

Who Are We?

Colby College Special Collections houses the college's rare and early printed books, literary and historical manuscripts, and Colbiana, the college archives. We actively support the work of the college by collecting, managing, preserving, and making these culturally-significant materials broadly available, as well as promoting their use to students, faculty, and staff at Colby; scholars and researchers from around the world; and the greater Waterville community and general public.

Significant collections include the Pestana Collection of World War I materials; the papers of former Maine State Poet Laureate Wesley McNair; poet Edwin Arlington Robinson's papers and personal library; the James Augustine Healy collection of Irish literature; the Bern Porter Collection of Contemporary Literature; significant book and manuscript holdings of Thomas Hardy, Sarah Orne Jewett, and other Maine and regional New England writers and artists; early printed books prior to 1700; and the history of Colby College as it relates to the larger history of the United States.

Archives Education Program

Since 2010, Special Collections has committed resources to building and sustaining a robust archives education program at Colby. Integrating special collections materials into the classroom is a central part of our mission and the primary way we support faculty teaching at Colby. Our program emphasizes **active learning** that places the student at the center of instruction and class design, providing the opportunity for students to engage in hands-on learning and build transferable skills applicable to their academic experience and beyond.

We work with faculty across disciplines and departments to develop archival, primary source, and object-based educational experiences to enrich teaching and support a wide variety of learning goals.

These experiences may include:

Single class session

Introduces students to special collections and archival materials; provides students with experience analyzing, interrogating, and interpreting documents

Single class session with single assignment (students required to return to Special Collections)

Provides students with more exposure to documents; introduces students to the archival research process; provides students with a greater understanding of analysis and interpretation of documents and the challenges of silences and incompleteness of archives; provides additional time for students to reflect on using these materials

Multiple class sessions with multiple assignments

Semester-long partnerships with scaffolded assignments designed to build more advanced archival research skills through direct experience with research projects; provides students with a deeper understanding of the politics, power, role, and holdings of archives; provides advanced experiences in analyzing and interpreting archival materials, and in understanding the roles of content and historical context; provides practice in the use of primary and secondary sources in the research process

Depending on course content, we may be able to offer materials that tie directly into class themes. We are also always excited to work with faculty to develop creative, flexible, and innovative ways to use our collections in classes.

To Consider

- How can Special Collections best support your learning goals for this class?
- Are there specific archival formats or larger contextual/historical/regional/literary themes you would like your students to encounter during the visit(s)?
- How can we best assist or collaborate with you on the development and practice of specific skills and projects or assignments using active learning strategies? What do you want your students to **do** during a class visit, and what do you want them to **take away** from a class session in Special Collections?
- Consider types of assignments or projects that you would like your students to engage in, and that Special Collections can support: for example, different types of writing - reflective writing, journaling, field notes, etc.; development of archival research skills; proposing or designing a website; conducting oral histories; mounting a student-curated exhibit, etc.

Strategies and Outcomes

Approaching the book as an object

Students learn to consider the book as an object to understand the history of printing and book production, including changes in the technology of printing and book production over time and space, how the materiality of a book may hint at its intended and actual use, audience, or reception, how provenance may be traced through the physical condition of the book, and more.

Sample materials: Nuremberg Chronicle; family bibles; private devotional books; medieval manuscripts; poetry broadsides; early travel books; visually-rich and illustrated books; books with extensive marginalia, inscriptions, and signs of use.

Understanding politics, power, and silence in the archives

Students learn how the political, social, and cultural contexts in which archival collections are produced can shape the nature of historical documentation, identify gaps and silences in archival collections, and consider questions of power in the archive.

Sample materials: The Samuel Osborne Collection; materials comprising early Black, Asian, and Asian American students at Colby (alumni files, Echo articles, Oracles, etc.).

Close reading and critical textual analysis of primary sources

Students develop an understanding of primary sources, including the variety of formats available and the types of information or insight offered by primary sources, as well as strategies for critically interpreting them.

Sample materials: Henry Clay Merriam correspondence, 1890s; family correspondence; correspondence between women writers; student scrapbooks

Situating literary texts in context

Students learn to identify and analyze the broader context in which historical or literary documents are produced and consider how those contexts shape their writers.

Sample materials: WPA Travel Guides; Edna St. Vincent Millay at Colby materials; Phillis Wheatley poetry books; Porter 'zines; 19th century traveling library.

Constructing historical narratives from archival documents

Students learn how to use archival collections to develop historical narratives, identify and consider diverse and divergent perspectives on the same event or historical moment, and understand the chronology of events.

Sample materials: Anti-Slavery Society and Rebellion of 1833 materials; 1890 and 1900 debates surrounding women's education; 1970 SOBHU Chapel Takeover Collection; Abolition of Fraternities in the 1980s.

Researching individual lives in the archives as the basis for broader histories

Students learn how to use historical documents to research individuals, often from the college's history, who may not be historically famous but whose lives represent broader historical dynamics and trends.

Sample materials: Civil War Era Colby Alumni; Minerva Leland letters; Benjamin Butler campaign letters; World War I and II Colby Alumni; Early Colby Women; Early Asian Students

Close looking and critical visual analysis of images

Students build their visual analysis skills through learning how different types of photography and other visual formats are produced (e. g. daguerreotype, tintype, lithograph, engraving, and others), and analyze images as well as the interplay of image and text.

Sample materials: Anti-slavery pamphlets; Barbara Nnoka photographs; Levine and Picher family photo collections; 18th and 19th century books portraying Orientalism; student

scrapbooks; 18th and 19th century atlases and maps; early photographic formats; Audubon elephant portfolio and Catesby and Wilson ornithological texts.

Historical research using ephemera and other diverse archival formats

Students gain an appreciation of the range of archival formats available and consider how the nature of different types of documentation both reflect historical events and shape archival research.

Sample materials: Vietnam Collection; Minority Recruitment Pamphlets; Margaret McFadden LGBTQ at Colby Collection.