Historical Research: How Do I Find the "Good Stuff"?

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Today’s Agenda

• The Tool Bag
  • ELM – Secondary & Primary Sources

• Digital Collections – What are they?

• Digital Content
  • Discovering Digital Content
  • Vetting Digital Content
  • Analyzing Digital Content

• Exploring Digital Collections
  • Minnesota Digital Library
  • Digital Public Library of America
The Tool Bag

- Britannica
- Student Resources In Context
  - z.umn.edu/srictitlelist
- Academic Search Premier
  - z.umn.edu/asptitlelist
- Digital Collection Discovery & Analysis
- Minnesota Reflections
- Digital Public Library of America
Digital Collections - What are they?

**Digital collection** consists of digital objects that are selected and organized to facilitate their discovery, access, and use.

**Digital Collections include:**

1. Digital Objects
2. Associated Metadata
3. User Interface
Digital Collections - 2 Sources of Content

**Digitization of existing physical content** via scanning, digital camera work and other file format conversions.

**Born-digital materials** – content created in the digital world, including Documents, Photographs, Videos, E-mails, etc.
Discovering Digital Content

• Domain Specific
  • inurl:gov
  • inurl:edu
  • inurl:org

• Site Specific
  • site:umn.edu or site:lib.umn.edu
  • site:mnhs.org
  • site:loc.gov

• Examples
  • abraham lincoln inurl:gov digital collection
  • world war I inurl:edu digital library
Vetting Digital Content

- Trusted Source
- Searchable and Discoverable
- Persistent
- Citation Ready
- Evidence of Good Metadata
- Reliable Funding Source
- Retention of Original Context

1957 Miss Minnesota Pageant, Excelsior Amusement Park, Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society
Trusted Source

- Museums - Historical Societies
- Libraries - Archives
- Colleges - Universities

VS.

- Google search results
- Personal websites - Pinterest
- Wikipedia
Searchable and Discoverable
Can you easily search for content? Advanced Search? Refine Searches?

Can the digital content be discovered in a variety of ways?
Persistent
Will the resource be there tomorrow? Next week? Next year?
Citation Ready
Can you easily cite the source information in a bibliography?
Evidence of Good Metadata
What do we mean by metadata?

Is there Descriptive Information associated with the content?
Who, What, When, Where?

| Format         | Content Category: paintings
|                | Medium/Materials: oil
|                | Colorization: color
|                | Physical Support: canvas
| Creation       | Painter: Anonymous
| Subjects       | Subject: Hennepin, Louis
|                | Portraits.
| Dates          | Creation: 1694
|                | Content: 1694

Is there Administrative Information associated with the content?
Who owns the content?
Contact information?
Rights Statements included?

| Contributing Organization | American Swedish Institute
|----------------------------|--------------------------
| Contact Information       | American Swedish Institute, 2600 Park Avenue South, Min
| Rights Management         | This image may not be reproduced without the written per
Reliable Funding Source
Who is paying for this project? Will they continue to pay?
Retention of Original Context
Is the structure of the original document retained?

Can you easily understand how a single item or page relates to the larger whole?
Resources for Analyzing Primary Sources

- History Matters
  - Making Sense of Evidence
  - z.umn.edu/histmatters

- National Endowment for the Humanities
  - Tools for Analyzing Primary Sources and Close Reading
  - z.umn.edu/nehprimary

- Library of Congress
  - Using Primary Sources
  - z.umn.edu/locprimary

- National Archives
  - Docs Teach
  - docsteach.org
Exploring Digital Collections
Minnesota Reflections - reflections.mndigital.org
Minnesota Reflections - Using Favorites

1. Within a collection, select individual digital items to save to Favorites

2. Check the box next to the image

3. Click Save to Favorites
Digital Public Library of America - dp.la
Questions? Contact us!

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