(Conceptual) Conversion: Reworking Archival Curriculum to Incorporate the Multiverse

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Reworking archival curriculum
to incorporate the multiverse

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Goals

- Informally test the “Educating for the Archival Multiverse” conceptual approach in course design
- Devise a course with portable components that are not dependent on localized practices
WISE consortium class based at UW-Milwaukee
Fully online and asynchronous
37 students across US and in New Zealand
Half conceptual, half applied
Pedagogical goal of supporting students while disrupting their existing mental frameworks with the intent of enabling intellectual growth
The first thing I did was make a list of all the concepts that I thought related to the topic of archival outreach.
Concepts from the Multiverse

Objective 2: Expand Existing Curricula to Focus on Core Archival Concepts and Values as Well as Processes

Rationales such as trust, evidence, accountability, authority, access, and permanence can form the bases of curricula rather than archival processes such as appraisal, arrangement, and description around which current, often highly linear, curricular standards and hence programs are struc-

This slide is only a sampling of the shift of competencies identified in the syllabus. 2010 had 4 competencies, 2012 had 8.

The major addition in 2012 directly addresses concepts.
This slide shows a close match between the *multiverse* ideas and the language in the syllabus.
One of the Week 4 discussion prompts:
In what ways do the archives you’re familiar with display archival authority and symbolic meaning or fetishism? What is the archive actually authoritative in? How might this perception of authority and symbolic meaning affect the varied stakeholders (archivists, administrators, donors, patrons, creators, subjects, others)?

Week 6 discussion prompt (Ketelaar’s archive as time machine had been assigned):
What metaphors can you think of for the archive? Why does each metaphor work and how could you leverage these images for outreach and/or reference?

Week 7 discussion prompt:
What rights should archives protect? Does it matter whose rights you are considering? Should you protect them in all circumstances? Explain your stance.
Activities: 1) self-test on internet use amongst Americans and New Zealanders followed by research and discussion of statistics about internet use and technology adoption

2) Synchronous reference interviews in pairs

3) Exhibit visit and analysis in home community
Students selected their own entry and work in teams of 2. If a teammate dropped out, I would grade the solo effort more leniently.
Evaluation comments were very positive overall. Several students wrote that they felt they had really stretched with this class and felt more confident and prepared as a result.

Outcomes

- Initial resistance to the word “fetish” but voluntary adoption by late term activity analyzing exhibits (i.e. disruption of mental framework resulting in intellectual change and facility with concepts)
- 2 students obtained employment during the course of the class and attributed their success partially to the class
- Lively and often insightful discussions
- Students also learned specific analytical skills and methods
Initial Conclusions on Efficacy

- holds great promise even in settings where the focus has been on skill development and application
- seems to have strengthened two students’ job qualifications – the “theoretical” approach can thus be pragmatic.
- seems to have worked even in a multi-national, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual class.
- Can work alongside skills-oriented instruction
Thank you.