

# Information literacy in the humanities: Engaging students with primary sources and cultural heritage material

Round table at Creating Knowledge  
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- IL in the humanities
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# My context/background

- Humanities Library, Gothenburg UL.  
We hold large collections, archives,  
cultural heritage materials
- Increased interest in our cultural material in  
parts due to digitization
- Can we integrate archival material and other  
primary sources into our IL classes?
- Can primary sources enrich learning or be  
used as a pedagogical resource?



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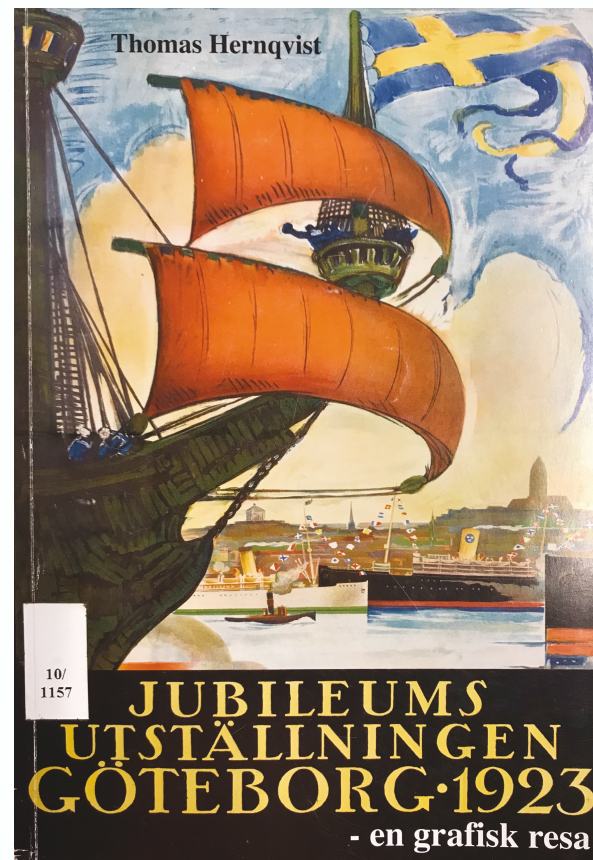
“ We all know that if students can be lured into special collections and exposed to the rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and other materials in our care, a certain kind of seduction will often take place. Paul Moser, vice-provost and director of Libraries at the University of Pennsylvania, has named the fundamental source of this seduction 'sacro-power,' the power to attract which emanates from the very being of primary materials. ”

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Susan M. Allen, Head, Department of Special Collections at UCLA, 1999, pp. 110-111

# Example 1

- First year students at the Department of Conservation
- A 3 hour workshop
- Aim:
  - to broaden the view of what a source can be and what the library collection holds
  - go beyond show and tell and to let the students actively work with primary sources
- Material: primary (and some secondary) sources from the Gothenburg Exhibition, 1923



- Different stations
- Questions to explore and seek answers to
- How to find material: bibliographies, card catalogues
- Primary sources used: exhibition catalogues, maps, photographs, brochures, newspapers clippings
- Lessons learned: fun!

“opened my eyes for new ways of finding material”

Examples of primary sources used in the workshop



## Example 2

- Master's Program in Digital Humanities
- Part of the course: Digitization processes and cultural heritage
- 7 sessions, 20 hours, embedded collaboration
- Material: Primary sources from the Gothenburg Exhibition, 1923
- Aim: To create an exhibition using digitized sources from the Gothenburg Exhibition on the platform Omeka
- Very hands-on





Sources from the students' exhibitions

## Sessions:

- The library's collections and how we choose what to digitize
- Processes before digitizing (ordering, cataloguing)
- The digitization process, copyright
- Introduction to the Gothenburg Exhibition and selecting material
- Dublin Core
- Workshop in Omeka
- Presentation of the end result – their exhibition [dhmastergu.omeka.net](http://dhmastergu.omeka.net)
- Lessons learned: fun!

# Challenges and opportunities

## Challenges:

- Time consuming (extremely so ...)
- Difficulty finding a topic

## Opportunities:

- Engages students
- Promotes active learning
- Primary/secondary sources



# Discussion

- What are your experiences working with primary sources or special collections/archives with students?
- 15 minutes
- Summarize your discussion in Padlet  
[padlet.com/karin\\_pettersso/dl6fxu1i1xelhpvk](https://padlet.com/karin_pettersso/dl6fxu1i1xelhpvk)
- Copy paste the link from the chat



Photo: Freepik.com

# IL in the humanities (and the arts)

- IL varies between disciplines
- Are we too influenced by the STEM and social science interpretations of IL?
- Focus on peer-review, IMRaD?
- What sources are we promoting to the students?
- Digital/printed?



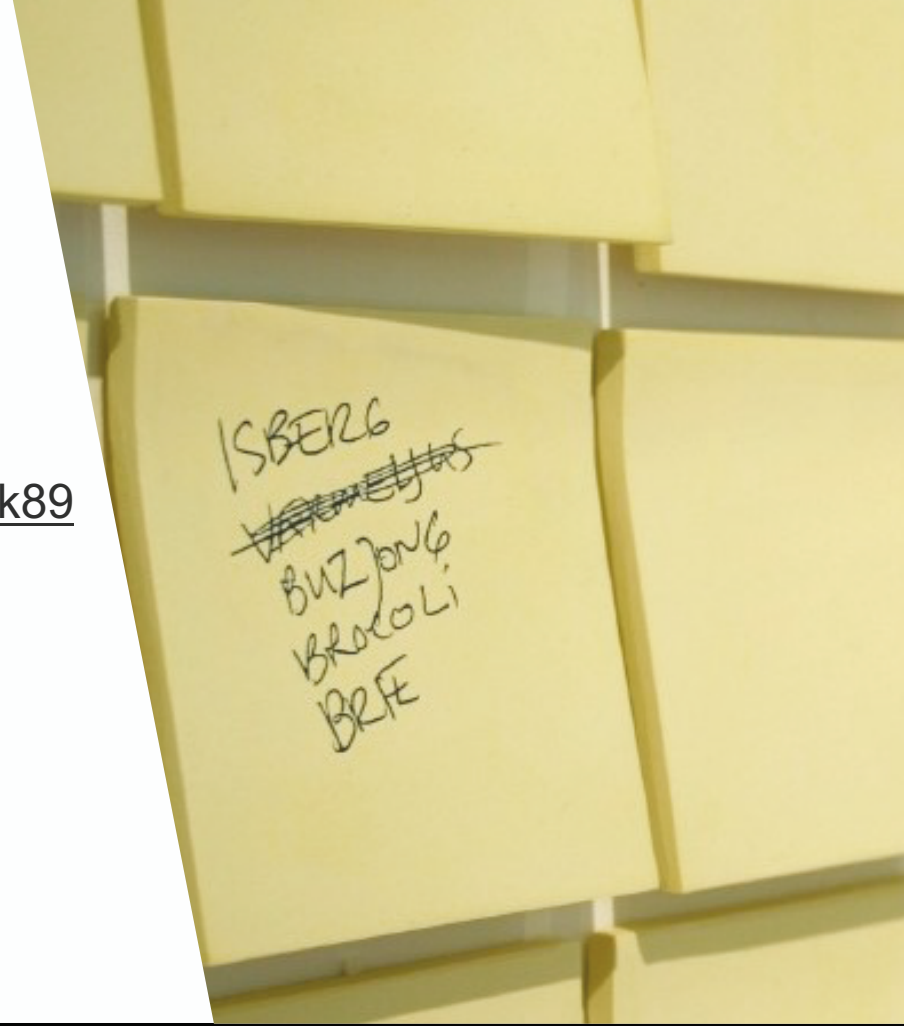
# Primary source literacy

- ACRL's Guidelines for primary source literacy, 2018
- Working with primary sources and archive material requires other skills
- Primary source literacy: find, interpret, evaluate and work with primary sources
- The organization of archive material differs from other sources the students are used to
- Develops critical thinking skills



# Discussion

- How do we teach IL within humanities?
- 10 minutes
- Summarize your discussion in Padlet  
[padlet.com/karin\\_pettersso/ysgrfdcttj89wk89](https://padlet.com/karin_pettersso/ysgrfdcttj89wk89)
- Copy paste the link from the chat



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# Roundup and questions

- Continue the discussion in Padlet
- Please contact me if you want to talk more, I would love to hear from you!

Thank you!

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# References and further reading

- Association of College and Research Libraries' Rare Book and Manuscript Section, & Society of American Archivists. (2018). Guidelines for primary source literacy. Retrieved 16 September 2019, from [http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/Primary Source Literacy208.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/standards/Primary_Source_Literacy208.pdf)
- Allen, S. M. (1999). Rare books and the college library: Current practices in marrying undergraduates to special collections. *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship*, 13(2), 110–119. <https://rbml.acrl.org/index.php/rbml/article/view/157>
- Pettersson, K. (2021). Möt källorna: Kulturarvsmaterial i undervisningen. In A. Svensson (Ed.), *Objekt och samling: Om det unika i Göteborgs universitetsbibliotek* (pp. 245–258) [Forthcoming]. Göteborgs universitet, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.