Evaluating the User Experience: Classes in Special Collections

Sarah M. Horowitz
Augustana College
Augustana College

- Undergraduate, liberal arts
- 2500 students
- ~25% of students use Special Collections every year
- Good culture of library assessment
Goals, Priorities, and Assessment

- Goals of the class instruction
- Typical exercises for classes at each level
- Purpose and timing of the assessment tool
- Tool itself
- Limitations of each tool
Goals of Our First-Year Program

- Introduce students to the existence of special collections
  - Types of materials held
- Learn to frame a question/research topic in order to:
  - Get the materials they really need
  - Communicate with the librarians
- Provide interesting content for assignments
- Set expectations and guidelines for use of materials
Assessment Administration

- Day assignment is completed
  - Need to work with faculty
- Time to process their use of materials
  - Allows for learning that occurs during return visits
Assessment Tool

- Name two things you learned from working with Special Collections materials.
- How might your research topic or paper have been different if you had not used Special Collections materials?
- What could the Special Collections librarians have included in their presentation which would have made it easier for you to use Special Collections materials?
- Why would you use Special Collections in the future?
- Please list the materials you used in Special Collections (as much as you can remember, perfect titles and dates aren’t necessary).
Analysis

- Not sure we got as much information on student learning as we wanted
- Focus on the first two questions
- Question about what session could have included not helpful
Name two things you learned from working with Special Collections materials

Types of Information Learned

- 76
- 52
- 28
- 15
- 12
- 12
- 6
How might your research topic or paper have been different if you had not used Special Collections materials?

**How would your paper be different?**

- 48
- 30
- 21
- 12
- 12
- 11
- 4
Limitations

- First college research paper
- Self-reporting
- Wide variety of source types
What’s Next?

- Revision of questions
- Expand assessment to upper-level classes
- Integrated assessment of in-class activities
- ACRL’s Assessment in Action program
Transferability

- All institutions are different
- First goals/outcomes, then assessment
- Depends on what you want to measure