

Conducting Family History Research: Digital Literacy & Research Methods

Instructors: Jaci Wilkinson & Natalie Bond

January 16-February 20, 2018

Tuesdays 6:30pm-8:00pm

MLIB 284: Buckhous Room (Level two, Mansfield Library)

Course Description

Genealogical and family history research has boomed in the past several decades. Coupled with leaps in the scale and accessibility of technology, those wishing to conduct such research are now faced with a vast array of information, tools, and resources at their disposal. How does one make informed decisions and identify valid, historically accurate data? This course aims to equip students with the tools and resources to conduct informed, detailed and *fun* genealogical searches around family names and origins. Classes will focus on both genealogical/historical resources and online literacy, enabling students to gather and identify accurate information with established provenance.

Objectives

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Confidently identify and utilize local and national digital genealogical tools and resources
- Engage in conversation regarding the ethical considerations of DNA-based genealogical services
- Identify and utilize tools for digitizing their own family history records
- Parse digital information encountered during genealogical and family history research using digital literacy concepts

Assignments

MOLLI assignments are optional, but those that we have developed will significantly enhance your understanding of the material and experience of this class.

Instructor Contact

Natalie and Jaci can be contacted at their University of Montana email addresses: natalie.bond@umontana.edu and jaci.wilkinson@umontana.edu.

Classroom Etiquette

Please help us foster a productive learning environment for everyone! To this end, we ask that each student:

- turn off their cell phone during class,
- use their computer solely for class work and activities (misuse is distracting to you and your neighbors), and
- is mindful of their participation in large and small group work. All voices are valued.

These rules are our way of showing you that we value your full presence during class time. Please talk to us if you have questions or feedback.

Accessibility

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and the MOLLI program. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your experience of this class, please contact us or Karen Hendrickson, MOLLI Program Manager. We will work with you and MOLLI to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Week-by-Week Instructor Notes

Class 1: Tuesday, January 16th

Introduction to digital literacy concepts and the basics of genealogical and archival research. We'll discuss our individual goals for the class.

Class 2 prep:

Readings

1. [Metaliteracy Learning Objectives](#) by Jacobson and Mackey
2. [Mozilla Whitepaper: Web Literacy](#)
3. [Facebook Must be Held Accountable to the Public](#) by Danah Boyd
4. ““The Essential Force of the Clan”: Developing a Collecting-Inspired Ideology of Genealogy through Textual Analysis” by Ronald Bishop from *The Journal of Popular Culture* (on Moodle)

Optional assignment:

Let's explore the wide world of genealogy blogs! Read [The 10 Genealogy Blogs Worth Reading \(PDF\)](#) by Kimberly Powell and pick one of the blogs included to explore and review. What did you like or dislike about the blog? Does your review/assessment of the blog line up with Powell's? Who is the creator of the blog and what expertise do they have? Is there anything from the digital literacy readings which you utilized or thought of as you read the blogs? How is social media a component (or not a component) of the blog?

Class 2: Tuesday, January 23rd

We will learn how to conduct research online within the framework of digital literacy, providing a set of competencies enabling the effective use of technology (genealogical websites, online repositories, social media and networking websites) in historical and genealogical research.

Class 3 prep

Readings (on Moodle):

1. Selections from *Fostering Family History Services* by Rhonda L. Clark and Nicole Wedemeyer Miller
2. "Where Is the List with All the Names? Information-Seeking Behavior of Genealogists", *The American Archivist* January 2003, by Wendy Duff and Catherine Johnson (<http://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/aarc.66.1.1375uj047224737n>)
3. "The Creation and Destruction of the 1890 Federal Census", *The American Archivist* September 2008, by Robert L. Dorman (<http://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/aarc.71.2.c600075v1q5x0004>)

Optional assignment:

Choose a particular branch of your family and, to the best of your ability, create a family tree with all current information at your disposal. If you've already created a family tree, just focus on the readings (but bring in whatever work you've done on your family tree)! Bring your family tree to the next class for sharing and discussion. Additionally, bring any readings or resources you used to decide how to create your tree.

Class 3: Tuesday, January 30th

We will identify and discuss a number of local, national and international genealogical resources. We will also discuss strategies for at-home genealogical research.

Class 4 prep

Readings

1. [The Rise and Fall and Rise Again of 23andMe](#) by Erica Check Hayden (also available on Moodle)
2. [23andMe is Terrifying](#) by Charles Seife
3. Tucker, Susan. 2006. "Doors Opening Wider: Library and Archival Services to Family History" (Moodle)

Optional Assignment:

Watch one (or all!) of the following National Archives "Know Your Records" videos in an area of interest, and try utilizing the tools and tips discussed in the video(s) on the National Archives website. Prepare a summary of your findings to present to class the following week:

- [Census Records at the National Archives](#)
- [Immigration Records at the National Archives](#)
- [Military Research at the National Archives - Volunteer Service](#)
- [Military Research at the National Archives - Regular Service](#)
- [Military Research at the National Archives - Pension Records](#)

Website: <https://www.archives.gov/calendar/know-your-records>

Class 4: Tuesday, February 6th

For the first half hour of class, vice president of the Western Montana Genealogical Society, Leslie Rieger (who also works with us here at Mansfield Library!) will be here to talk about her organization and answer your questions.

Interest in genealogy research has skyrocketed in the past ten years. In this class, we'll discuss genealogy as a cultural phenomenon and some of the ethical concerns that get unearthed in the process. The popularity of DNA/genetic testing and its relation to genealogy will also be discussed.

Class 5 prep

Readings (on Moodle)

- "Archive Fever as Genealogical Fever: Coming Home to Scottish Archives", *Archivaria*, by Hannah Little (<https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13147/14391>)
- "Just a Name on a Grave? Discovering the Story of an Unknown Montana Miner", *Montana Magazine of Western History*, by Don L. and Melinda Blanchard Crawford (https://www.jstor.org/stable/27922549?seq=3#page_scan_tab_contents)
- "Genealogists as a 'Community of Records'", *The American Archivist* January 2007, by Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres (<http://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/aarc.70.1.115414u736440636>)

Optional assignment:

Conduct an online search, using your current knowledge of digital resources, for biographical information on one of the following people, or a person of your choice related to Montana/Western history: Edward T. (E.T.) Johnson, Mary Ronan, Joseph Dixon, Etta Place, Jack Slade, or Henry Plummer. Focus on finding evidentiary documentation of their lives: birth/death/marriage certificates, census records, mentions in newspapers and other publications of the day, journals and diaries, correspondence, etc.

Class 5: Tuesday, February 13th

Students will learn about local genealogical resources, focusing on Montana and the Missoula area. They will also take a field trip to the Mansfield Library's Archives and Special Collections, where resources commonly used for genealogical research will be highlighted.

Class 6 prep

Readings (on Moodle)

- "Community Archival Practice: Indigenous Grassroots Collaboration at the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre", by Krista McCracken. *The American Archivist*: Spring/Summer 2015, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 181-191. (<http://americanarchivist.org/doi/pdf/10.17723/0360-9081.78.1.181>)
- "Community Histories, Community Archives: Opportunities and Challenges," by Dr. Andrew Flinn. *Journal of the Society of Archivists*: 2007, 28:2, pp. 151-176. (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00379810701611936>)
- Selection from NDIIPP publication (http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/documents/ebookpdf_march18.pdf), pp. 1-56
- "Principles and Best Practices for Oral History", Oral History Association (http://www.oralhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/OHA_principles_standards.pdf)

Optional Assignment:

Visit (preferably in person, but online works as well) the Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, the Montana Historical Society, the Butte Silver Bow Archives, or the Ravalli County Museum and Historical Society Archives sometime in the next two weeks to view primary source material. Journal about the experience and how you felt. Why/how is it different from visiting and conducting research at a library?

Class 6: Tuesday, February 20th

We will discuss tools and strategies for personal digital preservation, including digitization best practices, recommended formats, tools and resources. Students will also learn how to conduct "DIY" oral histories with family or community members in order to begin building or augmenting their own genealogy. Finally, students will share what they have learned in class and any plans for future genealogy research.