**Ian Post:** Welcome, everybody. I'm Ian Post, I'm the Local History Archivist at the Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture. And today we're going to be talking about collaborative adaptations to primary source instruction during COVID-19. I'm joined by my colleagues Jen Piegols, our University Archivist and Special Collections Librarian, as well as Melinda McPeek, our Curator for Exhibits and Engagement, and we've been working with primary sources in the classroom for the past couple of years at the Nabb Center, and COVID presented with, presented us with an interesting opportunity to kind of reinvigorate some of our primary source instruction and bring it into the 21st century using online sources. So, we have a couple perspectives on our, on a one-shot session, on a session or on a, an assignment that went throughout the semester where we were embedded in, and managing a couple of internships throughout the pandemic. And, so, to start that off I'm going to turn it over to Jen Piegols.

**Jen Piegols:** So, as Ian said, I'm Jen Piegols, I’m the University Archivist and Special Collections Librarian at the Nabb Research Center. And here at the Nabb, we offer professors the option of a one-shot session to teach their students about analyzing primary sources and engage them with some of those archival materials that we have. For the past few years we have been working with one of our history professors who teaches two women's history courses, both centering around women within United States history.

Traditionally, our one-shot sessions were held in our classroom, and students would have the experiences that accompanied visiting an archive. So, they would leave their bags outside and only use pencils. Once our students were settled, we would give a brief presentation on primary sources, and walk through the basics of analyzing those types of materials. Throughout the room, we would have about 20 items laid out on the tables for the students to look through. These items, all related to the course’s broader historical context, but varied in how they actually did relate.

After our initial instruction, the students would browse the different materials and complete an individual assignment that took a deeper look into one of those sources. In order to follow the ACRL RBMS-SAA Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy as much as possible we use detailed analysis sheets created by NARA. Once the students had completed their analysis, the class would come back together, and students would share what they looked at and any interesting information they had learned. Their final assignment would be, due a week or two later, and was a two-page reflection paper on the primary source that they had studied in our class, with support from additional secondary sources.

Once COVID hit, we adapted our one-shot session so that it could be taught over zoom. Since we wanted to focus most of our synchronous class time on the students engaging with primary sources themselves, we created a Guide on the Side as our introduction and asked students to review it before they came to our class session.

If you're unfamiliar with Guide on the Side, it is an open source application that allows you to ask questions and provide guidance as a viewer walks through a web page or document that you have created. You can see a screen capture of it on the top right. The program allows you to create fill in the blanks, multiple choice questions, text-based questions, and an optional quiz at the end. You can also format it so that students provide their email addresses to receive a completion certificate. And that is what ultimately drew us to this resource, since it already had a built-in form of accountability and made it easy for the professor to know if the students completed the activity as well as gauge how much, they, effort they actually put into the questions. For us we created a PDF for our resources and placed it in set with the guide.

So, unlike our in-person classes, we gave our instruction beforehand, and this allowed us to use the majority of our zoom time to interact with the primary sources and have a decent discussion.

Another large change to our one-shot session was the materials that the students had access to. In the classroom, the archival items would cover a range of topics related to the course, but since everything the students would work on over zoom needed to be available online, we turned to our already digitized collections and pulled a common theme from them. If there weren’t any collections already digitized, we would selectively scan parts of a collection for the students to look at.

For our fall session, we focused on a on a theme of romance, and you can see some of those items that we chose on the slide. As you can see with the pink diary, a piece in our collection that was not digitized or transcribed before this, our zoom session, we scanned only the front of the diary and a few pages that illustrated our theme of romance. We also use excerpts from transcriptions of oral histories and objects like a sweetheart pillowcase and wedding dresses from our artifact collection. All of these items were selectively made available online via PDFs for the students to analyze.

Because we had fewer sources to look, at we decided that instead of asking students to analyze a source of their choosing on their own, we randomly grouped students together and assigned them a primary source. They then worked as a team to analyze and engage with their digital source.

You can see a couple of the different selections we did for the spring session, and doing it this way impacted their final project because they were forced to write some, their reflection on an item they were assigned rather than an item of their choosing.

And some of these, or the theme that connected all the items on the screen was death and mourning. And although this is a bit of a morbid topic, we decided to go this avenue because it is what we had a lot of materials for that we're already digitized or easy to scan or photograph.

Our last significant change came with how the students analyze their source. In the past, we used NARA worksheets that walked researchers through a written document, photograph, object, etc.

And these worksheets, like the one shown on the left, encourage the researcher to look at the physical condition of the item, as well as its content. Because the students did not have access to the physical item and were working in teams, we decided to form three questions for the students to answer: to summarize the primary source, provide some historical context, and pull out an example of how you could use that source to learn about women's lives in the 20th century. This simplified analysis led to a wonderful class discussion at the end of both of our class sessions.

Overall, we thought that our adapted one-shot sessions were a huge success. We feel that we provided an engaging remote experience for students that culminated in quality class discussions on a more focused topic.

We are also proud that we were able to continue our collaboration with our professors and sustain our relationships and presence in classes throughout the pandemic. However, while we feel that we provided a positive classroom experience, our remote session also limited the experience that students would have with the NABB Center.

We found that in the past, when students came into our classroom and physically engaged with our sources, that experience could inspire them to write a thesis using our resources, or even become excited about archives and apply to be a student assistant for us. Without that physical connection to our space’s sources, we feel that students left with a narrow view of what the Nabb Center really has to offer.

And now I'll turn it over to my colleague, Ian Post, to talk about a semester long project.

**Ian Post:** Thanks, Jen. So, one of our longer running collaborations with a history class is with History 102, which is our world civilizations after 1500. And starting in about 2017, we work with a professor, Dr. Emin Lelic, to integrate a National History Day project-based model into the classroom to kind of replace the traditional semester long essay that students would work on in this 102 type class.

And, so, we picked out a number of special collections that the students would work with and throughout the semester they would work in groups of three to four with that primary source and start to build out some secondary source research and build a script to a documentary that they would eventually develop as a group and turn it at the end of the semester. And, so, we've been doing that, collaboration, since 2017 every semester, and when spring of 2020 rolled around we had to kind of make some adaptations.

So, we kind of developed a pretty good scaffolding to this assignment since the beginning, making slight adaptations throughout to kind of address different needs. And, so, we always start off with the primary source session around Week 3, it's not always in Week 3, but around Week 3, where the students come into the Nabb Center, they work with, there's about 20 different primary sources out throughout the classroom, they get an introduction to what the Nabb Center is and what primary sources are, and they choose their groups and choose their source that they're going to work with throughout the rest of the semester.

And then later, a couple weeks later, in Week 6, they visit one of the librarians, one of the liaison librarians, to do a secondary source research session. And shortly after that there's an annotated bibliography due. And before the secondary source session, there's a source description and prospectus due. So that we’re kind of scaffolding the assignments that go along with the documentary, building up towards the documentary at the end.

And then week 11 and 12, there's groups of consultations with the professors and the archivist where we review the script of their documentary before they eventually fine tune it and submit it in week 15, and present it to the rest of the class. And really what the assignment allows the students to do is one, become familiar what with what primary sources are, and two, is to discover how we can explore the historical context around this primary source and around the historical figures throughout time. And, so, they get the experience of working throughout an entire semester within a group, using primary sources as a historian would, they get a chance to experience the historians craft.

And, so, that changed for fall 2020 and we had to figure out how we were going to address going into fall 2020 and these challenges and doing a semester long group project. And, so, one of the first things that we had to do is obviously work with digital collections only, since the classroom and campus, and the library were closed off to class visitors. And so, we worked with digital collections only and made them available in a research guide, where we embedded the sources. And we arranged them based on three overarching themes, based on the courses textbook and this is something that we hadn't done in the past, but we grouped the different sources under religion and science, money and trade, empire and politics. And so these three different groups, allowed the class to kind of naturally segment into their personal interest or what majors they might be coming from, since most of them were non-history majors. And the biggest change that we made was scrapping the idea of a documentary and instead using a website. And this is one of the options for National History Day projects, is developing a website. And, so, we thought it would be a good way to present the same sort of information that they would in a documentary, to still be able to emphasize some of the graphic qualities of the sources that they're working with, but also give them a chance to do something other than writing a traditional research essay.

And, so, we got through fall 2020 doing that and wanted to make a few refinements for spring of 2021, based on how things had gone in fall of 2020. And, so, the biggest change for that was introducing the University Writing Center to the process and we’d always recommended students to visit the Writing Center to fine tune their documentary scripts, but we felt with so much writing, and we had noticed with students writing in the fall semester, that they weren't editing throughout as they had in the past, that we really needed some intervention from the Writing Center and to incorporate them in a way that was planned, rather than sending them later on.

And, so, collaborating with them we were able to plan one intervention in Week 7 after the students have already done secondary research and they're starting to fill out their outlines, and it really helped them piece together the way that they were going to structure talking about these primary sources and how they would explore them within the context of the broader historical context. And then a second intervention to kind of fine tune their work at the end of their websites. And, you know, one small other collaboration, or one adaptation that we made was adding an abstract requirement and changing the website outline instructions.

And, so, for two semesters throughout the pandemic, we were able to continue this project in sort of a new way, scrapping the documentary made less technological problems because students were used to, and it was easier for them to make websites. And then, you know, the collaboration that the students had as well as the collaboration between the, the faculty member, the liaison librarian, us archivists and curator, and the writing center, that, I think bringing on these new partners and all of us working together, we were able to make a pretty important assignment for these students and really great experience for them during a pandemic to kind of engage in a new and interesting way.

But the biggest thing that we noticed in both semesters, was that there was a lot of burnout on both the instructors parts, but mostly with the students who, you know, throughout a full semester had to work remotely with several other students on a, on a project that had a pretty big bearing on their grade, and all of it done over zoom including all the sessions that we've carefully scaffolded into the assignment, all being on zoom, this really burnt them out and you could kind of tell at times and the amount of effort that was put into some of the websites. But overall, they had a great experience with working with primary sources and we feel we made some really strong adaptations to be able to continue primary source of instruction during the pandemic.

And, so, I'm going to turn it over to Melinda McPeek, who's going to be talking about managing our remote internships.

**Melinda McPeek:** Thanks, Ian. So as Ian and Jen discussed, the Nabb Center offers a range of opportunities to engage students with primary sources in the classroom setting. But in addition, we provide in-depth instruction through semester-long, credited internships.

Working in conjunction with SU’s History Department, the Nabb Center offers three to four credit internships in both archival and museum studies. Our internship program is very much a hands-on learning experience, with students required to work on site, about 6 to 10 hours per week depending on how many credits they're working towards.

So, typically, the first few weeks of an internship we really just give students kind of an introduction to the fields of either archival or museum studies, give them some basic skills and training in object and archival material handling, introduce them to cataloging and arranging collections, and preservation of collection materials, as well as digitization and photography. But really the bulk of our internships are spent engaged in project-based learning.

So, for archival studies, students might process an entire collection and write a finding aid at the end, whereas the museum studies, interns typically take on an exhibition project. So, while we do have some required readings, we really don't like to overload our interns with reading and writing assignments. Our approach is really more organic. We like to mentor our students, kind of gauge what they're interested in, and that kind of leads to more meaningful discussions and theoretical conversations and then we can kind of suggest readings from there to go along with their interests. And, their projects also require a fair amount of research and writing through each step, so aside from a short reflection paper at the end of the internship, most assignments are really building towards this final project.

So in March of 2020, like so many campuses, SU closed to faculty and students due to COVID-19. And at the time, I was in the process of supervising an intern in museum studies, and at this point in her internship she was already researching and planning, making plans for her final project which was going to be a small exhibition in our gallery. But when we realized that we wouldn't be returning to campus, we decided the remainder of the internship would have to be done remotely.

So, we had weekly synchronous meetings over zoom, and we kind of had to rethink this final project.

And we could have done something that was just an exhibit proposal project, without actually getting to do the exhibit, but this particular intern was really excited in this exhibit project, so we made the decision to transition it to an online exhibit. So luckily, we had begin, began exploring Omeka, which is an open source platform for online exhibits. We hadn't really done a lot with it at this point.

But, transitioning this internship project into an online exhibit was really kind of the prompt we needed to dig into Omeka a little more, and actually, kind of, create a training manual so that we could then train students in it's use, and then begin creating our own virtual exhibits.

And, so, it really wasn't all that easy to transition midway through a semester to remote internship. And I'm thinking, both the intern and myself worked a lot more hours than we typically would, in an internship project, but, we did realize that this is something we could do and that it was a possibility. So, when we were approached by SU's internship coordinator about offering a fully remote internship opportunity for a student that following fall, we decided to embark on creating a new digital humanities internship.

So, we had already started discussing with our graduate studies coordinator in the history department about a possibility of a public history or digital humanities track within the department. So, Ian, Jen and myself we had already kind of started brainstorming about a possible course that we might co-teach, that really merged together archival and museum studies. So, the creation of a digital humanities internship, we felt, would be kind of a great way to test the waters for this joint course.

So, we collaborated on the creation of a syllabus and the structure of the internship, and we decided that like our in-person internships, we really wanted it to be focused on project-based learning, and that the experience would culminate in the completion of a digital project of the intern’s choice. So, my colleagues and I we all met with our intern in synchronous zoom meetings once a week, and initially we would have the student complete different exercises just to get more familiar with digital resources, both at the Nabb Center and at other repositories.

So, for example, we had the intern, locate and analyze an object, photograph, publication, document, and audio-visual source from a select group of online repositories as well as at the Nabb Center. And we chose the topic, Native American history. Then, they had to submit a written assignment just noting details about the digital platform, metadata information, copyright, copyright status for each of the sources, and then, that was followed by a discussion about the sources during our zoom session.

So, we also have them accession a mixed collection of archives and objects. The collection items were digitized, photographed, and put into Dropbox and the intern completed a basic accession form, catalog record, and a small brief finding aid for the collection.

Early on in the internship, we had them complete a project proposal, identifying both their topic and the type of digital project that they wanted to undertake. So, we kind of left that open, it could be a website, documentary, online exhibit, podcast, and in this case, our intern actually chose to do a podcast series. So, we were able to customize several assignments and readings pertaining to podcasts, enabling them to do a deeper dive into that particular platform. And they were interested in research related to the Vietnam War. So, our intern used oral histories from our collection to create a three-part podcast series.

And we also provided training in Omeka, and that was used as the platform to make the podcast available and accessible. So, along the way she completed scripts, sample recordings of each episode, and we reviewed and discussed during our meetings, each step of the way.

So, after the internship wrapped, my colleagues and I met just to kind of talk about what worked, what didn't work, what we could improve, if we wanted to continue doing remote internships, moving forward.

So, one of the primary issues that we encountered was just some miscommunications at times, and we all agree that more frequent, maybe shorter meetings would work better so we would have kind of a touch point and make sure that everything was on track. I think, you know, when you're meeting with a student, and an intern over zoom it's a lot different than that, in person, meeting and you can really gauge more if they're on track with things. So, I think the idea of meeting a little more frequently and kind of checking in with progress.

So, we really liked co-supervising the internship, because we thought it was really a good way for us to contribute from our various areas of expertise and kind of enabled us to also sort of share and split the workload. But, we kind of thought it might be a little intimidating for our intern to have to work with three supervisors, every week. So, one thing we've discussed is maybe doing more one-on-one sessions, so we would all be involved but you know maybe a one person meeting and kind of teaching a section, and then we could all gather for some discussions.

And then, finally, allowing our student to select the project type kind of gave them more ownership of the project. But in this case, podcasts were sort of something new to all of us, and we kind of had to learn as we went along, so, you know, going forward, we might want to focus the final project in an area where we have a little more expertise or if it's something that we actually need for the Nabb Research Center for developing a particular story or online exhibit, so it may be that instead of giving them that choice we kind of guide that process a little more.

So, I think the greatest success with this remote internship was just that we could provide a great internship experience, and this would allow more students to be able to participate in the program. So, we're actually going to be supervising a digital humanities remote internship for a graduate student next semester, and she works full time in addition to being in the graduate program, so it's just an example of a student that wouldn't ordinarily be able to take part in our internship program, but now has the opportunity.

And I think the biggest drawback to remote internships is that students really do miss out on that hands-on interaction with archival items and artifacts, so we can provide a really rich rewarding experience, but I just don't think you can replicate the excitement students have when they're able to have that physical interaction.

So just to sum up, remote instruction as a result of COVID 19 kind of became the catalyst for us to find more creative adaptations to continue primary source instruction. And since we weren't meeting with students and patrons and couldn't work on projects that required us to be on site, that freed us up and we were able to collaborate more and shift our focus to really enhancing our digital resources.

So, I don’t think we would have been given the green light to try something like a remote internship prior to COVID-19, but now that’s something we will continue to offer. And, we’re certainly looking forward to resuming in-person instruction, but these new digital initiatives, born out of COVID-19, will enable us to expand our reach.

Thank you so much and our contact information is up on the screen. If you have any questions or want to email us for additional information, we would be happy to correspond with you. Thanks!