

ILLINOIS SOUNDSCAPES:

Teaching Illinois Music History
with Primary Sources

Dr. Nolan Vallier
Assistant Archivist, Sousa Archives and Center for
American Music
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

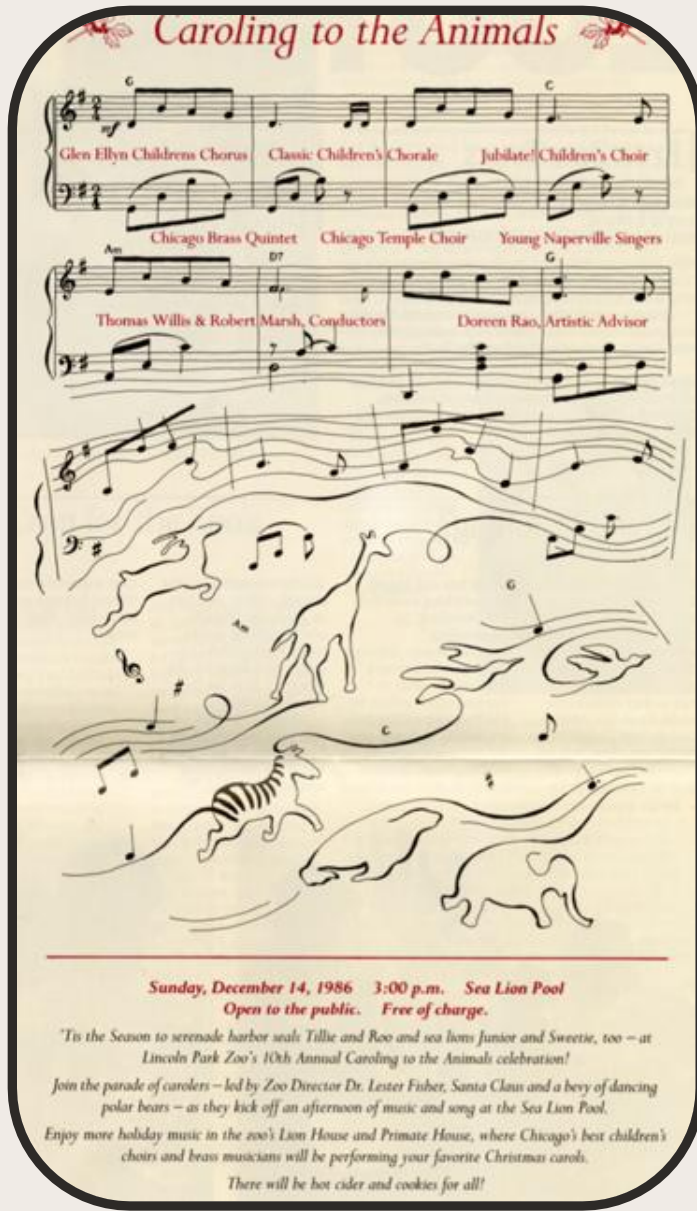
Conference on Illinois History, Fall 2026



PURPOSE AND GOAL

- To inform educators in Illinois about current standards related to primary source information literacy, to consider the benefits of developing lessons that use primary sources across content areas, and to provide educators with a means of incorporating primary sources from the perspective of music education in their own classes.
- By the end of this workshop, you will:
 - Know about the current standards related to primary sources
 - Walk away with a toolkit on how to use primary sources
 - Consider examples of how to effectively use primary sources about music in K-12 and undergraduate environments

OVERVIEW



- 1) Literature Review: Current standards for primary source information literacy
- 2) Discussion: Some limitations of incorporating primary source literacy content into K-12 and undergraduate curricula
- 3) Three case studies from the University of Illinois
- 4) Toolkit activity
- 5) Reflection

DEFINITIONS

Society for American Archivists, *Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy* (2018)

- **Primary source** = an instructional tool, that may take a variety of formats, created at the time under study, that serve as original evidence, documenting a time period, event, people, idea, or work
- **Archives/Special Collections** = general term for department, unit, library or physical place which stores and provides secure access to primary source materials; may also include privately held or personal archives/collections
- **Information Literacy** = Competency, knowledge, or skills related to the analysis of information; may be taught by a variety of specialists and educators

FRAMEWORK FOR INFORMATION LITERACY

- Association of College Research Libraries (ACRL)
Framework for Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2016)
 1. Authority is constructed and contextual
 2. Information creation as a process
 3. Information has value
 4. Research as Inquiry
 5. Scholarship as conversation
 6. Searching as strategic exploration



Vic Benson and Art Schwolow erect a quiet sign, June 25, 1951
F. 489, Box 14, Ravinia Festival Association Archive. Newberry Library, Chicago, IL

STANDARDS ESTABLISHED BY THE TPS COLLECTIVE AND SAA

- Teaching with Primary Sources Collective, *Primary Source Literacy Guidelines* (2026)
- Society for American Archivists Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy (2018)
- Students who are knowledgeable of primary sources can:
 1. Conceptualize
 2. Find and access
 3. Read, understand, and summarize
 4. Interpret, analyze, and evaluate
 5. Use and incorporate

THE CORE COMPETENCIES IN ACTION



MUS 421/521: Curating Community, Curating Music, Spring 2025
Students in the archive and completed exhibit

SOME CURRENT CHALLENGES TO INCORPORATING PRIMARY SOURCE LITERACY INTO THE K-12 CLASSROOM

1. Lack of Archival Intelligence, or knowledge of practices, strategies for research, intellectual skills (Yakel and Tores, 2003)
2. Appropriateness of the subject, both in obtaining information literacy skills when not college-bound and in accessing potentially difficult sources at too young of an age (Clarkin-Phillips et. al., 2013)
3. Requires interested faculty and thoughtful planning to fit within rigid curricula (Krause, 2008; Malkmus, 2010)
4. Fighting the assumption that history/social studies is the most relevant subject in which to use primary sources (Ensminger and Fry, 2012)
5. Issues of access and copyright

THE VALUE OF USING PRIMARY SOURCES

- **Deepens Learning Experiences and Provides Motivation for Learning:**
“[Primary Sources] offer a chance for students to take more control of their learning experiences... to form their own questions and develop a deeper understanding of the units they are studying.” (Krause, 2010)

THE VALUE OF USING PRIMARY SOURCES

- **Encourages Empathy and Collaboration:** Archival sources “provide an important humanizing perspective for students” (Gardner and Pavelich, 2008)

THE VALUE OF USING PRIMARY SOURCES

- **Improves Critical Thinking:** primary sources “provide contextual corroboration of a content area, deepen student’s content understanding, and facilitate cognitive processing...” (Ensminger and Fry, 2012)

THE VALUE OF USING PRIMARY SOURCES

- **Sparks Imagination and Appeals to Emotion:** Primary sources expose “students to the ‘magical awe’ of working with analog archival materials (Garcia, Lueck, and Yakel, 2019)

CASE STUDY 1: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Backward Design
- Goal = Introducing Primary Sources and Archives by playing a familiar and an unfamiliar song to K-4 and special education classes, re-introduce terms and topics used in 2nd and 5th grade courses
- Activity = playing Civil War era bass saxhorn and double-bell euphonium, songs: “Move to the Beat,” “Make New Friends,” “Wade in the Water”



Performance at Thomas Paine Elementary, Urbana, IL
May 2026, Photo by Leigh Meador

DISCUSSION



Performance at Thomas Paine Elementary, Urbana, IL
May 2026, Photo by Leigh Meador

- Primary Source Core Concepts:
 1. Conceptualize
 2. Find and Access
 3. Examine, Understand, and Summarize
- ACRL Framework:
 3. Information has value



Students of the Pontiac, IL High School Band, February 2026
Photo by Nolan Vallier

CASE STUDY 2: MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

- Building Information literacy around important disciplinary concerns (Conor, 2019)
- Illinois Summer Youth Music (ISYM)
- Instruction in the archives, most common setting for location of instruction (Krause, 2008)
- Goal = Students play music instruments, beginning to interpret and evaluate how the source functions by comparing it to familiar experiences

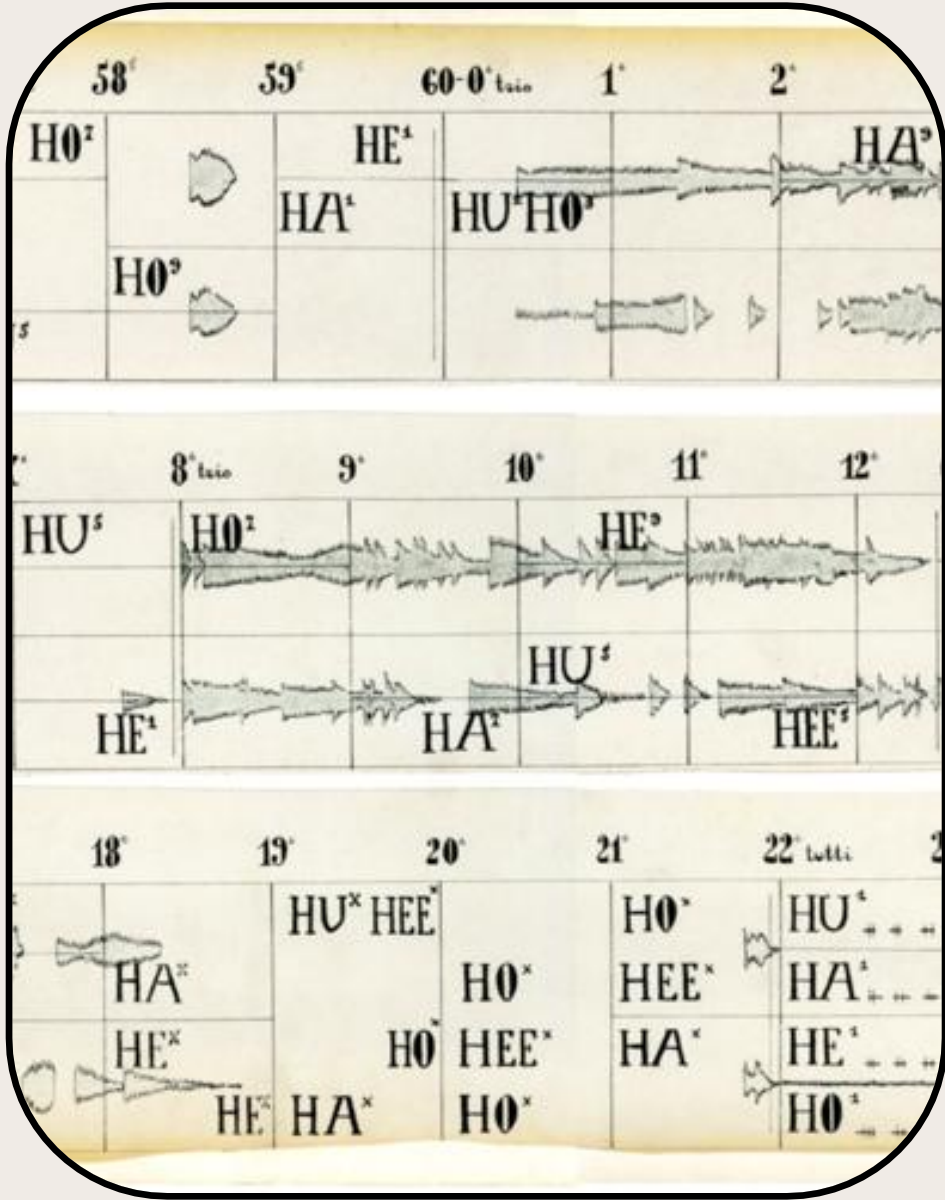
DISCUSSION

- Core Concepts learned:
 1. Conceptualize
 2. Find and Access
 3. Read, Understand, and Summarize
 4. Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate
- ACRL Framework:
 3. Information has value
 4. Research as Inquiry



Undergraduate student analyzing tenor sarrusophone, Fall 2025, photo by Nolan Vallier

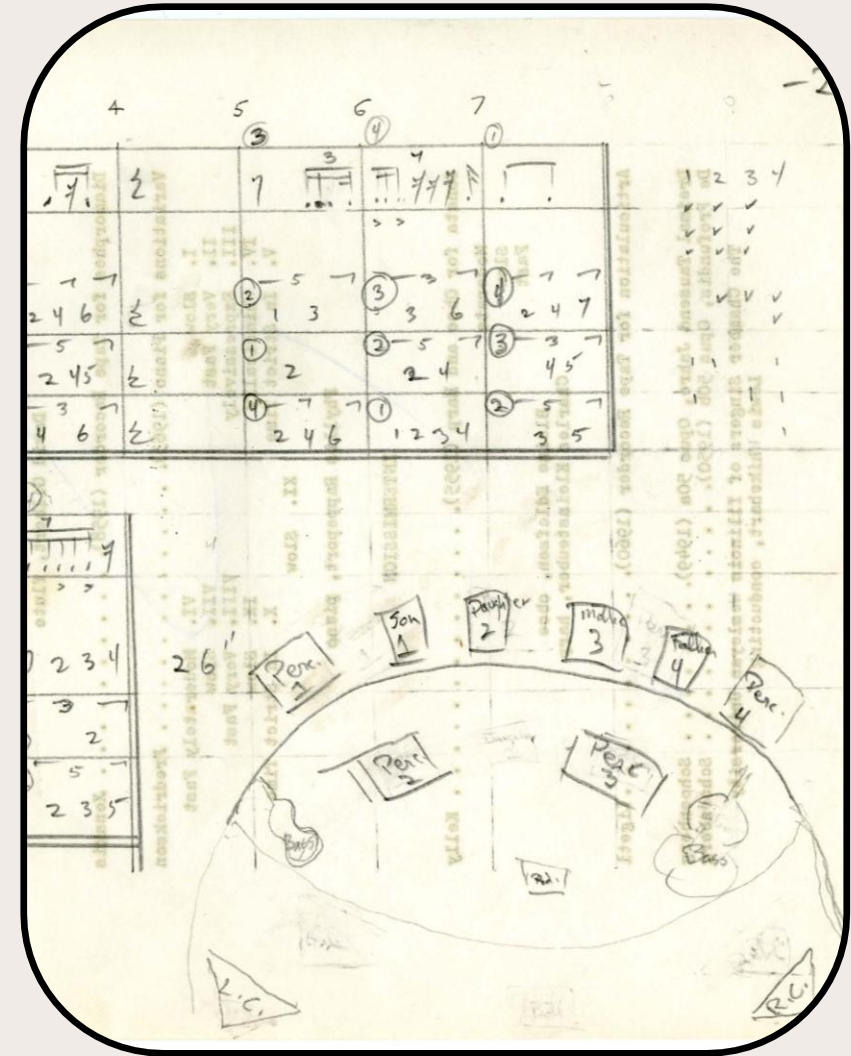
CASE STUDY 3: UNDERGRADUATE



- MUS 130: Music in Illinois
- Goal = Encourage individual research inquiry
- Activity = Before class, students read secondary sources about experimental music in Illinois. In class students listened to historic recordings and examined facsimiles of scores and concert programs. Students then found additional examples of graphic scores. Reflected on the experience.

DISCUSSION

- Core Competencies Learned:
 3. Read, understand, and summarize
 4. Interpret, analyze, and evaluate
 5. Use and incorporate
- ACRL Standards:
 2. Information Creation as a Process
 3. Information has value
 4. Research as Inquiry
 5. Scholarship as Conversation



Underworld, first score fragment, including instrumental set-up for John Garvey House, ca. 1965
F. 2, Box 27, Salvatore Martirano Music, Personal Papers, and Sal-Mar Construction. SACAM.

TOOL KIT ACTIVITY

- In small groups select one of the surrogate primary source images from the provided location
- Considering the image you've selected, construct a backwards lesson design for a specific age group that emphasizes two of the core competencies for primary source literacy



REFLECTION AND SURVEY



- Turn to someone in the audience:
- What did you learn from this workshop?
- What questions do you still have about accessing primary sources or designing lessons around information literacy?
- How might you use primary sources in your classroom?

THANK YOU!

Nolan Vallier, PhD
Assistant Archivist,
Sousa Archives and Center for American Music
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
vallier2@illinois.edu