Archival literacy in action: Exploring information literacy capabilities in the Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine collection

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The Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine Collection

Abstract

During the Fall 2012 semester, Kent State University doctoral student Shelley Blundell worked with Dr. Jodi Kearns at the Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron. As part of our information literacy instruction, we decided to explore information literacy as it applies to archival collections. Blundell worked with the recently donated Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine collection to practice “archival literacy,” an emerging term that describes the intersection of information literacy and archival practice.

Blundell created an information resource guide on adolescence for the collection, as well as a manual for continued preservation and information literacy activities for the collection at the conclusion of her investigation. The collection contains more than 1,500 popular psychology magazines which span a great deal of the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries.

During an interview with Benjamin, he stated that the enduring historical and preservation-worthy value of the collection lies in the “cultural snapshot” these magazines provide of U.S. social history over the previous century. The poster will include images taken from the collection (e.g. magazine covers) and ideas for potential archival literacy activities based on subjects covered in the collection.

Facts and images from the collection

Current Psychology in Pictures, October issue, 1937

Benjamin: “I’m a collector.”

Dr. Benjamin began “accidentally” collecting popular psychology magazines in the 1970s. Starting with only a handful of magazines, the collection currently stands at 1,590 items (with more coming on Dr. Benjamin continues to collect any popular psychology magazines he sees regularly). Three centuries are represented in this collection – Some items in the collection date as far back as the late 1890s, and some were published more recently as last year.

Collection donor: Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.

Dr. Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.’s numerous international contributions to the field of psychology through his research, scholarship, and teaching, are matched in honor by his unwavering commitment to, and support of, the Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron. Dr. Benjamin is considered a true giant in the CHP, and the recent donation of his popular psychology collection further cements his commitment to ensuring the growth of the CHP and the benefit of all those conducting research in the dynamic and exciting field of psychology. To read about his work with this amazing collection, visit the CHP blog entry “Thanksgiving with Ben” at http://centerforhistoryofpsychology.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/to-read-more-about-dr-benjamin-please-visit-his-web-site-at-hp/benjamin.html

Current Psychology in Pictures

Psychology: Faith, Hope, Courage, April 1945

Human Behavior, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 1978

Benjamin: “[These magazines] offered secrets to success, to greater financial security, to happiness, to health.”

Dr. Benjamin believes as much as “Honey Boo Boo” provides a glimpse into modern-day culture and society, so too do these magazines represent “a cultural snapshot” of America’s social history, particularly those magazines from the 1920s and 1930s.

Some of the more interesting subjects covered in the collection:

Clairvoyance, facial symmetry, hermaphrodites, lying, miracles, voyeurism, smiling, witch-craft, and wolf-children.

Defining archival literacy

Archival literacy is defined here as a combination of the basic “find, use, incorporate” model of information literacy and the navigation and specialized instruction experienced in an archivist/special collection.

• “No finite” definition of archival literacy has been reached, however, many researchers in the library and information science field, particularly archivists, have contributed greatly to the understanding here of what good archival literacy should be (and indeed, what good archival literacy instruction should be as well). See “selected references.”

Differences between information literacy and archival literacy

Key differences are acknowledged in the following two areas:

1. In archival literacy, particular importance is placed on the finding, usage, and understanding/analysis of primary source documents, and
2. Those providing archival literacy instruction provide the patron with opportunities to extend the archives or special collection into a number of areas in the user’s life, and indeed, beyond the physical archive or special collection (such as into the digital realm).

Archival literacy instruction with a special collection

• An theoretical lesson plan is provided on page 2 of the handout as an example of how one might incorporate information literacy standards into the exploration of a special collection, enacting “archival literacy.”
• The information resource guide presented below is a part of the collection manual developed at the culmination of the project.
• A rubric for creating further guides on other subjects explored within the collection was also provided in the manual, extending archival literacy possibilities with this collection beyond the initial project.

Information Resource Guide Example

Information Resource Guide: Adolescence

(Coverage of subject in the Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. Popular Psychology Magazine Collection)

Maggie (organized alphabetically, and chronologically within each title)

Adult - Dec-Jan 1953, Vol. 1 No. 4, p. 58: parenting (processed); March-April 1954, Vol. 1 No. 5, p. 110: medical care (processed)


Current Psychology and Successful Living - Sept 1935, p. 8 (processed)

Personal Psychology – July 1957, p. 64 (unprocessed)

Psychology – December 1939, p. 22 (unprocessed)

Psychology Digest - June 1938, p. 68 (unprocessed); August 1938, p. 66 (unprocessed)

Psychology: Faith, Hope, and Courage – November 1946, p. 20 (unprocessed)

Psychology: Health, Happiness, and Success - May 1931, p. 23 (unprocessed); May 1937, p. 45: sex (unprocessed)

The Psychologist Magazine – May 1974, p. 12 (unprocessed)


You, Including Popular Psychology – August 1952, p. 5: love (unprocessed); March 1955, p. 52; April 1956, p. 79: drugs, parenting

You, The Psychologist Guide to Desirable Living – April 1954, p. 44

Psychology: Faith, Hope, and Courage – November 1946, p. 20 (unprocessed)

Psychology: Health, Happiness, and Success - May 1931, p. 23 (unprocessed); May 1937, p. 45: sex (unprocessed)

The Psychologist Magazine – May 1974, p. 12 (unprocessed)


You, Including Popular Psychology – August 1952, p. 5: love (unprocessed); March 1955, p. 52; April 1956, p. 79: drugs, parenting

You, The Psychologist Guide to Desirable Living – April 1954, p. 44

Selected references


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(Relationship guide continued in next column)