AGENTS OF INFLUENCE:

ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

Fostering partnerships at the forefront of research

Gale, here for everyone.
RESEARCH BY DISCOVERY

Gale and *American Libraries* collaborated on a multipart series to explore how academic librarians build and grow meaningful relationships with, and between, students and faculty based on topical issues and improved research. The following pages include the articles featured in the series.

We have also included information about the *Gale Primary Sources* referenced in each article. Fromsurfacing the voices of previously marginalized groups to shedding light on the ideologies and movements of extremist groups, these unique digital collections can guide critical conversations happening on college and university campuses today.

*Original article publication dates range from August 2019–March 2020.*
Human Libraries: Turning the Page on Discrimination

University librarians are opening a dialogue with events in which people serve as books

By Timothy Inklebarger

Our protagonist grew up in a secular household in Ohio, never thinking that anything about their life was out of the ordinary. But in the Human Library book *A Secular Humanist in the Bible Belt*, the protagonist tells the story of moving to Arkansas in the late 1990s and quickly learning that their disinterest in religion meant they didn’t fit in. Neighbors and others would ask, “Where do you go to church?” This question was a subtle reminder that as a nonbeliever, they were not fully welcomed into the community.

The “book” was available for one day only during a Human Library event at Torreyson Library on the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) campus in Conway. The forum offered “readers” the chance to check out more than two dozen flesh-and-blood human beings, who served as books, to tell their stories about living with the challenge of being gay, spending time in prison, recovering from addiction, wearing a hijab as an American Muslim, and more.

Human Library events provide a forum for these “human books” to discuss the prejudices they’ve faced with the goal of confronting stereotypes and discrimination. UCA’s Human Library was the brainchild of Tamela Smith, head of access services at Torreyson Library, who says she was inspired to organize the event because of her experience raising a gay son. Smith and her husband feared their son would be bullied and began attending local meetings organized by PFLAG, a nonprofit that offers support for parents, friends, allies, and those in the LGBTQ community. “It was very eye-opening for me and my husband,” Smith says, describing her then-lack of experience with LGBTQ folks. “When people talk to people, you can change minds and change views,” she says.

Smith, who is already planning for the second Human Library in April, joins universities across the country that have been holding similar events for nearly a decade. The Human Library is branded by the Copenhagen, Denmark–based nonprofit of the same name that has held thousands of such events since launching in 2000.

Smith decided to organize a Human Library at the school after seeing one hosted at the local public library in Conway. She says the library partnered with a number of organizations within the university and helped promote the event by creating a LibGuide and distributing flyers around campus.

Students who want to incorporate this kind of dialogue on discrimination into their scholarly research can go further with *Gale Primary Sources*. The collections on this platform give researchers access to thousands of documents exploring critical conversation topics, such as *Political Extremism and Radicalism*, *Religions of America*, and *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.

Librarians at Western Michigan University (WMU) in Kalamazoo also played a key role in organizing two Human Library events, says Marcy Peake, director of diversity and community outreach initiatives at WMU College of Education and Human Development, who spearheaded them.

“I teach in this area, and many people are willing to learn and talk about their differences, but they’re not offered opportunities in society to do that,” Peake says. “And people who are not in dominant groups often would like the opportunity to explain who they are but want to choose the time and place and how to disclose things about themselves.”

Peake says the events were a collaboration between the College of Education and Human Development and WMU Libraries. In addition to leading orientations and training sessions, she says librarians provided information to the planning committee about other Human Library events and created a checklist manual for organizing them.

Juliana Espinosa, librarian in residence for engagement and inclusion at the school’s Waldo Library, and other WMU librarians served on the planning committee and helped promote them, held information sessions for prospective “books,” and helped plan logistics.

“The mission of libraries is very much in alignment with the Human Library,” Espinosa says, “because we are a democratizing force for the university and a democratizing force in general in society.”
Digging through Boxes, Delving into Databases

Researching gender issues

By Laurie D. Borman

Mark Ray Lockwood Jr., a third-year PhD student at University of Maryland, College Park, has been researching and writing about gender and sexuality issues since his undergraduate days as an English major. Lockwood was introduced to deeper research work through a class called Sex in the Archives at New York University, taught by Zeb Tortorici, associate professor of Spanish and Portuguese, and Marvin Taylor, director of Fales Library and Special Collections and curator for food studies and the arts.

“Dr. Tortorici helped me learn how to better articulate my project,” Lockwood says. “I really knew nothing [about research] before his class.”

Much of Lockwood’s current work for his dissertation on ethnicity and pornography involves digging through boxes at archives and museums, and while he likes being onsite, he recognizes that accessing databases and digitization of more archives could make for speedier and more quality research.

“Academic and college libraries have been supporting those kinds of critical conversations around social justice issues—gender and sexuality—for a long time,” says Karen Munro, associate dean of libraries, learning, and research services at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, and recently elected president of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). “We’re starting to see more and more attention paid to the collections, what we collect, what our collection policies are, how accountable we are to our users, and also our digital collections in particular. Especially the ones we create and maintain.”

Some researchers like Lockwood enjoy working in person at an archive. “Being able to sit with the materials helps me to process it better,” he says. But the expense of travel to various libraries, difficulties of access, limited discoverability, and other challenges make librarians and researchers enthusiastic about increased digitization of collections.

Researchers are increasingly turning to databases like Gale’s Archives of Sexuality and Gender to find original documents, photos, newsletters, and brochures that is not only easily accessible, but is the largest historical collection available in support of gender studies and sexuality. The Archives of Sexuality and Gender provides researchers with greater depth of information as they research major topics related to LGBTQ groups, like the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots or the AIDS crisis. For example, within this three-part series, there are some 900 books that come directly from the Kinsey Institute archives, where Lockwood is conducting his current research.

“There are limits to these collaborations,” says Liana H. Zhou, director of the Kinsey Institute Library and Special Collections in Bloomington, Indiana. She wants to protect donor anonymity and copyright for items in the collections while still making them as widely available as possible. That means letting graduate students “camp out” in the library in the summer, she says, and offering more items online of various collections.

Librarians are also freshening up old-school methods with innovative research ideas to attract students into social justice and gender topics. Munro notes that Jenny Ferretti, digital initiatives librarian at Decker Library at Maryland Institute College of Art, created a LibGuide of Beyonce’s Lemonade in 2016 that has drawn lots of attention.

“She did a fantastic job of using a common tool—the LibGuide—to cover art, visual information literacy, popular culture, feminism and gender issues, and race, all in one place, in a way that was really accessible to students,” says Munro.

Librarians continue to guide students and researchers on the reliability of primary sources, which have been carefully curated, compared with the sometimes dubious results of online search engines.

Safiya Umoja Noble, associate professor at UCLA in information studies and African American studies and a scholar on the social application of algorithms, has highlighted how biased search results can be. In 2015, she spoke on the topic at an ACRL conference session. With her research, Noble raised an alarm about the demeaning results from Google searches for such terms as “black girls,” leading the tech giant to change its algorithms to more meaningful results. “She has done amazing work in helping to raise our awareness, call to action around, increasing our education around, and raising our voices around these results,” says Munro.

“She has actually brought about quite substantial change.”

The Archives of Sexuality and Gender program is a robust and significant collection of primary sources for the historical study of sex, sexuality, and gender. With material dating back to the 16th century, this archive allows researchers to examine how sexual norms have changed over time, the development of sex education, the rise of sexology, changing gender roles, queer culture, social movements and activism, erotica, health and hygiene, and more.

—Philip Virta, senior acquisitions editor, Gale Primary Sources
The extent of the collections is truly outstanding overall, and individual collections range from a few hundred to a quarter million items. Archives of Sexuality & Gender is an unparalleled resource for access to primary source documents of concern to LGBTQ scholars and activists alike.

—E. M. Bosman, New Mexico State University Library, Choice Reviews

Request a trial at gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence
One of the fastest growing undergraduate programs at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, is the Medicine, Health, and Society degree. It examines cultural, economic, demographic, and biological factors that impact health. The main campus library and the biomedical library staff assists students and faculty in finding ways to help students grasp public health research.

"Whether it’s helping to work with a question, or some people who come and say, ‘Here’s my topic,’ we try to make sure we can do more than search," says Philip D. Walker, director of Vanderbilt’s Annette and Irwin Eskind Family Biomedical Library and Learning Center.

The Eskind Family Biomedical Library offers an extensive collection on the history of medicine as well as current research, journals, and databases. The university recently acquired Gale’s Public Health Archives: Public Health in Modern America, 1890–1970, a collection that supports scholars from various disciplines as they examine the impact of past health policies and practices. Anyone interested in the history of health and medicine can search through content related to literary and artistic works, cultural and social norms, religious and political life, and economic and sociological behavior during the last two centuries.

“A lot of problems we have [in public health] have never been resolved,” says Arlene Shaner, historical collections librarian at The New York Academy of Medicine, speaking about the new archive. “You can see historical underpinnings. One of the great topics that is tackled in the Academy’s Michael M. Davis Collection is universal health insurance. We often think we are the first ones to be raising these issues, but it’s really not true.”

And of course, digitization of the collection makes it easier for researchers. “The search is really awesome,” says Robin Naughton, senior digital program manager at The New York Academy of Medicine. “You can put in terminology and find all the materials associated with that terminology. That’s something the material didn’t have before.” For academic institutions such as Vanderbilt, where researchers provide public health information such as mandatory vaccination for school children and effects of tobacco control legislation to state and federal legislators, access and organization are critical for both these historical references as well as their own research.

Academic librarians are a key component of the research teams. "We want to make sure we can help at any part of the research cycle," says Walker, who affirms that the library makes it a priority to work as a partner for researchers, faculty, and graduate students.

“There’s so much interdisciplinary work here,” he says. In addition to working with professionals and students at the medical center, the school of nursing, and the school of medicine, the biomedical library touches other parts of the university. “We have involvement with the school of management, school of law, arts and sciences, and the science and engineering library, and music library.”

At Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby, British Columbia, Joy Johnson, the vice president of research and international, whose own research has focused on sex and gender and health, says librarians provide resources and skills that address a researcher’s unique needs.

“As people are starting to conceptualize their work, librarians know how to access the literature, how to develop a better understanding of what we do know and what we don’t know,” Johnson says. In a queer history project in Vancouver, SFU librarians have been assisting with information organization.

“They know how to organize those collections, they figure out what can be done with them, how they can be accessed by others,” Johnson says. In this way, the library’s resources, whether historical documents relating to today’s issues or a new research project, are all within reach.

Public Health in Modern America, 1890–1970, is the first digital primary source collection to focus exclusively on the historical evolution of America’s public health systems—the stage on which the fight over America’s public health care future continues to rage. Understanding that history is critical as we face new global crises.

—Bennett Graff, senior acquisitions editor, Gale Primary Sources
This collection is ideal for those seeking to explore and understand the critical role of public health policy and practice within the broader scope of the American experience. Public Health in Modern America, 1890–1970 documents the evolution of public health legislation, policies, and campaigns at local, national, and federal levels. Rare content also explores urbanization and industrialization and their impact on public health; the rise of public advocacy; the transformation of domestic life; the role of government in the care of its populations; the challenges presented by differences of, and social attitudes toward, patients and practitioners in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, citizenship, age, ability, and class; and the means, methods, and mechanisms for organizing and financing public health policy initiatives.

Request a trial at [gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence](http://gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence)
Wading the Muddy Waters: Educating on Copyright and Digital Archives

Assisting students and faculty on copyright restrictions

By Laurie D. Borman

In only nine months, a LibGuide on copyright at the University of Texas (UT) at Austin has been accessed more than 50,000 times. Colleen Lyon, head of scholarly communications at UT, created the LibGuide three years ago from a course her predecessor Georgia Harper had developed in the 1990s.

Even with all that traffic, Lyon still gets many follow-up questions from people who have specific needs they can’t find in the guide. About 80% are about fair use.

“A lot of times questions are from graduate students who are working on their dissertation and have something that they want to include, and they’re trying to figure out whether or not it would be considered fair use,” says Lyon. “Fair use has varying shades of gray. And the answer is, a lot of times, ‘Well, it depends.’”

Along with students, faculty have questions about copyright with regard to materials they use in the classroom and online course content. To help students and faculty, librarians are preparing workshops, drop-in sessions, and online materials to inform those who need advice. Faculty can also be referred to the ALA Office of Information and Technology Policy’s Exceptions for Instructors resource.

At Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, two librarians created a copyright crash course for creatives—those involved in music and the arts who will need to protect their work from potential online pilfering and learn how to use other artists’ works properly in their multimedia projects. “When you are an artist and you are creating things that are copyrightable, you have to have certain know-how on how to use people’s work legally and how to protect your own,” says Hillary Miller, scholarly communications librarian at VCU. Miller developed the copyright crash course with Carla-Mae Crookendale, arts research librarian at VCU. Though the course is currently on hiatus, the VCU librarians continue to field calls and make referrals on copyright use for student artists and faculty.

One of the easiest ways to navigate around copyright restrictions is to use Creative Commons images or Gale’s digital archive collections that offer digital rights management–free content. For example, educators and students can copy a story from Gale’s archive Amateur Newspapers from the American Antiquarian Society for a research paper, a classroom PowerPoint, or even a multimedia collage. Alexis McQuigge, writing coordinator at Canada’s University of Regina, says she likes Gale’s model because “once we’ve paid for a database, we don’t have to pay again. It’s ours.”

Whether a question concerns fair use, public domain content, or digital rights management, academic librarians continue to develop new materials and educate their communities. “One of the things we’re trying to do is give people the tools they need to be able to interact with all the content that they’re using and finding,” says Lyon. “This is complicated stuff. We don’t expect everybody to know it off the top of their head.”

Newspapers were the social media of nineteenth-century North American youth culture. They offered teens and young adults, from all walks of life, a way to express themselves and their opinions to a wide and diverse audience. Amateur Newspapers from the American Antiquarian Society is a fascinating historical frame of reference that allows us to better understand how young people were impacted by the social, political, and economic events of the nineteenth century.

—Philip Virta, senior acquisitions editor, Gale Primary Sources
Exclusive to Gale, Amateur Newspapers from the American Antiquarian Society is a one-of-a-kind archive that offers students and researchers a thorough analysis of how teens and young adults expressed themselves through amateur newspapers and periodicals. It is an extensive collection of amateur publications that were written, edited, and published—primarily by young people between the ages of 12 and 20 years old—during the second half of the nineteenth century in 48 U.S. states and in Canada. Amateur newspapers can be likened to the social media of their time, giving teens and young adults a platform to express themselves and their opinions to a wider audience. Some papers focused on general news, while others offered editorials, coverage of the arts, original short fiction, essays, poetry, puzzles, or other areas of interest to the writers and editors.

Request a trial at gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence
Librarians use hackathon-like approach with research sprints

University librarians are advancing academic research, and at the same time showcasing the breadth of resources their libraries have to offer, by hosting so-called research sprints that pair students and faculty with teams of experts.

Also referred to as scholar sprints, the intensive forums are frequently compared to hackathons, where computer programmers and others in the tech industry use their collective brainpower to tackle large projects over the course of a few days. Research sprints take the same approach, but with librarians connecting students and faculty to experts in their various fields who can, in short periods of time, solve research problems that might otherwise take months or years.

Diana Perpich, academic technology specialist at University of Michigan (U-M), says her library began holding scholar sprints in summer 2018 and has tackled a wide variety of research topics, including exploring the impact of facial-recognition technology on communities of color, developing a data management system for information on public drinking water, and creating a guide for scholars to protect their anonymity while researching the dark web.

The projects often call for data from a broad range of sources, and finding the right collection can be key to moving research forward. Research aimed at creating an interactive timeline of the women’s suffrage movement, for instance, could use data from Gale’s Women’s Studies Archive: Women’s Issues and Identities, which offers nearly 1 million never-before-digitized primary source manuscripts, newspapers, and periodicals.

Caitlin Pollock, digital scholarship specialist at U-M Library, says it’s common for students on large campuses to not know where to go to find the right expertise or guidance. The scholar sprints, she says, can more quickly bring into focus the hurdles that must be overcome for research to advance.

Pollock has worked with Miranda Marraccini, digital pedagogy librarian, at the university library’s Connected Scholarship division to organize and raise awareness about the sprints.

The library’s approach to getting the word out about the program is to “advertise, advertise, advertise,” says Pollock, noting that she and Marraccini have spread the word with subject specialists, the IT division, and others to encourage more participation.

“We tried to include as much of the library as possible [in the sprints],” Pollock says. And the strategy appears to be paying off—the library’s most recent sprint received 14 proposals.

Judith Thomas, faculty programs director at the University of Virginia (UVA) Library, shares a similar story about growing interest in her library’s research sprints. The four-day event “allows us to present ourselves to faculty in a way that is immediately helpful for them,” Thomas says, adding that “the faculty are grateful.”

“We do have very strong research and teaching support services in this library,” says Thomas, “but we, like in a lot of libraries, have to constantly reach out to let them know and make sure they understand the breadth and depth of knowledge in our library staff.”

The scholars and UVA itself aren’t the only ones benefiting from the sprints, she says. The library also works to determine whether the projects librarians and researchers might potentially assist with will also contribute to their professional development. “Will the project be good for them? That’s also part of the consideration,” Thomas says.

Perpich says that although not all the proposals can be selected for a sprint event, librarians work to follow up with students whose projects didn’t make the cut. “Because really there’s not anything we’re offering in the sprint that we wouldn’t offer in a different sort of configuration or format,” she says.

As far as advice for university libraries considering holding research sprints, Marraccini says to be mindful of the researchers’ time and, maybe most important, to make sure you bring good food. “If you run out of food during the day, that could be a crisis,” she says with a laugh.

Global in scope, the Women’s Studies Archive presents materials covering the social, political, personal, and professional aspects of women’s lives as well as a rare glimpse into the roles, experiences, and achievements of women in society. With its wide range of primary sources, this archive can give researchers a comprehensive look at the pioneers of women’s history, the issues that have affected women throughout modern history, and the untold contributions they have made to society.

—Philip Virta, senior acquisitions editor, Gale Primary Sources
Throughout history, there has been a pattern of silencing women’s voices in favor of the male perspective and a focus on men’s achievements. This archive considers history from the female perspective during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Women’s Studies Archive program brings together a unique compilation of manuscripts, monographs, newspapers, periodicals, and more, with the aim of elevating women’s studies and making these materials more widely available for scholars in the digital humanities.

Women’s Voice and Vision
Women’s Voice and Vision is the second installment of the award-winning series, Women’s Studies Archive. It provides valuable primary source materials on the evolution of feminism and women’s experiences throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Coverage focuses on women’s political activism, such as suffrage, birth control, pacifism, civil rights, and socialism, across multiple geographic regions. Particular attention has been paid to the mediums through which women have created a voice for themselves, be it through periodicals, books, female-run presses, or forming social movement organizations.

Women’s Issues and Identities
Women’s Issues and Identities, which is our first release in the program and slated for future expansion, is a premier research collection, focusing on the issues that have affected and continue to affect women; women’s experiences socially, professionally, and politically; societal contributions; social status; and women’s movements. Researchers will find a wealth of inspiration and insights when searching across key collections, such as Planned Parenthood Federation of America Records, 1918–1974; The Hersstory Collection; and Swarthmore College’s Records of the Women’s Peace Union, 1921–1940.

Request a trial at gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence
Digital humanities programs are growing in popularity at universities across the country, and libraries at top-tier schools like Stanford University are helping to pioneer the nascent field of study. While advancing research in innovative ways using technology, the programs are also giving librarians new inroads to connect with faculty, students, and researchers.

Quinn Dombrowski, academic technology specialist at Stanford’s Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages, has worked in the field since 2004 and is the founder of DHCommons, an archive for digital humanities projects. She serves at Stanford’s Center for Interdisciplinary Digital Research, an entity within the university library that largely operates as an umbrella organization for academic technology specialists.

Regardless of how long a school’s digital humanities program has been in place, Dombrowski says it’s important to remember that “libraries don’t exist in a vacuum.” Connecting with departments and university leadership is key in breaking into the field or growing an existing program, she says.

Dombrowski suggests asking: “Is there a humanities center [that is] thinking about hiring technical staff to support digital humanities projects? If so, might there be an opportunity to partner with them to have a joint position [with] a person who might be able to straddle the worlds between disciplinary work and the library itself and be a two-way conduit of information?”

She urges those considering launching a digital humanities program to search for departments and programs on campus that may be interested in taking a leadership role in the program.

The academic technology specialist program at Stanford is half funded by the library and half funded by a department or a center, says Dombrowski. Such collaborations can be mutually beneficial, but they also run the risk of one side of the funding drying up and leaving the other entity left to pay for the position in full, she says. But funding isn’t the only upside of collaboration: “Ideally, those collaborations can not only serve to accomplish the library’s goals in digital humanities but also work toward building a network of relationships across campus,” she adds.

Dombrowski says librarians bring a high level of knowledge to digital humanities projects through web development, data organization and management, and navigating application programming interface (API) libraries, among others. “There’s a lot of expertise in the library, even among people who may not have taken programming as part of their MLIS degree,” she says. “That degree of expertise of how to think through organizing data is often underappreciated. It can really make the difference between a successful project and one that really struggles.”

She notes that for any given research project, much of the material comes from other libraries. Finding information from such external sources gives librarians an opportunity to enhance and influence research. “By and large, [researchers] don’t really care where the stuff comes from. They want the stuff they want,” she says.

A scholar studying 18th-century literature, for instance, might research their university’s own archive as well as digital archives like Gale’s Eighteenth Century Collections Online, an archive that includes more than 180,000 titles. Similarly, Gale’s Nineteenth Century Collections Online offers tens of thousands of documents from newspapers, pamphlets, photographs, manuscripts, ephemera, maps, and more. Both are great “starter” archives for schools launching or enhancing digital humanities programs, because they include a breadth of content for students in a wide range of academic study.

“To be able to contribute that expertise to a project team is something libraries can really excel at,” Dombrowski says. For example, librarians have a heightened awareness of the bias inherent to taxonomies, she says. “These are things that most people in humanities programs don’t think about, faculty don’t necessarily think about, and librarians can contribute to it in those projects in a way that makes sense.”

Prepping students is another important part of the process in running a successful digital humanities program. The school’s “Welcome to the Library” sessions give students a road map for various databases and APIs. Dombrowski suggests, “[Offer] a tour of the library highlighting not just the physical holdings, but the digital collections and some of the possibilities that are inherent to that.”

Nineteenth Century Collections Online is a one-of-a-kind project. It brings together digital primary sources—newspapers, rare books, ephemera, manuscripts—from nearly 100 institutional repositories to tell the story of this remarkable period in world history. The 12-part collection covers the late-Industrial Revolution, the birth of photography, the rise of the novel, the scramble for Africa, and other critical topics.

—Bennett Graff, senior acquisitions editor, Gale Primary Sources
Nineteenth Century Collections Online was formed from partnerships between Gale and nearly one hundred libraries to preserve content and make it digitally available for academic research. With guidance from professionals and end users, it gives researchers a wide range of carefully selected content from invaluable documents that cover the long nineteenth century and beyond. The collection unites multiple, distinct archives into a single resource of over 100 types of primary source documents.

Content consists of monographs, newspapers, pamphlets, manuscripts, ephemera, maps, photographs, statistics, and other types of documents in both Western and non-Western languages. Due to the rare and delicate, or extremely fragile, condition of these documents, Gale coordinates closely with curators and preservationists to maintain the integrity of the originals. With authoritative content, extensive bibliographic information, and innovative technology, Nineteenth Century Collections Online revolutionizes the way research of the nineteenth century is done.

Request a trial at gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence
A Monumental Debate: Addressing Controversial Namesakes

Archivists, librarians provide context to discussion on troubling history of memorialized figures

By Timothy Inklebarger

Librarians and archivists at University of Mississippi continue to play a key role in the ongoing debate over monuments and buildings across campus named after racist figures. Like their counterparts at universities across the country, library staffers at Ole Miss have provided historic documents and created LibGuides to help facilitate the conversation.

It’s been more than two years since the university chose to rename one of its buildings—Vardaman Hall, named after white supremacist and former Gov. James K. Vardaman—and place plaques to contextualize other controversial monuments on campus. While those two topics have been addressed, advocates at the university continue to focus their sights on other questionable namesakes.

Archivist Leigh McWhite, who works at the University of Mississippi Libraries’ Archives & Special Collections, created the LibGuide “Contextualization at University of Mississippi” with librarian Amy Gibson in May 2017. She says the conversation now centers on the question of whether to take a Confederate monument prominently displayed on the Oxford campus and relocate it to a Civil War cemetery, also on campus. The university ultimately decided to relocate the memorial, but the board of trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning has yet to give its final approval.

From the Black Student Union’s protests against the school waving Confederate flags in 1970 to the removal of Colonel Reb as the university’s official mascot in 2003, McWhite says the university has a long history of debating the use of symbols connected to the state’s Confederate past.

Providing information and creating LibGuides is only part of the library’s role in the conversation about racism. McWhite instructs classes on conducting research with archives, and student research projects frequently focus on the topic of campus buildings and monuments that memorialize Confederate figures.

“We almost always have classes every semester that will consider these subjects,” she says.

McWhite often directs students to the contextualization LibGuide, which has been viewed nearly 1,000 times since its creation almost three years ago.

Students and academics are increasingly turning to online databases to advance their research. Those searching for original source material on the history of racism in the United States, for instance, might begin their search with Gale’s Political Extremism and Radicalism archive. The archive offers more than 600,000 pages of documents on topics such as the history of the Ku Klux Klan and the rise of the civil rights movement.

It’s a similar story at Oregon State University (OSU), which chose in 2017 to change the names of three buildings named after a proslavery newspaper owner and a proslavery US senator.

Natalia Fernández, curator at OSU’s Special Collections & Archives Research Center (SCARC) and archivist of the Oregon Multicultural Archives and OSU Queer Archives, published a case study in February 2019 chronicling the work of reviewing building names. Fernández and SCARC Director Larry Landis were central to the two-year process, working to collect data to review and facilitating meetings with the public to discuss the issue.

“That was the idea, that it would be a case study from the perspective of an archivist who served on a committee who facilitated this process,” she says. The case study charts the archivist’s work drafting evaluation criteria, providing research assistance, and hosting six community meetings that seek public input.

Fernández says the study is now being used in a history class at the university, where students learn to conduct archival research by reading the case study and searching the archive for its findings.

“It’s a bit of reverse engineering, getting them to think critically about the process,” Fernández says.

Ultimately, Fernández adds, the study can be used as a guide for other universities and institutions aiming to engage with the public with a transparent review of the issue.
As one of the first digital archives on Far-Right and Left political groups, Political Extremism and Radicalism: Far-Right and Left Political Groups in the U.S., Europe, and Australia in the Twentieth Century contains approximately 600,000 pages of content and 42 oral histories, spanning the pre-war period into the twenty-first century, making it the most extensive resource of its kind. It contains a diverse range of content, including campaign materials, propaganda, government records, and various ephemera, that when combined with Gale Primary Sources technology, allows researchers to explore extremism and radicalism in new ways. Researchers of contemporary topics will benefit from exploring the origins and development of present-day issues, such as the resurgence of right-wing politics, evolution of civil rights movements, and the nature of extreme or radical political thought.

Request a trial at gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence
ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

Image sourced from The Allan Bérubé Papers, a subcollection of Archives of Sexuality & Gender, which documents the life of Allan Bérubé (1946–2007), a scholar and activist who helped found the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project.

Find your Gale Representative at gale.com/rep

Learn more at gale.com/academic/agents-of-influence

Gale, here for everyone.