use of the Library’s archival collections by students and to assist faculty in designing great learning experiences for students using the collections. The study, now in its third year, is actively collecting various forms of qualitative data on archivist-faculty collaborations, student performance on document-based exercises that utilize archival sources, and the development of an engaged learning evaluation framework. The data includes 1) interviews with faculty members and archivists about teaching with archival sources and the process of collaborating to develop learning objectives and evaluation metrics; and 2) student responses to a document-based exercise on the history of women at the University of Michigan.

Student Role

The REMS student will be involved in the coding of research interviews, the checking of interview transcripts, and the conduct of semi-structured interviews. An analysis of previous studies of teaching with archival sources in the field of education may also be done. REMS students will also participate in such archival education programming at the Library as is available during the summer. In this way s/he will participate in a research team and be exposed to all aspects of the research. The student will be assigned specific duties leading to at least one peer reviewed presentation. The student will be involved in collecting new data and in thinking about evaluation techniques for the entire project. The student will also gain experience in archival education from the perspective of the archivist.

Mentoring Plan

The student will meet regularly throughout the project with the research team led by a Dr. Patricia Garcia, Assistant Professor in the School of Information. The student will meet with the mentor weekly during individual meetings. The individual meetings will focus on developing personalized goals for academic, professional, and personal growth. These goals will include identifying research interests, outlining specific skills and/or knowledge they hope to gain through the experience, and determining strategies for reaching their goals. In addition to individual meetings, the student will participate in weekly team meetings where they will be exposed to an interdisciplinary and collaborative culture of research.