



Beyond the Cabinet of Curiosities

Demonstrating Impact in Special
Collections Instruction

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Our Instruction Program

- 100 classes a year
- 200 sessions
- 2000 students
- Approximately one-fifth of undergraduate population visited SCRC last year.





Why Assess?

- More recent assessment focused on student response, resulted in general feedback.
- No holistic assessment of instruction program in at least a decade... or ever!
- Lacked information on faculty goals for class visits.



Objectives

- Quantify types of instruction being requested.
- How were students using rare materials after class visits?
- What is the pedagogical value of special collections instruction?
- Determine what additional technology needed.



SCRC Faculty Survey

In Summer 2013, we implemented a survey sent to all University of Chicago-affiliated instructors who had taught a class in Special Collections within the past two years.

- **Worked with Assessment Librarian:**
 - Create instrument
 - Gain IRB approval
- **Delivered via SurveyMonkey**
- **80 individuals surveyed**
- **Excellent response rate of 61%**
- **49 completed surveys**





Types of Instruction

69% reported having librarian instruction for their class

Introduction to the department and proper handling demonstration	78.8%
How to find rare books, archives, etc	66.7%
Topic-specific research guidance with or without activity	51.5%
How to use (beyond proper handling) rare books, archives, etc	33.3%
Librarian-led hands-on activity	30.3%



Types of Instruction

How have you used Special Collections?

Focused visit (3 or fewer sessions)	57.1%
Quarter-long class (4 or more sessions)	34.7%
No formal session, but directed students to use materials housed in Special Collections	0.0%

Student Engagement with Special Collections

Approximately what percentage of your students used primary sources from Special Collections in an assignment?



0-25%	48.9%
26-50%	17.0%
51-75%	4.3%
76-100%	29.8%



Student Engagement with Special Collections

- **Written Papers:** *I built my course's first assignment around a photo collection housed in Special Collections. All of my students were asked to write a formal analysis of one of five works by Edward Curtis. This was a wonderful opportunity for my students to write about an object.*
- *My students were required to use archival sources from Special Collections for their final project, and I think it was really a great experience--they don't usually get to engage with material in that way, and it gave them a better sense of what historians actually do and some of the challenges of archival research.*
- **Class Presentations:** *Most of the courses I teach in Special Collections rely on the Rosenberger and Sondheim Collections and students make extensive use of them for class presentations and research projects.*
- **In-class Activities:** *They practiced ways to read an old map and using original materials elevated the experience.*



Demonstrating Pedagogical Value of Special Collections Instruction

How does Special Collections Instruction Enhance Student Learning?

- *Concrete* vs abstraction or theoretical understanding
- Provides historical *context*
- Different way of transmitting knowledge through *physical interaction* vs reading secondary accounts
- Practice *actual methodologies* of specific discipline
- “Archives as Lab”

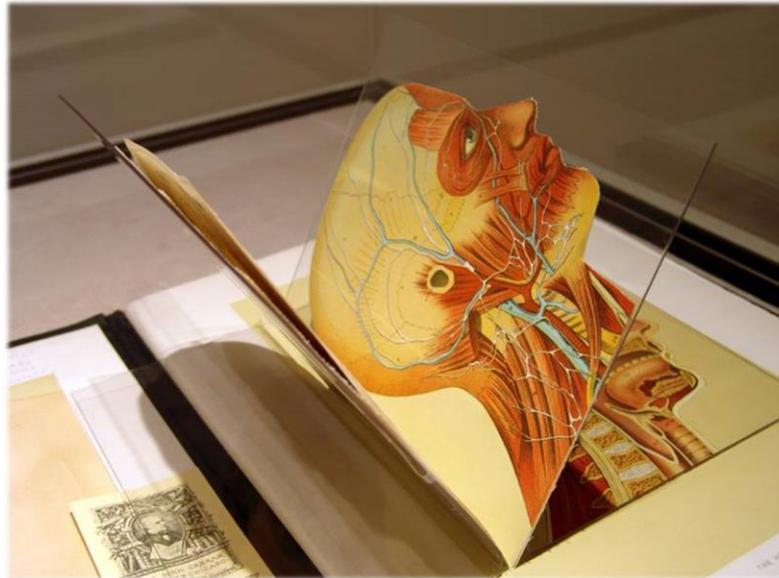


Demonstrating Pedagogical Value of Special Collections Instruction: Faculty Comments

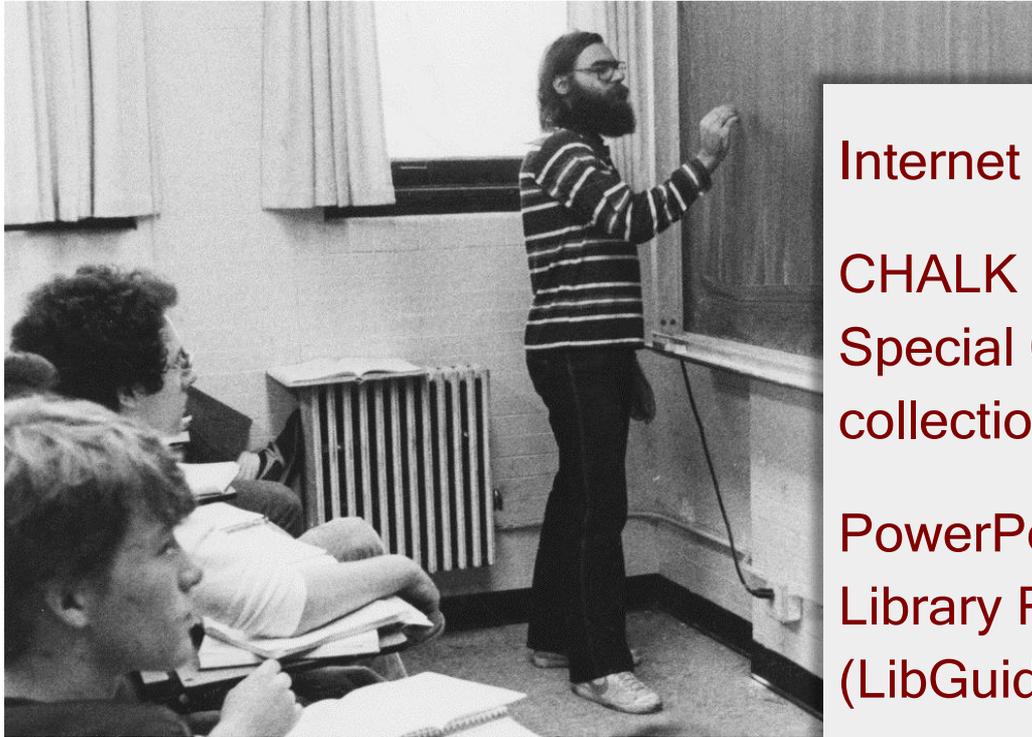
- *Tactile experience with rare editions and artists' books provided a necessary supplement to students' largely digital reading experiences*
- *The students could really only understand the course material by experiencing using the collection.*
- *The opportunity to see and touch medieval manuscripts first hand allowed students to better understand the unique materiality of the transmission of text and image.*
- *Part of the course dealt with the ways that makers of fine-press books saw their work as instantiating a set of socialist principles. I've taught this part of the course using powerpoint images of the books in the past, but students have a richer experience when they are able to immediately interact with the books themselves.*

Demonstrating Educational Value of Special Collections Instruction: Graduate Students

- Enriched classes's knowledge of the period.
- We were able to introduce to sources they might not have considered before.
- Helped them find new areas of discovery for their areas of focus.
- Support dissertation research: materials and research services.



Uses of Technology in Teaching



Internet	73.9%
CHALK (Blackboard)	67.4%
Special Collections digital collections	60.9%
PowerPoint	54.3%
Library Research Guides (LibGuides)	43.5%
Social Media	4.3%
Prezi	2.2%

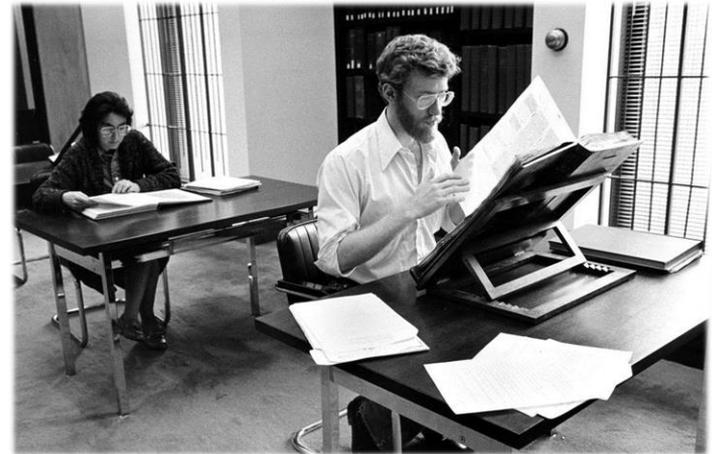
Most Desired Additions to the Teaching Spaces



Mac operating system	52.2%
Smart boards	37.0%
Whiteboards	34.8%
Other (please specify)	30.4%
Laptop computers	17.4%

What We Learned About our Population

- Value special collections instruction beyond show-and-tell model.
- Want to collaborate with librarians for hands-on activities, value our expertise. We could be more proactive.
- The physical matters.
- Have opinions on collection development regarding teaching.



What We Learned About Assessment

- We need to do more.
- Assessment is collaborative.
- Faculty testimony speaks more loudly (and is heard) to administrators.
- Objectives are the most important part of assessment; drives value of your data.





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