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# Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources at the University of Miami

## Faculty Showcase 2020: Navigating the New Teaching Landscape

Thursday, October 22, 2020

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University of Miami Libraries



## Project Overview

- IRB-approved study on those who teach with primary sources
- Interviews with 15 instructors from the humanities and social sciences
- 23 parallel studies in the US and 2 studies in the UK
- Larger study coordinated by Ithaka S+R

Dale Chihuly (American, b. 1956)  
*Mosaic Persian*, 1998/2018  
Gift of Dale & Doug Anderson, 2017.2  
**Low Art Museum, University of Miami**



# Project Objectives

Discover how instructors teach with primary sources, which physical and digital collections they access regularly, and how they describe the benefits of this engagement for student learning.

Identify challenges that instructors face to develop recommendations to support teaching with primary sources at the University of Miami.

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# Primary Source Categories

- ❑ Historical or contemporary human artifacts
- ❑ Primary sources used as cultural artifacts
- ❑ Teaching that investigates the cultural contexts of primary sources

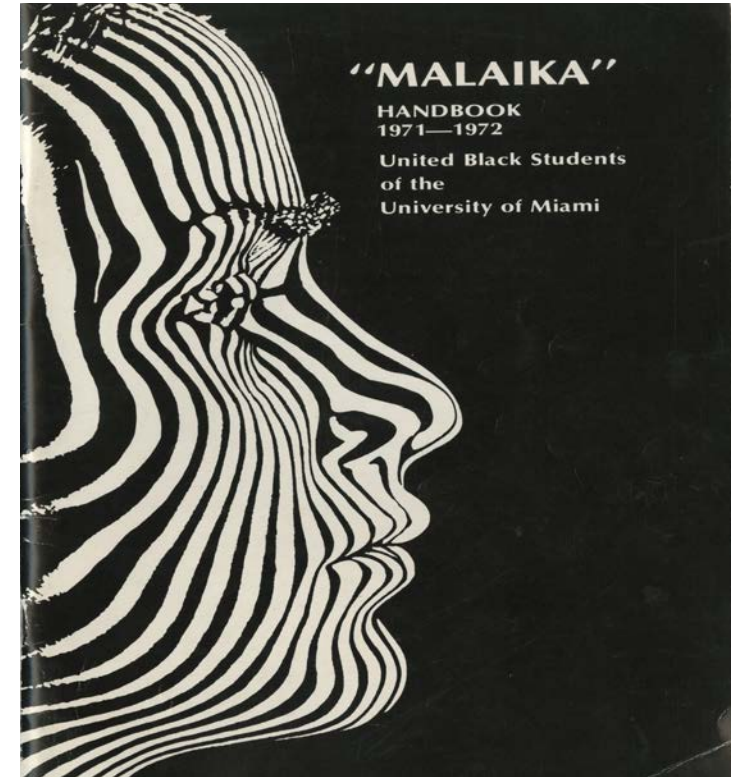
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*Philip II, King of Spain, letter to Lázaro Moreno de León, governor of Tenerife and La Palma.*  
Special Collections, University of Miami Libraries

# Primary Source Formats

- Physical Objects
- Print editions
- Photocopies or facsimiles
- Digital versions of original primary sources



*Malaika handbook, 1971-1972.*  
University Archives, University of Miami Libraries

# Primary Source Formats

- Audio or video recordings
- In-person interviews
- Ethnographic observations
- Born-digital objects



*Orquesta femenina Cubana (Cuban women's orchestra),*  
1930-1939, photograph, 20.2 x 25.2 cm.  
**Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries**



## University of Miami Distinctive Collections

- University Archives
- Special Collections
- Cuban Heritage Collection
- Lowe Art Museum

# Discoveries

- Faculty most often mentioned working with colleagues from Special Collections, Cuban Heritage Collection, and the Lowe Art Museum
- Collaboration was a key aspect of successful engagement with primary sources
- Several faculty members described integrating technology with primary sources (GIS, 3-D printing, VR, and AR)
- Faculty valued both physical and digital primary sources (even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic)





## Highlight

*“And fundamentally, at least for me, history is about learning to read critically, to write analytically, and to speak articulately. And so primary sources give students a fresh way to do that.”*

## Impact

- Increased opportunities to practice languages, information literacies, and visual literacies
- Having a wider scope of world cultures
- Considering perspectives of marginalized groups and DEAI matters
- Transferrable skills of analytical and critical thinking
- Better understanding of physical materials in relation to course curriculum

# Challenges

- Tradeoff of time between core curriculum and working with primary sources: “Is it worth it?”
- Access and discovery limitations
- Sizable collections (“burden of plenty”)
- Difficulty navigating online collection materials
- Student literacy in understanding the primary sources



# Recommendations

## Teaching with Primary Sources during COVID-19

Communicate availability to partner with faculty to engage students with primary sources in online contexts and increase digital access of materials.

# Recommendations

## Develop Training Opportunities for Faculty and Students

- Introduction to primary sources
- Overview of specific UM resources
- Navigation of online collection databases and finding aids
- Object-based learning methodologies with sample assignments
- Tutorials on digital primary sources and how to vet them





## Recommendations

### Streamline Access to Primary Sources and Technology

Create a systematic way of incorporating digital primary sources and technology.



## Recommendations

### Foster Collaboration between Distinctive Collections

Encourage a seamless experience for classes with University Archives, Special Collections, Cuban Heritage Collection, and the Lowe Art Museum, with greater synergy between the four collections to work with each other and assist faculty, staff, and students.



## Recommendations

### Incentivize Instructors to Teach with Primary Sources

Recognize instructors who teach with primary sources by offering career building incentives that align with areas of teaching, research, and service across the University of Miami.



# Recommendations

## Strive for Excellence / Prepare for Impact

Guide faculty and students to make dynamic connections between primary sources of the past and larger concerns of the present. Through careful planning, engagement with primary sources can have a lasting impact on student learning.





For the full report of “Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources at the University of Miami,” please visit [scholarship.miami.edu](https://scholarship.miami.edu).

Thank You.

