

Library Impact Research Report: Western University Libraries Impact of Archival Collections and Services on the Western University Department of History

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Today's Agenda

- Background and introduction
- Overview of methodology
- Highlights of findings
- Lessons learned and conclusion

Background and Introduction

- At Archives and Special Collections, Western University:
 - Archivists work with university and privately donated records
 - Special collections librarians work with rare, published books and maps

Background and Introduction continued

- The study focused on users in the Department of History
- We hypothesized that archives made measurable impacts on the work of history faculty and students
- We investigated our impact on the Western Department of History as a case study to identify and understand the broader influence of the archives on teaching, learning, and research

Methodology

- Our initial methodology (pre-March, 2020) involved three focus groups: undergraduates, graduates and faculty members
- Ultimately, our methods included:
 1. Survey of faculty and students
 2. Analysis of instruction data
 3. Analysis of visitor data
 4. Analysis of citations of Department of History publications

Findings: Faculty Survey

- 63% of survey respondents indicated that they had used Western's Archives
- Senior faculty members are more likely to use Western's Archives
- Most survey respondents stated Western's Archives has no impact on their work as a faculty member
- Improved access to the archives, creating a liaison position for the department, and hosting meet and greet sessions for faculty members were all suggestions for improving the relationship with the History Dept.

Findings: Student Survey

- Most student respondents heard about the archives through their professor or through the library
- The most common reason for not using the archives was not knowing how to
- Suggested promoting services and collections, becoming more user friendly, becoming more accessible, and increasing the archives' online presence
- Indicated that all history courses could benefit from students receiving this form of instruction

Findings: Visitor Data

- Analysis showed consistently low numbers of visits from undergraduate and graduate students, with no substantial growth in student visits
- Majority of graduate student visits were from the Public History stream of the History Department
- Analysis revealed that there was no consistent growth in faculty visits from the History Department
- The majority of faculty visits were from other departments within the University

Findings: Instruction Data

- The number of undergraduates taught increased during the first half of the 2011-2019 decade and then declined sharply during the second due to discontinued courses and retirement of senior faculty
- Graduate student instruction was relatively stable throughout the decade

Findings: Citation Analysis

- 9 doctoral theses (2011-2020)
- 1 faculty publication (2011-2020)
- 1 undergraduate journal article (2010-2019)

Conclusion

- Collecting better quality and standardized instruction and visitor data could allow for more effective analysis in the future
- Department of History wants increased engagement with ASC and we need to meet those needs proactively
- It is challenging to measure the impact of archives and special collections on research, teaching, and learning at an academic institution

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