

UNIT 2: ANALYZING EXISTING ARCHIVES

Much like culture, society, and custom, archives and archival practices vary widely depending on their location, context, and contents. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the function and purpose of archives, examining existing archives will provide a deeper insight into how those archives operate.

Select an existing archive. This archive can be one present in a physical location, such as the archives present in the Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, a digital archive found entirely online, or an archive that is a combination of the two. While archives by traditional definition feature written or textual documents, I encourage you to look at archives that also feature multimedia texts such as video, photographs, etc. I encourage you to select an archive that is relevant to you in terms of your career, personal interests, or passions, as you will be spending a lot of time examining the body of that archive for the purpose of analyzing it.

After selecting your archive, you will conduct a rhetorical analysis of that archive that considers its primary audience, context, and overall purpose, as well as how it functions in a wider cultural conversation. Since all archives differ, each analysis will look a little different, but you should analyze your chosen archive with an eye towards discerning the information it presents, how that information can be used, and the goals and methods surrounding its construction. The analysis should draw from specific examples present in the archive to present evidence for its structure, purpose, and context, and should also include an examination of the archive's paratexts and ephemera (pieces of writing used to explicate the contents of the archive).

The goal of this analysis is to give you a deeper insight into how archives function, the purposes they hold, and practice making use of rhetorical analytical tools when considering archival design and curatorial practice.

Deliverables:

- Written analysis of existing archive of your choice, 1500-2000 words

Total Points: 150