



A three-part seminar in archival praxis

Free and open to graduate students

April 14 / April 21 / April 28

10 AM to 12:30 PM

This interdisciplinary seminar, to be held on three consecutive Friday mornings at the Newberry library, is designed to give students an introduction to current theories of the archive and to modern archival practices. Through our readings and through an investigation of Chicago-related collections, we will explore the theoretical and methodological dimensions of archival work, as we engage with the question of how taxonomies shape our critical understanding of a field. How do we organize information and knowledge? How do we develop our own archives of study? And what is meant by being an “authority” in one’s field?

Readings will include selections from the following, and will not exceed 65 pages per session: Burton, ed. *Archive Stores* (2005); Derrida, *Archive Fever* (1995); Edwards, “The Taste of the Archive” (2012); Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (1989); Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2002); Olson, *Chicago Renaissance* (2017). Participants will also be asked to read short pieces by Sherwood Anderson, Fanny Butcher, and Ben Hecht. They will also closely read several finding aids.

Three sessions—2.5 hours each—will be held at the Newberry from 10 AM to 12:30 PM, followed by lunch. Graduate students across the humanities are encouraged to apply, especially historians, art historians, literary scholars, and those with a strong interest in the cultural history of Chicago.

Students should send a C.V. and short statement of their research interests to Liesl Olson at olsonl@newberry.org by March 15, 2017. Accepted students will be expected to attend all three sessions.

Session One, April 14: Introduction & Overview, Chicago Collections at the Newberry

The first session will be oriented around the questions—What is an archive? What kind of archive is the Newberry? We will begin with the Newberry’s history, and the provenance of some of its most recognized collections. We will then look at materials that illuminate the breadth of the library’s holdings in the history and culture of Chicago. Collections will be selected based upon participants’ research interests. Newberry staff will join the seminar for a Q/A discussion about the challenges confronting the modern-day archivist. They will also provide an overview of the concepts of original order and provenance, intellectual and physical control, the politics of appraisal, materiality and ephemerality, the gaps that define any archive, the advent of “born digital” materials; and the evolving challenges of backlogs and access.

Participants will be asked to spend 1-2 hours working in a collection between the first and second sessions.

Session Two, April 21: Archive and Narrative

The second session will discuss the questions—What are we looking for in an archive? What assumptions do we bring? What kind of histories and arguments do we create from archival material?

We will take a “big” collection, the Sherwood Anderson Papers, to consider where a researcher might start, and why. We will also consider why this collection is “priority one,” including what it contains, and what it does not.

We will then look closely at two divergent ways in which narratives are constructed from archival material: an essay by Brent Hayes Edwards, which traces the origins of a photograph from the Claude McKay Papers; and Liesl Olson’s account of Sherwood Anderson’s nervous breakdown and move to Chicago in 1913.



The Ben Hecht papers as they arrived at the Newberry.

Session Three, April 28: Chicago Journalism

The last session will focus on archival collections relating to journalism in Chicago, including the correspondence of journalists, drafts of political cartoons, and the tiny, handwritten diaries of *Chicago Tribune* literary editor Fanny Butcher. A display of collections items will include material from the papers of Finley Peter Dunne, George Ade, Ben Hecht, Paul Scott Mowrer, Eunice Tietjens, Fanny Butcher, Harry Hansen, Jack Conroy, and Era Bell Thompson. Brad Hunt will discuss other archives in Chicago, including the Chicago Collections Consortium. We will consider archival research methodologies, including how to work through voluminous material; what to ignore; when and how to photograph sources; how to decode seemingly illegible handwriting; and how to judge when to disappear down archival “rabbit holes.”



Liesl Olson is Director of Chicago Studies at the Newberry. She is the author of *Chicago Renaissance: Literature and Visual Arts in a Midwestern Metropolis, 1893-1955* (Yale, forthcoming 2017) and *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford, 2009). She has written extensively about twentieth-century literature and art, and received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Newberry.



Brad Hunt is Vice President for Research and Academic Programs at the Newberry. He is the co-author of *Planning Chicago* (APA, 2013), and the author of *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), which won the Lewis Mumford Prize from the Society of American City and Regional Planning History.