

Archives Collection Analysis – Fall 2015

History 204 Professor Bilodeau

Collection Analysis: Due Sep. 22 at noon

Archival collections provide the historical evidence that historians use to analyze and understand the past. You have been provided with a select list of collections of documents located in the Archives and Special Collections. Choose one collection from this list that interests you. Based upon a visit to the Archives and a careful examination of the collection and its finding aid, respond to the following questions about the collection in 2-3 pages. Answer the questions below in relation to the collection as a whole, rather than any individual document.

Part A: Collection Overview

In one paragraph, provide brief answers to the questions below based on an examination of your chosen collection.

1. What individual or organization was the main creator of the items in the collection?
2. What date range does the collection cover?
3. What document formats are represented in the collection (for example: letters, photographs, diaries, scrapbooks, financial records)? What document formats do you find more difficult to understand and interpret, and why?
4. In addition to the creator of the collection, what other individuals or organizations are significantly represented among the items in the collection?

Part B: Making Meaning of Archival Documents

In several paragraphs, provide detailed answers to the questions below based on an examination of your chosen collection. Put on your historian's hat and think carefully about your answers.

5. Who donated this collection to Dickinson College, and is there any discernible relationship between the donor and the creator? Why do you think this collection is in Dickinson's Special Collections?
6. What general topics, issues, or events are represented in the collection (for example: Civil War, sports, 19th century business and finance)?
7. Why did you choose this collection? What sparked your interest?
8. Based on the identity of the main creator and the time period represented by the items in the collection, what topics, issues, or events might you have expected to find in this collection, but did not? Why did you expect to find those topics represented, and why might they not be in the collection?
9. To what other fields or disciplines (for example: genealogy, architectural history, anthropology, etc.) might this collection be useful? How or why might it be useful in those areas?

Part C: The Finding Aid

Address the following questions in a few sentences.

10. What do you find useful about the finding aid? How would you change the finding aid to improve it?
11. Who do you think is the finding aid's intended audience? Would it be more useful for some types of researchers than others?

Email the completed assignment to archives@dickinson.edu as a Word doc by 12:00 pm (noon) on Sep. 22.

History 204 Collection Analysis Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall analysis	Demonstrates careful and thorough examination of the collection beyond the finding aid	Demonstrates sound examination of the collection, reflecting its full content	Demonstrates basic examination of collection	Demonstrates little or no examination of the collection; merely repeats content from the finding aid
Discussion of related topics and disciplines	Demonstrates complex understanding of connections to larger historical issues beyond content of the finding aid	Makes numerous connections to broader historical events beyond content of the finding aid	Begins to make basic connections to larger historical issues beyond content of the finding aid	Simply repeats historical issues addressed in the finding aid
Completeness	All questions are answered thoroughly and thoughtfully	All questions are answered reasonably well	Questions are answered, but responses are rather brief	Omits some questions, and answers other questions in a cursory fashion
Writing	Very well-written, free of spelling and grammatical errors	Includes only a few spelling and grammatical errors	Includes occasional spelling and grammatical errors	Contains numerous spelling and grammatical errors