

Scholarly Editing: The Annual of the Association for Documentary Editing

Editor-in-Chief Noelle A. Baker

ISSN: 2167-1257 | DOI: [10.55520/6ZH06EW2](https://doi.org/10.55520/6ZH06EW2)

Volume 42, 2025-06-11, DOI: [10.55520/49RSWHQY](https://doi.org/10.55520/49RSWHQY)

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). © 2025 Scholarly Editing.

Methodologies for Exploring Unknown Archives

Jean Lee Cole, Loyola University Maryland 
Elizabeth James, Marshall University

DOI: [10.55520/VVZ6VV93](https://doi.org/10.55520/VVZ6VV93)

In 2010, Jean, a professor of American literature at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, stumbled upon the online catalog record of the Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore (hereafter referred to as the WLCB) at the Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) (Figure 1).

Collection, 1890-1920.

← Return to Search

Records

Detail

Actions

Corporate Author: [Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore](#)

Title Statement: [Collection, 1890-1920.](#)

Description: 30 vol., 9 boxes.

Restriction Note: Unrestricted.

Summary, Etc. Note: Summary: Programmes and minutes of meetings of the Women's Literary Club of Baltimore, 1890-1920. collection contains autographs and/or letters from James, Cardinal Gibbons, 1885; Leo XIII; S. L. Clemens (Mark Twain); John Bannister Tabb, and Julia Ward Howe. Eliza Ridgely was first secretary of the club in 1890. Scrapbooks pertaining to literary subjects in Baltimore. Also roll books and scrapbooks of programmes.

Terms of Use: Information on literary right available in repository.

Source of Acq. Note: Not known.

Biog./Historical Note: Literary Club; Baltimore, MD.

Figure 1: Screenshot of MCHC's online catalog entry for the WLCB papers, including collection-level description from its initial processing in the 1970s. Maryland Center for History and Culture online catalog (). Screenshot taken May 19, 2023.

Initially attracted by the size of the collection as well as the catalog entry's mentioning such well-known names as Mark Twain and Julia Ward Howe, Jean made this collection a locus of research over the next decade, eventually involving over two dozen students in two seminar classes, as well as librarians, archivists, and digital humanists from her institution and beyond. In the course of "processing" this collection, we discovered that the catalog entry—which was the only accessible piece of information about a collection treating the work and lives of over three hundred women over half a century is both misleading and woefully incomplete.

Working together, we learned that Twain meant almost nothing to the WLCB, and Howe only slightly more. Their interest in Edgar Allan Poe and especially poet Sidney Lanier, however, verged on the obsessive. We initially assumed that Eliza Ridgely, the only member of the WLCB mentioned in the description, must have been its best-known or most important member, and confirmed that she was the club's first secretary and a member of a prominent Baltimore family. However, she left the club only two years after it was founded and was replaced by Lydia Crane, who served as club secretary for over twenty years and became the voice of the club, documenting its activities in detailed, chatty minutes that seemed to be written in Technicolor compared to the terse meeting notes Ridgely provided. These minutes, clocking in at over three thousand dense, handwritten pages (Figure 2), are far more important than autographs in terms of their historical value. Describing almost verbatim what was said by each member at the club's weekly meetings, they provide an ongoing glimpse of real women asserting a very real presence, in contrast to male-dominated histories of the period. The archive also contains poems and letters exchanged by club leaders, election ballots, membership lists, dues books listing addresses of club members by year and whether they had paid for each year of membership (Figure 3), and hundreds of printed programs (Figure 4) that list the order of proceedings for each meeting, including paper titles, musical selections, authors, presenters, and discussants.

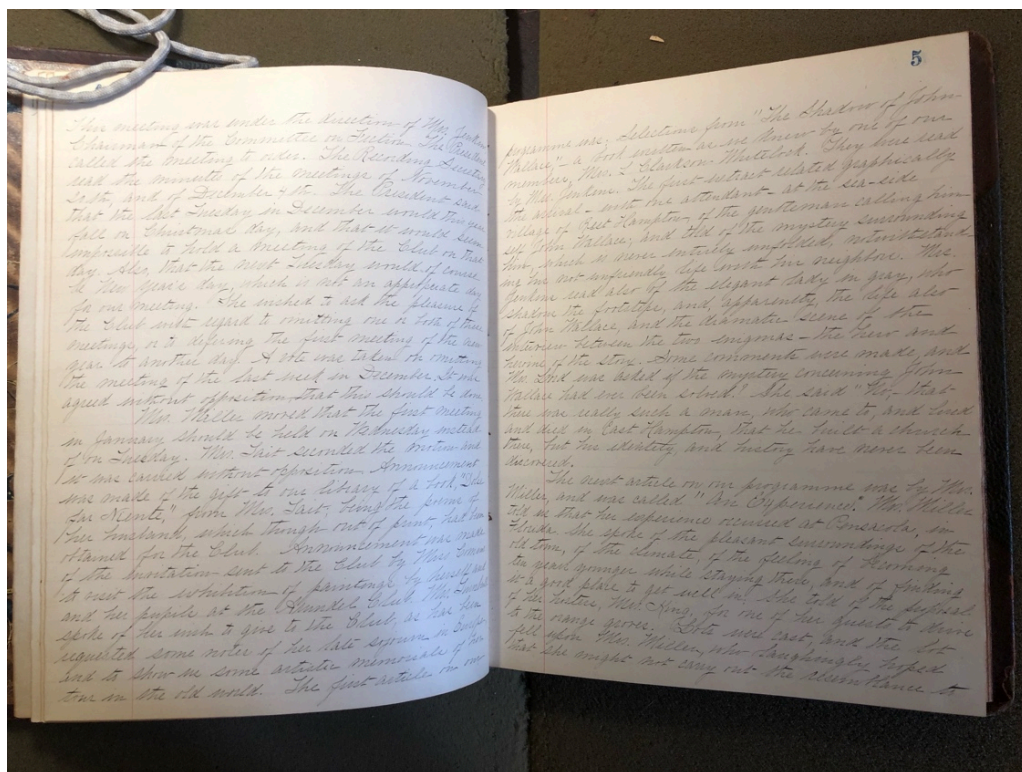


Figure 2: Meeting minutes from the December 4, 1894, meeting of the Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore. Maryland Center for History and Culture, Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore records, 1890–1920, MS 988.

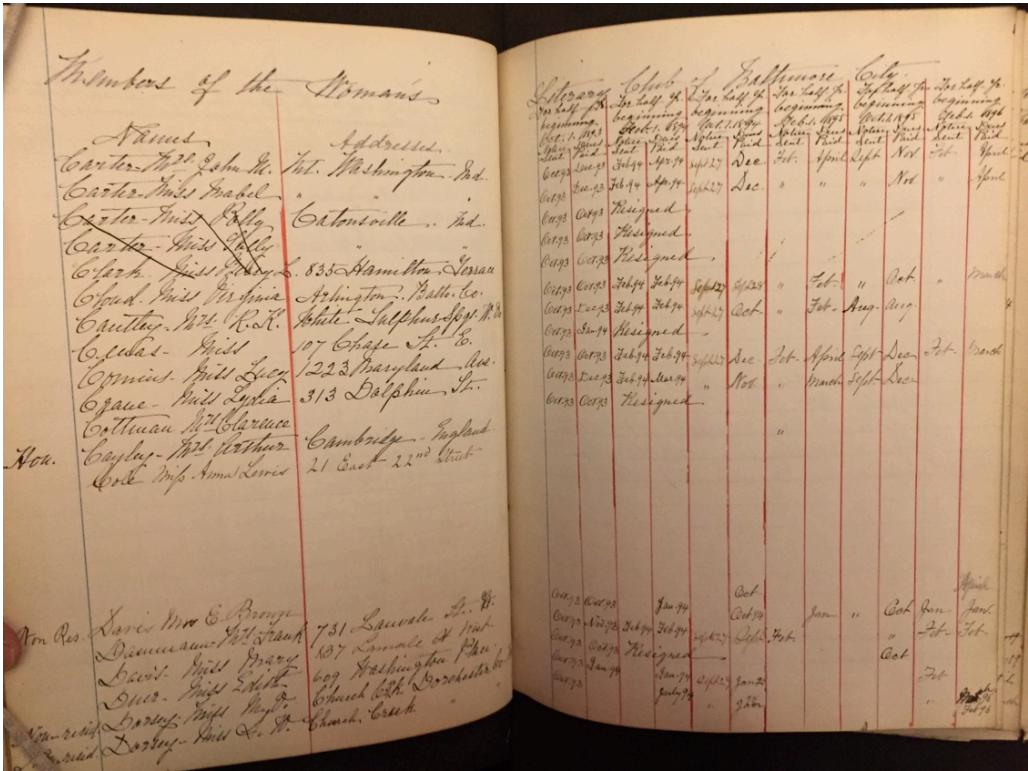


Figure 3: Membership dues book, Maryland Center for History and Culture, Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore records, 1890–1920, MS 988.

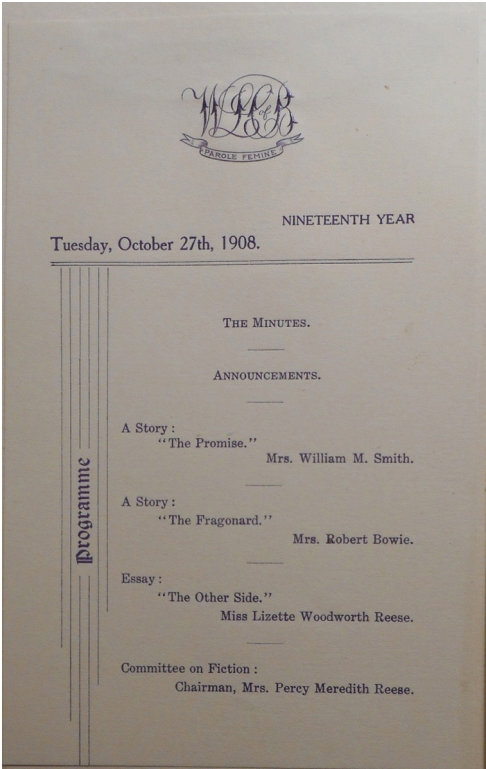


Figure 4: Printed program for the October 27, 1908, meeting of the Woman's Literary Club. Maryland Center for History and Culture, Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore records, 1890–1920, MS 988.

The archival description fails to capture either the richness of the archives or the human presence—which is to say, the people and the life—of the WLCB, which sustained the intellectual and social life of a significant number of Baltimore women for generations. Perhaps most regrettably of all, it includes not even a hint of the club's most important impact: the critical role it played in nurturing and promoting female authorship. As we discovered, the members of the WLCB published, and published a lot: over a thousand pieces of published writing by some fifty authors have been located to date.

Recovery, of course, entails not just discovery but restoration of this evidence—and these stories—to the historical record. To accomplish this goal, Jean, students, and library staff created the online Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive (<http://wlcg.github.io/archive>), building it in several stages over a period of more than a decade; Elizabeth played a crucial role in creating its current iteration. The website both “completes the loop” of archival and literary recovery and also extends it, making this previously unknown collection and group of women available and knowable for future students and scholars. This essay seeks to make sense of this long-term project, especially in terms of the possible methodologies available for engaging students in the work of uncovering and restoring access to collections treating marginalized populations.

What Is an Unknown Archive?

The WLCB collection is an almost textbook example of an “unknown archive,” or an archive that is so minimally described as to be borderline unusable by researchers. The MCHC's description indicates the pertinent dates (1890–1920) and size (thirty volumes, nine boxes), but little else. The WLCB itself is described only as a “Literary Club,” and the provenance of the materials is unknown. The name of the club itself is misspelled (the club debated but ultimately rejected the idea of using the plural “Women's” in favor of a more universal “Woman's”). In the absence of archivists or historians to make sense of these materials, students had to develop “archival intelligence”—defined by Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah A. Torres as “1) knowledge of archival theory, practices and procedures; 2) strategies for reducing uncertainty and ambiguity when unstructured problems . . . are the norm; and 3) intellectual skills, or the ability to understand the connections between representations of documents, activities, and processes and the actual object or process being represented.”¹ In short, students became their own archivists.

Admittedly, humanities scholars have come to describe anything that refers to history, or the past in general, as an archive. As Dorothy Berry writes, “A photo-album becomes *an archive*, a neighborhood becomes *an archive*, the stains on a blouse—anything that can hold and spark memory.”² While this conceptualization of the archive has been evocative and generative for scholars, Berry argues that it has “led to a harmful eliding of both the labor of archivists to preserve material history, and the vast wealth of . . . history living within unsuspecting institutions.” Speaking specifically of Black history, Berry suggests that scholars would benefit from better understanding what archives actually are in practice, especially if they are interested in unearthing the history and experiences of marginalized people. In essence, she argues that humanists may have turned to garage-sale photo albums, neighborhoods, and blouses as archives because

they simply do not see, or have failed to access, materials that actually and already exist in archives but have been obscured under the conventions and practices of archival collection. One of the greatest surprises we encountered in working on the WLCB was the extent to which this rich archive was hidden in plain sight, rendered invisible by its catalog listing.

The rules governing archival cataloging and description, which privilege materials created by white men, have played a significant part in making women and other marginalized groups invisible within collections. Archivists' stress on provenance privileges the collector, not the subjects of the materials in the archive, while their use of collective description rather than the meticulous parsing of individual items highlights known historical figures, who are traditionally (and are still) predominantly male and white.³ Meanwhile, the turn to digitizing materials—motivated by a sincere desire to bring materials to light and into use rather than keeping them hidden in storage vaults—has not necessarily made them more usable. Using archives and the materials found within them requires specialized knowledge and skills,⁴ and it takes time and concentrated effort to process and explain what each archive contains and how it might be of interest or use. [The Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy](#), created by the Society of American Archivists and the Association of College and Research Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, note that primary sources require supplemental contextualization to be used effectively “due to their creators' intents and biases; the variety of contexts in which they have been created, preserved, and made accessible; and the gaps, absences, and silences that may exist in the materials.”⁵ The trend toward digitization-with-minimal-description has simply elided and thus rendered invisible important contextual information and description that would help users understand what an archive is. While it appears to be present and real, it remains unknown.

When Jean first went to the MCHC to see the collection firsthand, she knew nothing about these things. But she could see that most of the thirty leather-bound volumes in the nine boxes mentioned in the online catalog had no labels; the few that had dates sometimes turned out to be inaccurate. The work of making sense of the archive was made especially difficult because the archival institution, the MCHC (then known as the Maryland Historical Society) was a private closed-stack repository that tightly restricted access to materials due to its mission as well as practical concerns. The society was founded in 1844 by a group of wealthy Baltimoreans who sought to collect and preserve the “remnants of the state's history,” and throughout much of their existence their activities revolved around the traditional historical foci of “politics, wars, and the lives of notable men.”⁶ As a privately funded institution, resource limitations of time and staffing in the MCHC archive were especially acute; as a result, the reading room was only open to researchers a few days per week (and for a fee), and many areas within the society's collections were minimally processed and described. The use of minimal descriptions reflects a desire to provide users with the broadest sense of what collections are available for use rather than leaving materials sitting in an inaccessible backlog until they can be fully processed. This approach aligns with what Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner describe as “more product, less process,” adopted by many archives in response to resource scarcity.⁷ While some of the barriers to understanding and use that archives place on their holdings are justifiable, limited hours and opaque and difficult-to-understand policies can result in the failure of archives to meet their core mission of access.

Jean knew that descriptions compiled by undergraduates without training in cataloging or even in basic bibliographical method would be incomplete, possibly inaccurate, and certainly messy, but she believed it would be better than the nothing that currently existed (this phrase, “it’s better than the nothing we have,” became a refrain for the entire project). Although they could never replace professional archivists, their very naïveté made them effective participants in the process of learning about the archive. They understood, for example, that the changing formats of meeting minutes, elections, dues books, and membership rolls showed that the club was figuring things out over time, underscoring historian Ann Ruggles Gere’s point that “such records show clubwomen making their own history and defining their own cultural identity.”⁸ Students became fascinated as they explored documents in which the women debated and drafted their constitution, determined criteria for membership, held elections, and documented the club’s activities. They especially appreciated these efforts when they were reminded that these women were doing all this apart from male oversight, decades before women attained the franchise.² As they made sense of these documents, students gained a deep appreciation for democratic processes of governance, despite their complications. They also took on the role of archivists in that they were attempting to understand and describe the collection as a whole. In the absence of contextual information about these materials and their creators, students had to do the primary document-based research to find the people behind the names and place them within the historical context of late nineteenth-century Baltimore.

Even the women’s own names proved elusive. The minutes and other materials were private documents, intended to be viewed only by club members, but even so, they referred to one another by their husbands’ names rather than their given first names. Unmarried members were simply referred to as “Miss,” frequently omitting their first names altogether. The lack of given names made the women virtually impossible to locate in historical records, such as the census and contemporary newspapers, and because most of them did not work outside the home, they were not included in city directories. Nevertheless, some names were discovered in the process of transcribing club minutes and programs; others were revealed in newspapers, obituaries of male family members, census records, and genealogy websites. It may be the lack of complete names in the WLCB collection that resulted in their absence from the cataloging record. Eliza Ridgely may have been mentioned there simply because she signed her full name at the end of each entry in the first two volumes of the meeting minutes, making her readily visible. We might contrast her case with that of “Mrs. Fabian Franklin,” a frequent commenter and early leader of the WLCB, whom, we only discovered after months of searching, was one of the club’s most illustrious members, Christine Ladd-Franklin, a faculty member at Columbia University whose books on vision and cognition are still in university libraries.

Another absence that became increasingly visceral as we studied the WLCB was racial diversity. Baltimore was one of the nation’s busiest nineteenth-century ports, a point of entry for European immigrants, and a major railway hub that linked the northeastern United States with the South and the West, and it had always had a large Black population. During the years students worked on the project, the Black Lives Matter movement sparked demonstrations around the country. “Did the WLCB admit Black women?,” the students inevitably asked. Local historians we consulted told us that it was almost certain they did not; nevertheless, the drive to locate and identify nonwhite members became especially urgent. (None have been located.) While the club’s constitution contained no explicit statement regarding segregation or exclusion, Baltimore was socially segregated, and as a social organization, the club was no exception.

Students were shocked and disappointed when they encountered frequent, if sometimes oblique, expressions of allegiance with the South in meeting minutes (a border state, Maryland joined the Union during the Civil War, but did so, ironically, in order to remain a slave state). The question of racial diversity was never discussed in club meetings, but only because the WLCB was always and already assumed to be “whites only.” The issue of white supremacy, like that of gender, became central to the project team, and it was addressed directly and iteratively in class discussions and in assigned readings about racism and sexism in the publishing industry, literary history, and editorial praxis.¹⁰ Nevertheless, one student disengaged from the project because she could not personally justify recovering and potentially amplifying the views of white supremacists.

Grappling with the Unknown: Methodologies

In addition to the difficulties in accessing materials and information, it was hard to plan the work when the students themselves lacked the skills and knowledge to undertake archival research. As a way of training students in some of those methods, Jean initially adopted a “learning-by-doing” approach, breaking down the work into a series of discrete tasks that could be performed in sequential, linear fashion, following a Bloom’s taxonomy structure for student learning that begins with the accumulation of information and gradually works toward higher-level aspects of critical thinking. This approach aligns somewhat metaphorically with what project managers describe as a “waterfall” methodology, where a project is broken down into a series of constituent steps, beginning with an assessment of the requirements of the project, followed by analysis and design, implementation, and testing.¹¹

In her first course that focused on the WLCB, Jean assigned each student a group of three or four club members on which they would focus their work, and she then engaged them in a series of tasks: first, they would learn about the club by transcribing meeting minutes, then they would find what their assigned women did as club members, and finally they would compile biographies of these women that would place them within both Baltimore history and, if they were writers themselves, American literary history. By giving individual students ownership of a small part of a large project, students were given a stable “home base” from which they could venture forth rather than having to engage with a huge and potentially overwhelming project in its entirety from the outset. Within specific assignments, such as the “Literary Recovery” assignment (Appendix A), students collected information and entered findings into text fields on spreadsheets rather than being asked to immediately synthesize information as would be the case in the traditional forms of papers or bibliographies. This approach helped students focus on collecting accurate information, prompted them to submit complete documentation for their work, and was essential for Jean to efficiently collect and compile the research into a single spreadsheet/database.

Almost from the beginning and continuing throughout the project, students’ findings confounded initial expectations and required shifting methods and goals midstream. Jean initially had assumed, in large part because of the focus on celebrity autographs and the lack of mention of club authors in the catalog description, that the WLCB was organized primarily around the reading and appreciation of literature, like present-day book clubs. Students discovered as they were transcribing meeting minutes, however, that initially the club only solicited membership from published authors—and that over thirty women attended its first meeting. Suddenly, literary recovery became a goal of the project, and the “Literary Recovery”

assignment (Appendix A) was developed in response to this discovery. Jean expected that aside from that initial group of original members, students might find two or three others who eventually succeeded in seeing their work in print, and she also assumed that the majority of these authors might have published a single poem or story in a local newspaper or magazine. The results of the assignment proved her totally wrong. Just by performing simple keyword searches in literature databases and online text repositories, students located publications from nearly all the club members they looked for, and several had published *prolifically*. The search for Virginia Woodward Cloud, for example, produced dozens of hits, including at least three published volumes of poetry. Louise Clarkson Whitelock published over a dozen books of poetry for children with E. P. Dutton, all of which she also illustrated herself. Margaret Sutton Briscoe had published more than a hundred pieces of poetry, fiction, and journalism in *Harper's Bazaar* and other national magazines. Altogether, this single assignment resulted in the location of over five hundred works written by club members, and subsequent searching has more than doubled the number of texts recovered. In short, we had discovered a formerly unknown and highly significant body of literature written by Maryland women, whose contributions have been rendered invisible in literary history.

Experiences like this one caused Jean to organically move away from the traditional “waterfall” methodology to one that was more “agile” in approach. First announced in 2001 in the form of a “Manifesto for Agile Software,” agile developers “welcome changing requirements, even late in development,” rather than committing to a series of linear steps at the outset. Rather than divide and delegate tasks to individual people, agile development emphasizes constant collaboration, “face-to-face conversation,” a horizontal organizational structure, feedback, and reflection. Stressing design (amid change), usability, and sustainability, agile methodologies are ends-focused without committing to a discrete end.¹² Pedagogically speaking, rather than becoming skilled in a linear and accumulative fashion, students were required to practice all the required skills simultaneously and collaboratively. Jean unwittingly adopted the agile approach due to circumstance rather than intention. Despite her best efforts, pursuing a project on an unknown archive made traditional research methods and pedagogy impossible.

Understanding this unknown archive necessitated an iterative approach and a willingness to rethink our findings as we went along. One recurring example of such “reiteration with new knowledge” was when biographical research uncovered pseudonyms and variations of names that then led to another round of publication searching. In our editorial work, the “waterfall” process of transcription/OCR scanning, global search-and-replace text correction, proofreading, and annotation was frequently interrupted as team members encountered new information about authors, related texts, or historical contexts that required a new round of text correction or annotation.

The time constraints of semester-long courses that enable students to devote concentrated time and energy to research and editing, as well as the time constraints of academic years, fiscal years, and grant funding cycles led Jean to characterize the form of editing performed on the project as “guerrilla editing,” where the scope of the work is delimited by the human and financial resources available within a set period of time. These latter constraints, which define software development and the world of industrial capitalism generally, become especially exacerbated when superimposed on an academic setting and timeframe. They also reflect the concerns and constraints faced in archival processing. While the logical progression of waterfall methodology provides researchers and students alike with a clear path to follow, unexpected snags

and evolutions make agile methodology a better fit for a dynamic project. It also better reflects the twists and turns of “real life”—advanced academic work, careers, adult relationships—and thus provide an excellent educational experience for students.

The WLCB Collection as Data

It has only seemed natural, given the collaborative, iterative, and adaptive approach we took to the WLCB materials, to share them using a “collections as data” approach, as described by Thomas Padilla and his team. This approach considers a collection of materials—an archive or collection of digitized materials, for example—as a dataset that can create additional ways of understanding the materials beyond studying the individual items themselves. Considering a collection as a set of data reframes it as relational and analyzable using computational methodologies including “text mining, data visualization, mapping, image analysis, audio analysis, and network analysis.”¹³ Using tools and approaches that support collections as data allows users to operationalize the idea that archival collections are best understood when they are viewed as a collective whole that exists in a specific context rather than as individual items understood independently. Similarly, creating a structure that allows researchers to better understand the club members as a network of writers and thinkers that can be visualized and mapped generates new arguments and ways of understanding the original collection. The online archive permits users to search the entire collection by keyword and organize that information in a variety of ways, and the entire datasets of publications written by club members, membership lists, meeting programs, and meeting minutes can be downloaded in CSV (comma-separated values) or Microsoft Excel format. In these ways, “use and reuse” by future researchers is both enabled and encouraged.¹⁴

Finally, a collections as data approach understands archival research as “an ongoing process” that “does not necessarily conclude with a final version.” While the ultimate goal is to create a “trustworthy, long-lived” collection, it is also always true that collections change based on shifting institutional commitments, available resources, and community needs. To allow for these shifts without undermining credibility and while preserving the collection itself, Padilla and colleagues recommend shared, transparent, and ongoing documentation that show “how and why the work is done” and how that work has developed over time. “While no documentation can be fully comprehensive,” they write, “incomplete or in-progress documentation is better than no documentation.”¹⁵ The “Project History” section of the WLCB online archive provides links to such documentation. This essay also is a way of sharing and making transparent how we did our work.

Restoring Access: Literary Recovery

The WLCB itself was acutely aware of the institutional forces governing literary publication and their exclusion of women. From its inception, the club prioritized the establishment of a club library, which occupied a room of the Academy of Sciences, where the club began meeting in 1892. While the original library is no longer extant, knowing the stated desire of the club to produce published writers and collect its own works made recovery even more central to the WLCB project. One of the most robust components of the WLCB online archive is its [Virtual Library](https://wlcg.github.io/archive/browse.html) (<https://wlcg.github.io/archive/browse.html>), a digital

recreation of the original club library. Rather than simply reproduce a bibliography of publications, the project team chose to embed digital surrogates of publications whenever possible, enabled by open-access repositories such as HathiTrust, [Archive.org](#), and Google Books. The visibility of digital surrogates gives tangible presence and shape to the wide range of publications produced by the club. As Theresa Strouth Gaul has written, “the typical privileging” of the book as the predominant literary form and the novel as the predominant literary genre has obscured a great deal of literature written by women, especially “letters, poetry, and personal narratives as well as other forms such as domestic writing, essays, drama, and journalism.”¹⁶ The thumbnail images and embedded PDF and page image files in the Virtual Library visibly demonstrate that WLCB members published books, newspaper columns, magazine poetry and fiction, children’s literature, scientific papers, and plays. Where publications existed only in physical form, we (along with staff at the holding institutions) created digital surrogates to include on the site. The cellphone photos and the “photobombs” of students’ fingers and hands assert the active, provisional, and ongoing nature of recovery work.

As Desirée Henderson, Brigitte Fielder, and others have noted, however, neither simply discovering the texts nor making texts available are sufficient to constitute responsible recovery. On the one hand, literary canons are persistent; Henderson notes that recovery scholars have to work extra hard to reach and sustain readership. Many “achievements in recovering women’s writing have occurred without fanfare or recognition, overshadowed . . . by established male authors about whom it would appear we can never know enough,” she writes.¹⁷ On the other hand, it is important, too, to recognize the relations of power exerted by the field of recovery itself, which may elide or ignore problematic aspects of the works and authors recovered in the service of amplifying the act of recovery. Fielder aptly describes responsible recovery as being one part of “a larger project of archival reparation that accurately represents the historical relations of power and upends them through more rigorous attention to our body of texts.”¹⁸ Doing responsible recovery also aligns with the collections as data approach adopted by the project team. “Ethical concerns are integral to collections as data,” Padilla and colleagues write. Because collections may “obfuscate what is hidden or missing in the histories they are perceived to represent,” researchers providing access to collections as data “must be mindful of these absences and plan to work against their repetition.”¹⁹

We had come to understand that the WLCB sought to establish a distinctively “Southern” branch of American literature that worked hand in hand with white supremacist Lost Cause ideology. We now also knew that the club never sought to include nonwhite members and never engaged with the DuBois Circle or the Colored Women’s League of Washington, DC, which were contemporaneous with the WLCB and espoused similar literary and philanthropic aspirations. A persistent challenge for the WLCB project both from archival and pedagogical perspectives has been to appropriately contextualize the admirable success of the club in the field of literature and as a support network for women *and* to situate that success within its problematic ideological views and social practices. A continuously expanding section of the WLCB online archive consists of explanatory exhibits and ongoing research [projects](#) (<https://wlcg.github.io/archive/projects.html>) that seek to provide important historical and social context for the activities and writings of the club and its members.²⁰ In addition to visualizations of archival documents that help to explain the club’s membership and activities, profiles of individual members such as suffragist and socialist [Katharine Pearson Woods](#), for example, help to demonstrate the diversity of political views within the club membership, and a [map of the membership](#) shows demographic movements in

Baltimore in the decades after the Civil War that foreshadowed the white flight that occurred in Baltimore after the race riots of 1968.²¹ The ethical dimensions of the work were a consistent subject of discussion, and one that deeply engaged students. We applied lessons learned from these discussions in developing pedagogical materials for the archival site.

Restoring Access: The Digital Turn

Technology has allowed archival research to look significantly different compared to even a decade ago. Digitization, even if conducted by researchers taking cellphone pictures, supports remote access to collections and provides the ability to easily reuse and repurpose collection materials beyond a single snippet used in a publication. That said, many digitization projects, as noted earlier in this essay, have only fulfilled the letter of providing access to materials, throwing up online minimally described and processed digital surrogates that can be difficult for users to navigate and understand. As such, they fail to mitigate the larger issues regarding archival access. Berry describes a prototypical example where an online collection might contain seventy photographs of US military personnel under the label “Photographs. Snack Bar, Undated,” with no other identification or description. She writes that if you were searching for photographs of Black soldiers within these photographs, you’d have to “scroll through each one,” and if one of the four of the seventy depicting Black people is located, you’d have to “mark the location yourself.” This collection, which preserves the original ordering of photographs by the *place* rather than the *people* being depicted, privileges what the collector thought was important and does not anticipate the user having alternative interests. In its minimally processed digital form, it is left up to users to figure out how to navigate the collection, locate what they’re looking for, and make sense of the objects they encounter—skills that everyday users (including undergraduate students) frequently lack.

The WLCB project shows that turning to digital forms can implement exactly those missing affordances. As we’ve seen, digital archives can remove barriers to access imposed by a visit to the physical archive at MCHC, while also placing the archive within broader historical and social contexts that users may not already understand. In addition, the form of digitization we adopted increased the usability of the archive by implementing search capabilities and links to related collections and resources unavailable to visitors to MCHC. A central component of the project involved transcribing and creating structured and annotated versions of meeting minutes created by the club members (this work was done both onsite and through the use of digital surrogates made available to students through the course content management system and Google Drive). The transcription of cursive writing into parseable text expands the accessibility of original materials manifold, because doing so allows remote users access to textual collections that can be searched, copied, saved, and linked. As a result, the WLCB project harnesses the affordances of the digital to create new ways of engaging with textual collections. From a pedagogical perspective, students learned firsthand that any transcription requires subjective interpretation of original sources where handwriting or the intent of the writing is unclear. Students were forced to confront the inherent messiness of archival work despite being separated from the physical materials.

Shifting users’ primary access to the collection from the physical originals to their digital surrogates does nevertheless create inevitable tension about whether the digital version is a sufficient surrogate to the archival original for educational purposes. What is lost if students cannot actually experience the “old paper

smell” of the archive or feel the brittleness of a letter they must carefully remove from an envelope and unfold to be able to read? Anecdotally, students appeared equally engaged at various stages of the project, confirming Meggan Press and Meg Meiman’s finding that “when students are asked to rhetorically analyze primary sources, the format of the sources has no discernible impact on their learning and engagement levels.”²²

One might also question whether the lack of training and expertise on the part of undergraduate students undermines the credibility of the archive. Is the something we have now better than the nothing we had before if it fails to meet acceptable standards of archival research and processing? This is debatable. We have stated in all documentation that this project was not undertaken by a team of professional researchers and archivists, that the transcriptions are provisional, and we encourage researchers to consult the originals before quoting or publishing materials from the site. Elizabeth nevertheless notes that the project site includes many of the traditional components of a finding aid that adheres to Describing Archives: A Content Standard.²³ The Club Records page, for example, outlines a System of Arrangement for the records found within the collection and a description that would not be out of place if found in a Scope and Content note, while the Club History page serves as an Administrative/Biographical History note. The fact that the current catalog listing at MCHC directs users to the website in lieu of a traditional finding aid further attests to the value of the description in increasing access to the materials.

Restoring Access: Pedagogy

The Santa Barbara Statement on Collections as Data recommends that it is necessary to “lower barriers to use” to encourage responsible use of archival collections as data. In addition to supplying necessary context for materials, responsible archivists will also consider pedagogical resources for teaching and provide complete documentation. These resources can show students and researchers across a range of contexts, educational levels, and levels of technical expertise how to use collections as data and do so productively, critically, and ethically.²⁴

Following the active engagement of undergraduate students with the WLCB materials, Jean worked with her institution’s digital librarians as well as in a collaborative partnership with Elizabeth, via the Recovery Hub for American Women Writers (<https://recoveryhub.siue.edu/>), to extend the research and pedagogical potential of the WLCB archive to future generations of students and scholars. In addition to biographies of over forty members and a searchable database of all club member publications located to date, we created online exhibitions and resources for teachers (<https://wlcg.github.io/archive/projects.html>) that would help extend the lessons we learned in the process of grappling with the archive. As supplemental appendixes to this essay, we include two of these resources: the “Recovering Authors and Texts” (Appendix B) and “Research as Data” lesson plans (Appendix C). These structured exercises, in a sense, turn the archive back on itself, providing ways for students to understand the processes by which it came into being, thus developing critical awareness in students of how knowledge is shaped, disseminated, and integrated into the historical record. Both lesson plans use a “five-minute expert” approach involving students closely examining resources for a period of five minutes and responding to targeted questions as the “expert” on that resource. The questions used are informed by the objectives outlined in the SAA-ACRL RBMS Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy (Conceptualize; Find and Access; Read, Understand, and Summarize; and

Interpret, Analyze, and Evaluate). Students are often surprised by what they discover and are excited to share their findings with the class.

These two assignments provide different ways of working with the archive depending on disciplinary needs and instructional goals. The “Recovering Authors and Texts” lesson plan is grounded in allowing students to continue to work as co-creators of a continually expanding and shifting archival collection and creates a scaffolded and supported approach that is especially well suited for courses in literature, especially at the university level. In comparison, the “Research as Data” lesson plan reflexively turns the gaze of the user toward the project site and the information contained within its pages as a place of inquiry and examination. The concrete analytical skills developed in this assignment can be applied in a variety of contexts and at different educational levels. Inspired by Elizabeth’s work on creating visualizations using the affordances provided by digital collections and their associated metadata, the lesson is inherently based in understanding the archival resources at a distance and drawing “upon computational means to ask questions and look for patterns.”²⁵ By undertaking this exercise, students can gain a better understanding of how archival resources viewed as a collective can impact scholarship, including the ability to see and assess gaps and biases of creators and collection materials and the possibilities of digital interventions using the data generated as part of the project.²⁶

The increasing emphasis on learning outcomes and evaluation metrics has made assessment a burgeoning area of development for those working with archival collections. Archives have long functioned as the arena for uncritical “show-and-tell” sessions that highlight individual items in an archive created (or touched) by an author or artist, relating to a historical period, or representing a particular region or culture. Increasingly, archivists and those who work with archives seek to show how archival research develops critical thinking skills and implements or advances student learning. Elizabeth Yakel suggests that archive-based primary source learning has cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that can be effectively assessed on a scale ranging from simple exposure to literacy to mastery.²⁷ With the advent of digital archives, assessment can also include other forms of literacy and critical thinking beyond the primary source literacy that is offered by analog archival materials. The “Teaching with Digital Primary Sources” white paper compiled by members of the Digital Library Federation and other archivists (2019) suggests that digital archives can also develop students’ information literacy, digital literacy, archival intelligence, visual literacy, and data information literacy.²⁸

Granted, the wide range of knowledge and skills that could potentially be assessed, combined with the unpredictable and sometimes chaotic aspects of archival projects, make the prospect of implementing traditional forms of assessment daunting. It is also important to remember that assessment needs to occur in multiple dimensions, especially in uncharted pedagogical territory like digital archives: it is necessary to assess student skills, teaching efficacy (sometimes with multiple instructors—e.g., faculty member, librarian/archivist, technology staff), and the tools/assignments used in the service of that teaching. Keeping in mind Robin M. Katz’s injunction that “What we do not need are more case studies . . . We need to develop frameworks for thinking about the work we do that would be useful to others,”²⁹ we found that forms of assessment that focus on metacognition—what students and instructors believe they learned, and demonstrating the ability to reflect meaningfully on learning—most helped students understand how their work in the WLCB archive intersected with course goals as well as learning aims for their chosen discipline

and future career plans. Jean, for example, implemented an “Editorial Poetics” assignment (Appendix D) in one course, where students, after engaging in documentary transcription, editing, proofreading, and annotation, defined their own editorial rationale and supported that rationale with examples from the texts they edited as well as secondary source readings in editorial theory. The “Recovering Authors and Texts” and “Research as Data” lesson plans (Appendixes B and C), meanwhile, emphasize process over results. Rather than asking students to locate correct or comprehensive answers, the plans focus on the iterative process of discovery itself by having the instructor successively share different perspectives on the materials before asking students about how their approach or knowledge has evolved. Because Elizabeth designed these lesson plans to be able to be dropped into a course with minimal additional preparation by the instructor, assessment in the form of formal assignments is not present. The plans can be easily modified, however, to be more fully integrated into a course. Their focus on skills (information literacy, digital literacy, and archival intelligence) align them with scholarship of teaching approaches to archival instruction, such as that offered by Keeran, which organizes instructional activities and assessment around areas of student learning and student engagement with digital primary sources.³⁰

What Do We Know Now? What Do We Still Want to Know?

Archives are inherently incomplete, and their composition is informed by a variety of organizational and societal factors. Using this fact as a starting point when working with students helps students develop archival intelligence, but also requires faculty and other instructors and technology support staff to develop that intelligence as well. By including original literary works by WLCB members, consolidating biographical information about them, transcribing and creating structured data of original documents, and creating additional topical exhibits, students served as co-creators of a new, augmented collection that filled in gaps present in the original collection and created new digital possibilities. That said, while we now know so much more than we did when we started the WLCB project, ironically we also now know how much remains unknown. Each discovered text, each club member’s name, bears a history and points toward another act of recovery.

The number of possible avenues for engaging with archival materials are unlimited, and diverse uses and avenues of investigation should be supported and encouraged by archivists by approaching materials with an open mind for the partnerships and pedagogical potentialities they generate. Archival description facilitates discovery of materials by researchers and archivists alike, and sufficient description that considers these possibilities is key to supporting the central mission of access. While not every potential research area can be surfaced within description for a collection, without sufficient discoverability no work can be done with archival materials. That said, it is worth emphasizing the “burdens” of responsible archiving which, Berry writes, “pull me farther and farther down.”

The WLCB Archive project demonstrates that partnerships between users and archives can enhance description, expand the archive, and put it directly into a wider scholarly context even if it is minimally processed. The work of grappling with the content and meaning of the collection reveals both a need and an opportunity. Resources are likely to continue to be limited for both archives and higher education; at the same time, digitization promises the possibility of widespread access to archival materials. How can we teach with and understand them effectively and ethically? We certainly need better models and approaches to deal

with minimally processed or wholly unknown archives; at the same time, student-centered and user-driven approaches provide an opportunity to rethink how archives can be used in both teaching and historical recovery.

Appendix A: Literary Recovery Assignment

Purpose: Recover literary publications by women authors by engaging in iterative keyword searching in literary databases and online repositories.

Skills: this assignment will help you practice the following skills that will help you succeed in this course and develop digital literacy that can be applied in your other coursework and professional life beyond school:

- Understanding and analyzing different literary genres in which women authors published
- Understanding metadata categories such as author/creator and publication types
- Applying and evaluating keyword searching techniques
- Synthesizing information gathered from multiple data sources
- Analyzing and synthesizing multiple names for a single author
- Creating bibliographies of authors' publications

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:

- Authorship practices such as pseudonyms, marital and given names, name variation, and initials-only identification
- Literary publishing in books, magazines, and newspapers
- Gender ideology of the late nineteenth– and early twentieth–century United States
- Women's writing and its exclusion from the literary historiography and US history

Task: What a culture or community considers “literary” or “literature” is not solely dependent on artistic merit or aesthetic quality. The very idea of an aesthetic standard depends on cultural authority and control, thus involving literature in relations of power, politics, and economics. In the United States, that has resulted in the devaluation of literary works written by women within patriarchal institutions including book and magazine publishing, as well as K–12 and university education.

Literary recovery is a process by which the actual contributions of marginalized writers can be restored to and thus enrich literary history. Recovery is especially important as the priorities and interests of readers, educators, and thinkers evolve over time.

Locating the actual works written by forgotten authors is the first step toward literary recovery. This is a step-by-step guide to finding works of literature written by women.

At each level, search for both names and titles.

Tips on names:

- Try different forms of names: maiden name; married name with given first name; married name with husband's name (i.e., Mrs. John Doe); last names (maiden and married) with first initial (many women published using a first initial to disguise their identity as women).
- Make note of how authors are catalogued in Library of Congress/OCLC listings; this is the author's "known" identity as an author.
- Make note of name variants and pseudonyms as you go along. For example, Katharine is often also spelled Katherine; Jensen as Jenson, Kelly as Kelley, etc. All variants should be searched in *each* database.

Tips on finding texts:

- Refer to biographies, news articles, and reviews for additional publication titles, dates, and co-authors.
- Use advanced search to combine author, title, and keyword searches.
- Use quotations around phrases to search for a string of text rather than individual keywords.
- Search for text strings if you have them.
- Be creative!

I found one! What to do when you've located a text:³¹

- Be sure to completely document the database, reference or publication where you have located it. They can be surprisingly—and frustratingly— difficult to re-locate!
- If possible, save the link to the text, or better yet, download a copy. You may want to develop a consistent file-naming convention so that you can easily locate what you've downloaded. For example: Authurname_Firstwordoftitle.pdf.

Level 1: Academic and literature-specific bibliographies³²

Bibliographies, as the word implies, are lists of books and other publications—which is to say, their purpose is to document what has been published and where books and other texts can be located. As a result, they are specifically tailored to finding texts by literary authors and should be the first places to turn; much of the work of literary recovery is simply to locate authors and titles that have simply been forgotten over time.

You will need to access some of these resources through your university or local public library. As bibliographies, they are searchable lists, not repositories of texts, so you may also need to do additional searching (online or in person) to find the book, poem, or text itself.

1. Library catalog
2. WorldCat/OCLC
3. American Periodical Series
4. Making of America
5. Reader's Guide
6. [Online Books Page](#) at University of Pennsylvania (search authors by last name first)
7. [FictionMags Index](#) (search by author)

Level 2: Online text repositories

These publicly available online repositories have amassed huge numbers of texts owned and subsequently digitized by libraries, research universities, and individuals and may contain all kinds of texts and documents (including multimedia and non-text materials). Because their contents are dependent on what texts are actually held in a repository and also what an institution has decided to digitize, they may not provide a complete list of any one author's publications. At the same time, they can include texts and documents that a bibliography in Level 1 might not include (a particular publisher or magazine, for example, might not have been indexed because it was too small or too new).

Searching in these databases will be much easier if you have publication names nailed down, as well as some titles. Because they are repositories of digitized texts, you can also search for strings of text within quotation marks. This can be especially helpful when searching for poetry or a text that may have been quoted in a speech or a book review.

1. Google Books
2. Hathitrust.com
3. Archive.org
4. Gutenberg.org

Level 3: Newspapers

You may be surprised to learn that newspapers used to publish literature of all kinds, including poetry, short stories, and even long novels (which were generally published in *serialization*, a chapter or two at a time). Until the turn of the twentieth century, far more people read literature in the pages of newspapers rather

than in books. Searching in newspapers can be tedious and messy, however, so it's best not to begin here. But because they covered daily or weekly events, sometimes at a very local level, you may find information in newspapers that are not included in monthly magazines or books, which tend to cover larger geographical areas and are published on a longer timeframe.

It's best to have some information about a particular author before you embark on a newspaper search. For example, it's important to know when the author was publishing (you'll want to restrict your searches for when they were actively publishing, and certainly there's little point in searching the period prior to that), and it's also helpful to know where they were living or working, so that you can narrow your search to newspapers in that town, city, state, or region. Because women in particular were frequently not referred to by their first names, you'll need to be careful to sort through the false positives that are likely to come up in a search (to make sure the "Miss Smith" you've found, for example, is the Eugenia Smith you're looking for, not Anastasia or Lucy or Christina Smith). Note: you're apt to find biographical information in newspapers as well.

- [Chronicling America](#) newspaper database at the Library of Congress
- ProQuest Historical Newspapers (or other newspapers to which your institution's library subscribes).
- [Newspapers.com](#), using seven-day trial or paid subscription. NB: only pull the trigger on your trial if you're ready to start reception + biographical research as well and can devote some time to collecting clippings.
- Note: some individual newspapers have their own archival systems; be on the lookout for ones that may be pertinent to the authors for which you're searching. (For example, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, which covered African American news and culture across the nation, has its own archive which can be browsed by date.)

Level 4: Google

What have you missed? Sometimes a random Google search on names and titles will turn up stuff on Wikipedia, personal websites, and the like. Note, however: this should be your last resort, not your first.

Returning to the start:

Your searching at any level may result in mentions of publications and new forms of authors' names that can be searched for in databases you've already tried. Look for obscure periodicals in WorldCat, HathiTrust, and Archive.org, or consult your institution's interlibrary loan office.

Remember always: recovery is an iterative process.

Criteria for success:

Succeeding in this assignment is not dependent on finding the most literary works. While some of the authors you have been assigned may have published prolifically, others may have published only one or two works, and some may not have published anything at all. Your task is to consult multiple sources to determine the most accurate and complete accounting of an unknown author's published output.

The most successful projects will be methodical in approach, consistent in the organization and presentation of data, and conscientious in terms of accuracy in spelling of names, publication titles, and numerical information such as dates of publication and page numbers. All databases listed in the task list should be consulted for each name in your group of authors, and you may need to consult them more than once as you recover additional names and name configurations for your authors.

Appendix B: Recovering Authors and Texts Lesson Plan

[The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) is fundamentally a [recovery project](#) in which Jean Lee Cole works toward, as outlined by the Recovery Hub for American Women Writers, “recovering the work of women writers by providing digital access to forgotten or neglected texts and/or extending them with network mapping, spatial analysis, multimedia storytelling, innovative contextualization, and the distant reading of massive datasets.” Part of this work requires researching authors, organizations, and texts that are often difficult to locate because of historical biases that often erased the work of women and members of marginalized communities.

Materials Needed

- This activity uses the information found on [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) as well as the home page to the site. Pages include:
 - [Club History](#)
 - [Who were they?](#)
 - [Membership Lists](#)
 - [Meeting Minutes](#)
 - [Virtual Library](#)
 - [WLCB Project Blog](#)
 - [Projects](#), specifically:
 - [Where They Lived](#)
 - [Katharine Pearson Woods Exhibit](#)

- Additional materials include databases and other methods of searching for information, selected at the instructor's discretion:
 - [Google](#)
 - [Chronicling America](#)
 - [HathiTrust](#)
 - [Internet Archive](#)
 - [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#)
 - Newspaper databases and genealogical databases (access to these may vary: contact your local librarian, whether at a public or academic library)
- Tablets and laptops for students, or guided exploration by the instructor via a computer and projector, will be necessary.

Preparatory Work

- The instructor should familiarize themselves with [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) and the databases, sites, and methods of searching they plan to use with students in this exercise.

Instructions

- Based on your background preparatory work, provide students with a brief overview of [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) site to understand what information is available on the site and how the archive serves as a [recovery project](#) for the works of the members of the Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore.
- Break students into groups and assign them a page under the [Materials Needed](#) section and ask them to become the "five-minute expert" on their page—i.e., look at the page and share with the rest of the class what their page is all about. Ask them to consider at the outset what type of research was required to create these pages and the potential sources of information needed by the writer.
- Draw students' attention to two pages: the [Membership Lists](#) page and the [Who were they?](#) page. Explain that while the [Membership Lists](#) page has a comprehensive list of members, the [Who were they?](#) page contains selective biographies of members. Collectively examine a biography, such as that of [Hester Crawford Dorsey Richardson](#), to get a sense of what a typical biography looks like for the site.
- Have students select a person from the [Membership Lists](#) page that is *not* represented on the [Who were they?](#) page. Then, have students try and locate information about that person using the search

and database sources outlined the [Materials Needed](#) section and any other sources they typically use for approximately ten minutes.

- Coming back together, ask students to answer the following questions:
 - What information were you able to find about your person? Where did you find that information? Was it on the sites provided as part of this lesson or outside sources?
 - Did you encounter any issues while searching?
 - Was it difficult to find information? If so, why do you think finding information was difficult?
- Additionally, you may want to include a short discussion of the following issues:
 - Accuracy of names or availability of information for a name. Many women in the Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore used "Mrs. [Husband's Name]" when they appeared in newspapers or the club's meeting minutes. How might you need to incorporate or understand societal mores of the time period and culture of the person you're researching as part of your search strategy?
 - Search techniques:
 - One issue students may have encountered was a large number of irrelevant search results. Each search platform or database supports different techniques for focusing in on specific search results, exemplified below:
 1. Google supports specific keyword searching using parentheses and quotation marks. For instance, the following search query searches Google for pages that feature the full name Katharine Pearson Woods and the word Wheeling:
 1. ("katharine pearson woods" and wheeling)
 2. Chronicling America has an [advanced search page](#) that supports searching by geographic area, time period, and phrases.
 3. HathiTrust and Internet Archive each support searching by metadata and full text. Metadata is information about the text or item, such as the title of a book, the author of a book, or year published. Each approach will deliver different very results.
 - Usage of contextual information:
 - Encourage students to use what information they did find to customize their searches. For instance, if they discovered a person lived in a specific town at a particular time, focusing the search results to that geographic location and time period may be helpful.
 - Employing iterative search approaches:

- If a search approach isn't working, think about why that may be the case and how to move forward. Is the issue what you're searching (i.e., full text scholarly monographs won't be in a genealogical database) or how you're searching?
- Using some of these considerations, have students go back and try and find additional information about their person for another ten minutes. Coming back together, ask students similar questions compared to the first round of searching:
 - What new information, if any, were you able to find about your person? Where did you find that information? Was it on the sites provided as part of this lesson or outside sources?
 - Was it still difficult to find information? If so, why do you think finding information was difficult?
 - Do you think that difficulty in finding information impacts the scholarship you can create and the research you can do? If so, why? How does that impact your research going forward?
 - How does this search process impact your understanding of [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) site?

Appendix C: Research as Data Lesson Plan

The goal of this exercise is to think about ways traditional research approaches and products can be transformed into data and data visualizations and how that data can serve to further extend and enhance original research.

Materials Needed

- This activity uses the information and data visualizations found on [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) as well as the home page to the site. Specifically:
 - [Data](#)
 - [Timeline](#)
 - [Authors Word Cloud](#)
 - [Projects](#), specifically:
 - [Where they lived](#)
 - [Katharine Pearson Woods Exhibit](#)
- Tablets and laptops for students, or guided exploration by the instructor via a computer and projector, will be necessary.

Preparatory Work

- The instructor should familiarize themselves with [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) site, specifically the pages under the [Materials Needed](#) section and the home page.

Instructions

- Based on your background preparatory work, provide students with a brief overview of [The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore Archive](#) site to understand the context of the visualizations they will be examining.
- Have students examine the home page and any or all of the visualizations on the pages listed under the [Materials Needed](#) section to gain a general understanding of the breadth of data visualizations on the site.
- Break students into groups and assign them a particular page or visualization and ask them to become the “five-minute expert” on their page or visualization—i.e., look at the page and share with the rest of the class what their page or visualization is all about. This instruction is intentionally vague to allow students to gravitate toward the aspects of the page or visualization that is compelling to them and to allow to instructor opportunity to be responsive to them.
- After each group shares a brief overview of their section, ask students to delve into the visualizations and information more deeply, exploring the rest of the site as needed to answer the following questions:
 - What data is being summarized or visualized?
 - Where did the data come from?
 - Who gathered the data?
 - What do the data visualizations tell us about the underlying data?
 - Is the visualization making an argument or telling a story? If so, what is that argument or story?
- After examining what is present, ask students to consider what isn't visible on the data visualizations.
 - What information do you think should have been included that was not included to further your understanding of the underlying data, specifically in terms of content and context?
 - Are there other ways the underlying data could have been visualized? How would that have changed how you understand the underlying data?
 - What can we learn from looking at a single underlying piece of data, whether it's a text or information about a person, versus a data visualization that may display information about many texts or information?

- When we examine any research using historical resources, we are only examining the resources that survived to be used and researched in the present day—all of these are chance occurrences that are impacted by societal values and biases about what works have value. When we examine these visualizations, those resources are being further interpreted through the creator of the visualization and the visualization type itself. Ask students to consider:
 - Is there any information not present or omitted from your visualization? Would we know if anything was omitted? How does that impact how we understand the visualization?
 - Can you rely on the person who accumulated the data and created the data visualization to be accurate and ethical?
- If desired, you can continue to zoom out from the subject further:
 - Do these data visualizations present information in a way that is accessible to individuals other than scholars?
 - Are there other methods that you might want to engage with the materials underpinning these visualizations? If so, how are those methods different, and are those differences necessarily better or worse?

Appendix D: Editorial Poetics assignment

According to literary critic Gerald Graff, **poetics** is the theory of literary forms. The term is often used in reference to poetry but is applicable to all acts of creative production—one might note, for example, that Aristotle’s *Poetics* focuses very little attention on poetry per se, instead concerning itself primarily with drama and rhetoric.

Susan Greenberg defines poetics as “a set of principles for the making of a text”; in this formulation an editorial poetics, then, would expand our notion of editing as being more than just the “policing of error” but rather, as a “dynamic process” that is both creative and analytical (*A Poetics of Editing* 225).

Over the course of this semester, you have learned about both the theory and practice of editing. This assignment asks you to define, both through a **description** and **application** (examples), your own editorial poetics, the principles that guide you in “the making of a text.”

PART I. Description (essay)

In an essay of at least three pages, you will explain the approach to editing that you have developed over the course of the semester, and how you have applied that approach to your editing of material for *Parole Feminine: Words and Lives of the Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Apprentice House, 2019). In your essay, you may wish to consider topics including authorial intention, different roles of the editor, versioning, consistency and eclecticism, uses of textual and contextual annotation, modernization and standardization of spelling, punctuation, and grammar, shaping and use of paratext, and the creative,

artistic, or ideological influences you seek to exert as an editor of works in this volume. To what extent are your decisions dictated by the stated goals of the volume? To what extent do you see them as potentially informing your entire editorial praxis?

- Your essay should make reference, as appropriate, to course readings:
 - Philip Gaskell, *From Writer to Reader* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1999)
 - Greenberg, Susan. *A Poetics of Editing* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)
 - Michelle Levy and Tom Mole, eds., *The Broadview Introduction to Book History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2017)
 - In Michelle Levy and Tom Mole, eds., *The Broadview Reader in Book History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2015):
 - W. W. Greg, “The Rationale of Copy-Text” (125–38)
 - Jack Stillinger, “A Practical Theory of Versions” (165–80)
 - Brenda R. Silver, “Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice” (181–98)
 - Beth A. McCoy, “Race and the (Para)Textual Condition” (199–210)
 - Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg, *Editing Historical Documents* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997)
- Your essay should refer to at least two specific examples from your editorial work. Explain the problem(s) or issue(s) that confronted you and how you applied principles to resolve them.

PART II. Application (editorial work)

You will demonstrate the principles outlined in your essay in the final edited manuscript for all sections/works you have been assigned to edit from the volume.

- Download a fresh copy of each file (headnotes and transcriptions) from the *Parole Femine* OneDrive folder.
- Revise headnotes as indicated below.
- Go through each transcription one more time, addressing all queries/comments and making final edits and revisions to MS and annotations, incorporating the principles you have outlined in your essay.

Editing the headnotes:

Note that in editing the transcriptions, you have been engaging primarily in the editing of documents and versions, as addressed in Stevens and Burg, Greg, Gaskell, and Stillinger. In your editing of the headnotes, you will also be engaging in aspects of practical editing. Your final headnotes should include the following:

- Correct birth and death dates for each author you have been assigned.
- Relevant biographical information that help provide context for their writing as a whole. (Note that some of the authors were better known in their lifetime for different kinds of writing than what is included in the volume.)
- Context pertinent for the pieces included in *Parole Femine*.
- Some treatment of the role that the author and/or her works played in the WLCB.
- Some sense of at least of how each club member's writing participated in the communication circuit.³³ (You do not need to do comprehensive research for all of your authors, but you should provide at least some sense of who published their works and how they were received by the public.)

Final editing of transcriptions:

- Keep **Track Changes** turned **ON**.
- Add or delete notes per the principles you have decided upon for your editorial praxis.
- Revise notes for concision, style, and editorial praxis.
- Address all queries/comments from me and explain how you have addressed them in a response to my comment.
- Remove all words, queries, and comments in square brackets or move them to notes. **No square brackets should appear in the final manuscript unless absolutely necessary.**
- If you have been asked to write transitional notes, include them, in italics, where indicated in the MS.

If you have questions about any aspect of the assignment, please contact me or raise the question in class!

-
1. Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah A. Torres, "AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise," *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (2003): 54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40294217>. ↵
 2. Dorothy Berry, "The House that Archives Built," up//root, June 22, 2021, <https://www.uproot.space/features/the-house-archives-built>. ↵
 3. See Robert Pearce-Moses, "Archives," in *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005) for more on archival description. ↵

4. SAA-ACRL RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy, ["Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy"](#) (June 2018), 4. ↵
5. SAA-ACRL RBMS Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy, 1. ↵
6. Maryland Center for History and Culture, "History," <https://www.mdhistory.org/about/history/>. ↵
7. Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, ["More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing"](#), *American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005), <http://www.archivists.org/prof-education/pre-readings/IMPLP/AA68.2.MeissnerGreene.pdf>. ↵
8. Ann Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and the Cultural Work of US Women's Clubs, 1880–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 2. ↵
9. Men were not permitted at club meetings, and the club constitution forbade the sharing of club documents without collective permission. The WLCB, however, did seek outside guidance from men and explicitly modeled their constitution and some of its processes on those of male clubs, especially, the Johns Hopkins University Club, formed in 1880, and one of its offshoots, the University Club of Baltimore, founded in 1887 (Johns Hopkins Club, Inc. Records, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, <https://aspace.library.jhu.edu/repositories/3/resources/1025>). ↵
10. In Jean's spring 2019 course "Book, Edition, Archive," for example, the syllabus included Brenda R. Silver's "Textual Criticism as Feminist Practice: Or, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf Part II," in *The Broadview Reader in Book History*, ed. Michelle Levy and Tom Mole (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2015), 181–98, and Beth A. McCoy's "Race and the (Para)Textual Condition," in Levy and Mole, *Broadview Reader*, 199–211, alongside more traditional readings in editorial theory. ↵
11. Thanks to Matthew Treskon, now Metadata Strategist at Project MUSE, for this insight. While he served as technology librarian at Jean's institution, Matt provided essential assistance during the project's early phases. Also see International Business Machines Corporation, "Agile vs. Waterfall," <https://www.ibm.com/cloud/blog/agile-vs-waterfall>, and Softwaredominos.com, "Operational Excellence in Software Development," <https://softwaredominos.com/home/software-design-development-articles/waterfall-project-management-a-brief-history-and-introduction>. The term was coined by computer scientist Winston D. Royce, in "Managing the Development of Large Software Systems" (1970), <http://www.scf.usc.edu/~csci201/lectures/Lecture11/royce1970.pdf>. ↵
12. Kent Beck et al., "Manifesto for Agile Software Development" (2001), <https://agilemanifesto.org/>. ↵
13. Thomas Padilla, Laurie Frost, Hanna Potvin, Elizabeth Russey Roke, and Stewart Varner, ["Santa Barbara Statement on Collections as Data"](#), May 20, 2019, <https://zenodo.org/record/3066209>, 2. ↵
14. Padilla et al., "Santa Barbara Statement," 2. The dataset of publications is available under the Explore/Data tab, while all datasets relating to the WLCB and its activities are available under the About the Club/Club Records tab on the WLCB Archive website. ↵

15. Padilla et al., “Santa Barbara Statement,” 3–4. ↵
16. Theresa Strouth Gaul, “Recovering Recovery: Early American Women and *Legacy*’s Future,” *Legacy* 26, no. 2 (2009): 274. ↵
17. Desirée Henderson, “Recovery and Modern Periodical Studies,” *American Periodicals* 27, no. 1 (2017): 3. ↵
18. Brigitte Fielder, “The Metaphors We Use: Recovery,” *American Periodicals* 30, no. 1 (2020): 20. ↵
19. Padilla et al., “Santa Barbara Statement,” 2–3. ↵
20. Jean Lee Cole et al., Women’s Literary Club of Baltimore Online Archive, <https://wlcg.github.io/archive/projects.html>. ↵
21. “Katharine Pearson Woods, *Metzerott, Shoemaker*, and the Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore,” Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore Archive, <https://wlcg.github.io/archive/woods.html>; “Where They Lived,” Woman’s Literary Club of Baltimore Archive, <https://wlcg.github.io/archive/mapping.html>. ↵
22. Meggan Press and Meg Meiman, “[Comparing the Impact of Physical and Digitized Primary Sources on Student Engagement](#),” *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 21, no. 1 (2021): 99, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/777819>. ↵
23. Society of American Archivists, [Describing Archives: A Content Standard](#). ↵
24. Padilla et al., “Santa Barbara Statement,” 3. ↵
25. Padilla et al., “Santa Barbara Statement,” 2. ↵
26. Thomas Padilla, Laurie Allen, Hannah Frost, Sarah Potvin, Elizabeth Roke Russey, and Stewart Varner, “[Always Already Computational: Collections as Data: Final Report](#)” (May 22, 2019), <https://zenodo.org/record/3152935>, 80. ↵
27. Elizabeth Yakel, “Teaching Undergraduates with Archives: Past, Present, and Futures,” in *Teaching Undergraduates with Archives*, ed. Nancy Bartlett, Elizabeth Gadelha, and Cinda Nofziger (Ann Arbor, MI: Maize Books, 2019), 292. ↵
28. Brianna Gormly, Maura Seale, Hannah Alpert-Abrams,; Andi Gustavson, Angie Kemp, Thea Lindquist, and Alexis Logsdon, “[Teaching with Digital Primary Sources: Literacies, Finding and Evaluating, Citing, Ethics, and Existing Models](#),” Digital Library Federation Digital Library Pedagogy Working Group, October 7, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.21428/65a6243c.6b419f2b>. ↵

29. Robin M. Katz, "Priorities for Progress," in Bartlett et al., *Teaching Undergraduates with Archives*, 338. ↩
30. Peggy Keeran, "'We turn the lens horizontal ellipsis on ourselves:' Assessing Digital Primary Source Library Instruction through the Lens of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning," *Reference Services Review* 51, no. 1 (2022): 42. ↩
31. Rather than asking students to submit bibliographies of works they have located (a traditional approach), instructors may wish to create a spreadsheet template or a Google Form that can be filled out by students which will prompt them to fill in metadata categories (name, title, publication, etc.). Doing so will help students focus on collecting correct and complete information rather than getting hung up on bibliographical style. ↩
32. This list of databases may vary depending on what is available at different educational institutions. ↩
33. Robert Darnton's concept of the communication circuit, as explained in his essay "What is the history of books?," *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 65–83, was the basis of the final assignment in the course. ↩