

# Using Digitized Documents in the Teaching of The University of Wisconsin's Foreign Relations of the United States Series

*Vicki Tobias, Richard Hume Werking, Brian Clancy, Robert M. Morrison, and Nicole Phelps*

*The editors of Passport would like to thank the SHAFR Teaching Committee for soliciting the following essays. Like other teaching-related articles that have appeared in Passport, these articles may also be found on the SHAFR website, under "Teaching Services."*

## Introduction

*At the annual SHAFR Conference in June 2010, the Teaching Committee presented one of its most successful programs to a relatively large audience. Ms. Vicki Tobias, Digital Services Librarian at the Digital Collections Center of the University of Wisconsin Libraries, led off with an introduction to the work of the Center, focusing on the production and maintenance of the digitized collection of more than 370 volumes in the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series. She was followed by four panelists who discussed various aspects of using the digitized FRUS in teaching. Presiding at the program was SHAFR Teaching Committee Chair Mark Stoler.*

*During the latter part of the session, the audience and speakers adjourned to the Memorial Library across the street to visit the Digital Collections Center, tour the operation, and talk with staff. The group was sufficiently large that it had to be divided into two segments, which followed different paths in touring the Center.*

*At the SHAFR luncheon on Saturday, June 26, SHAFR President Andrew Rotter presented a certificate of appreciation to Ms. Tobias and UW Libraries director Kenneth Frazier. It reads as follows:*

*"The Society for Historians of the American Foreign Relations acknowledges with gratitude the diligent service of [the recipient] in digitizing and posting on the Web the content of*

*the U.S. State Department's Foreign Relations of the United States series covering the century between 1861 and 1960. That accomplishment has greatly facilitated teaching and researching the history of U.S. foreign relations, to the benefit of the American people and the larger world community alike."*

## Digitizing the Foreign Relations of the United States Series

*Vicki Tobias*

Located in Madison, Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin Digital Collection Center (UWDCC) was founded in 2001 to create and host digital resources that support instruction or research. Twelve full-time staff (including librarians, archivists, technology specialists, and other information professionals) and a host of well-trained student staff work cooperatively to complete projects within this fast-paced, deadline-driven production environment. Digital collection materials originate from campus libraries, archives, or individual faculty and include rare books, photograph and slide collections, serials, archival collections, maps, posters, audio, and video. Collection strengths include various area studies, decorative arts and materials culture, Wisconsin state and local history, natural sciences, and UW campus history. Funded by both the UW System and UW Madison General Library System, the group has completed over four hundred projects to date and publishes new content each month. Materials hosted in the UW Digital Collections are freely available to the public.

In 2003, the UWDCC embarked on

an ambitious multi-year project to explore a new low-cost, high-volume digitization workflow using the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series (FRUS) as our guinea pig. This pilot project included volumes only through 1900. FRUS volumes were collected from multiple libraries throughout the city and state, disbound into individual pages using an old-fashioned book guillotine, and scanned on a high-speed scanner. In order to facilitate this work, the UWDCC developed new automated processes to create metadata (necessary to display the volumes within an online book platform) and achieve complete image and metadata quality control.

Analysis of data collected from the pilot project revealed an insignificant savings in cost and efficiency from this high-speed scanning workflow. As a result, the UWDCC outsourced subsequent FRUS scanning work to Preservation Resources, a digitization service provider affiliated with the Online Computer Library Center. The UW Madison government documents librarian, Beth Harper, worked cooperatively with other member libraries to collect additional volumes through 1960. Image quality was commensurate with previous "in house" efforts, and outsourcing a large quantity of materials (approximately two hundred volumes) allowed for the acquisition of additional digitization projects within the group.

The UWDCC completed FRUS in 2008, digitizing and hosting a total of 375 volumes covering the years between 1861 and 1960. The collection is available from the UW Digital Collections Web site at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>. A few gaps remain, and these volumes

will be added as they are acquired for the project.

The UWDC began gathering usage statistics in 2004, measuring individual sessions within its collections. In 2004, *FRUS* received 15,605 use sessions, and the UW Digital Collections (total) received 1,163,843. In 2010, *FRUS* received 1,111,112 use sessions, and the UW Digital Collections received 15,601,787. Clearly, use of online resources in general has increased in the last decade, and this pattern holds true for the UW Digital Collections. Of particular interest are statistics that show a remarkable increase in *FRUS* use in the past two years. In 2008, *FRUS* received 245,655 use sessions, while in 2010 UWDC tracked nearly four times as many use sessions for this collection, logging 1,111,112. Increased marketing and outreach efforts by UWDC staff and ongoing promotion by SHAFR and, in particular, the SHAFR Teaching Committee members may account for some of this growth.

Major development projects currently underway at the UWDC include the following: (1) a new platform to host digital content, allowing images, texts, audio, and video to be searched together; (2) a new Fedora-based infrastructure (repository) for storing digital objects; (3) new and greatly improved search capabilities; (4) a new Joomla-based content management system to host a redesigned UWDC website; (5) migration to a MODS-based metadata scheme (allowing for greater object description and preservation standards for digital objects); and (6) merger with MINDS@UW, our institutional repository that is a faculty self-submit online archive.

*Vicki Tobias is Digital Services Librarian at the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections Center.*

### Teaching with the University of Wisconsin Libraries' Foreign Relations of the United States

*Richard Hume Werking*

I can't remember just when it was that I learned that the University of Wisconsin Libraries had begun to digitize the *Foreign Relations* series, but it was at some point during a sabbatical in 2004. I was delighted to discover that the UW libraries, which I knew well from my time in graduate school at Wisconsin in the 1970s and with which I had stayed in touch over the years, had taken on this very important and useful project. (As this audience undoubtedly knows, the State Department's Office of the

Historian began to publish *Foreign Relations* in digital as well as print-on-paper format with the Kennedy administration volumes in the 1990s.) When I contacted UW library director Ken Frazier (partly because I was interested in our library at the Naval Academy doing more with digitization), I was surprised to learn that the UW libraries did not have a grant to fund this huge undertaking. Instead, they were taking it out of

hide. The project and the university seemed to me to be a really good match. Both UW and the state of Wisconsin have long had a tradition of public-spirited and substantive work on behalf of the larger public good. Moreover, the university has also had a long tradition of excellence in the field of American diplomatic history, including on the faculty such well-known names as Fred Harvey Harrington, Howard K. Beale, John DeNovo (who was my major professor), Tom McCormick, John Milton Cooper, Jeremi Suri, and, probably best-known, William Appleman Williams, who like Lloyd Gardner, Walter LaFeber, and Tom McCormick, trained under Harrington. Indeed, Tom once told me that in the late 1950s Williams had read the entire *Foreign Relations* series and had at least turned every page in the *Congressional Record*.

When I spoke to Ken Frazier about his library's project, he steered me to Vicki Tobias and the Digital Collections Center. After conversations with Vicki and Ken, I spent some time during the next year or two poking around with contacts at the Government Printing Office and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, to see if we might be able to come up with money to fund the digitizing of those many volumes that remained. I wasn't successful. Meanwhile Ken, Vicki, and their colleagues continued to churn out the digitized volumes.

SHAFR actually might have contributed some moral support to this effort. At one point Ken told me that it was important for the UW librarians, who were determining priorities for digitizing, to know that the digitized materials were significant contributions to teaching and scholarship, and he said that a letter from SHAFR to him and to the acting library director that year (the multi-talented Frazier was at that time acting Chief Information Officer for the whole university) might help give the *Foreign Relations* series a high priority. SHAFR Executive Director Peter Hahn graciously wrote a letter emphasizing how important this undertaking was to the work

of SHAFR's members, and it is my understanding that the letter helped.

Such cooperative action is an example of one of my hobbyhorses: the possibility of libraries and professional associations collaborating on projects of mutual interest. Another example, which we talked about in a recent Teaching Committee meeting, is the possibility of libraries and scholarly associations working together to preserve, in electronic form, bibliographies of secondary works. Any of you who share my frustration about one publisher's treatment of recent editions of a well-known book on the Cold War (dropping the bibliography, claiming to maintain a website containing same, and then failing to do so) will know what I mean.

Moving to matters more directly related to teaching, one event in particular underscores for me the enormous value of this project for our work. In the winter of 2006 I was in China with a delegation of librarians from the Association of College and Research Libraries, visiting our Chinese counterparts. We were in Shanghai, sitting in the back row of a classroom where a member of our delegation was providing an introductory overview of U.S. libraries for our Chinese colleagues, and I decided to travel, virtually, back to the United States. Using a library computer, I got onto the UW libraries website and into the *Foreign Relations* series in order to undertake a rescue mission. I needed to help one of my students in the sophomore research course I was teaching, a former Marine enlisted man, who was struggling to make progress on his paper topic. In terms he certainly would have understood, although I didn't share the metaphor with him, I was trying to drag a tired foot soldier, struggling under a full load, toward the finish line after an all-night march.

Coincidentally, my student was working on U.S.-China policy in the late 1940s and the State Department's "White Paper on China" of 1949. So there I was, in the library of a university in Shanghai, in a room full of Chinese and visiting Americans, reading the correspondence associated with the drafting and distribution of the White Paper, especially the disagreements between Secretary of State Dean Acheson on the one hand and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the other. As you may know, Johnson in particular thought it was a lousy idea to issue any such document, and he made that clear in his correspondence with the secretary of state. The whole

scene—reading this correspondence while in China and among the Chinese—was something of an out-of-body experience for me. In the end, I was able to email my student with some directions derived from my explorations, with good results.

I have written before about the importance of arranging for engagement and encounters in teaching, including, as Bill Williams put it once in a piece he wrote for the *OAHS Newsletter*, sending undergraduates “off into the bowels of the library to read other people’s mail.” This immersion into substantive primary sources is exactly the sort of encounter that prompts student engagement with the subject and really brings it to life.

Project Intrex at MIT in the 1970s and other user studies in the library literature have shown repeatedly that proximity to library resources greatly increases the likelihood of their getting used. We have all been used to that truism in terms of physical proximity, but as we know, it also applies to virtual proximity. Digitized materials like the *Foreign Relations* series are seeing increased use. The example of my use, in China, of important documents in the history of U.S.–China relations demonstrates the benefits of having easy access to materials online and having the ability to direct students to those materials—all without leaving one’s desk.

In the research seminar I mentioned, I consistently give the students a series of four assignments designed to familiarize them with library resources. The final one requires them to use the *Congressional Record*, the *Public Papers of the Presidents*, and the *Foreign Relations* series. For the last few years I have asked them to compare the paper and electronic versions of the *Foreign Relations* series. The results?

One of my better students was quite enthusiastic, noting that UW’s digitized version “seemed to be vastly more efficient than the paper copy. It allows for easy accessibility and the ability to print out the desired pages and mark them. The paper copy would be superior only in the event of technical failures associated with the electronic copy.” Note, by the way, that he still likes working with the paper copies, but the storage mechanism he prefers is electronic.

Although there is a widespread impression that college students always prefer online to print on paper, I haven’t found that to be the case. In fact, most of my students (though not all, obviously, given the testimony you just heard) prefer to browse through bound volumes to

encounter something of interest. But if they have a particular subject in mind and want to find information about it, they prefer to go online. And of course they appreciate the convenience of going online when a paper copy isn’t readily available, as I did when I found myself in Shanghai helping a student in the United States get across that finish line.

*The author would like to thank Thomas McCormick, University of Wisconsin, for his contributions to this piece.*

*Richard Hume Werking is Professor at the United States Naval Academy.*

### Assignment on the Origins of the Korean War

Brian Clancy

This is a third-year undergraduate assignment on the American entry into the Korean War. It combines the explanatory essays in chapter one of *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations, Volume II: Since 1914* with the University of Wisconsin’s Digital Collections FRUS. Students are cast in the role of presidential advisor and must analyze FRUS online documents, then make the case in an explanatory essay for the American entry into the Korean War.

#### Course material

a) A copy of *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations, Volume II: Since 1914* (Edition 6 or 7)

b) A copy of the assignment (Attachments “A” & “B”)

c) University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, FRUS, Korean War, Volume VII. Web address: <http://digiocoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-wisc?type=article&id=FRUS.FRUS1950v07&did=FRUS.FRUS1950V07.I0008&q1=Korean%20War>

d) For additional background material including oral histories, chronology, key player biographies, and additional documents, direct students should be directed to The Harry Truman Library’s *The Korean War: Week of Decision*: [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/koreaav1.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/koreaav1.htm).

#### Teaching Objectives:

- 1) Introduce/improve students’ knowledge of digitized collections
- 2) Deepen student analytical skills.
- 3) The short assignment allows students to spend more time editing.
- 4) Have some additive fun with primary documents!

#### Execution:

##### Step 1

Professors should first have students read and discuss the different approaches to studying U.S. foreign relations in chapter 1 of *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations, Volume II: Since 1914*. Once students have a sound foundation of those arguments, they are ready to tackle the assignment.

##### Step 2

Cast students in the role of a powerful Washington attorney and presidential advisor, such as Abe Fortas or Clark Clifford. Give students a copy of the instructions (presidential phone message, attachment “A”) and the list of primary documents drawn from the FRUS online at the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections (attachment “B”).

##### Step 3

Ask students to read the documents looking for a trend that best supports one of the explanatory essays in chapter one of *Major Problems*. (I instruct students to winnow out an enabling factor from a sea of contributing factors.) Have students write the president (that’s you!) a four-page memo offering their analysis about what drove the Truman administration to war in June 1950.

#### Example:

*Clifford, Student Smith, and Warnke  
Attorneys and Counselors at Law  
815 Connecticut Avenue  
Washington, D.C., 20006*

July 26, 1965

Dear Mr. President,

*After consulting the documents you sent me, I have concluded that President Truman chose to wage war in Korea for economic purposes. Allow me to elaborate...*

Optional:

To make this assignment more challenging, incorporate additional government documents available online at the Harry Truman Library: [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/koreaweek1docs.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/koreaweek1docs.htm).

Student Instructions

Assignment: Outbreak of the Korean War, June 24-July 1, 1950

Clifford, (your name), and Warnke  
*Attorneys and Counselors at Law*  
815 Connecticut Avenue  
Washington, D.C., 20006

Phone Message

July 24, 1965

From: President Johnson  
Taken By: Your personal secretary

President Johnson called while you were at the Metropolitan Club. He's heading to Camp David for the weekend and would like your private advice on a pressing foreign policy matter. As you're aware, the president is contemplating sending American ground forces to South Vietnam.

Given your service to President Truman and your expertise on Cold War related issues, the president specifically wants to know what drove the Truman Administration to war in South Korea in June 1950. Your answer will help White House speechwriters prepare an address for the president on the Vietnam situation. To refresh your memories of Korea, the President has sent over a series of primary documents from the June 25 to July 1, 1950 period. Some will be more useful than others, but you can judge them for yourself.

President Johnson wants your four-page assessment by (your due date) so his assistant Jack Valenti can include it in his nightly reading package. The president added that he would be pleased if you could join him at the LBJ Ranch next week for cocktails and a high-speed driving tour of the Texas Hill Country.

Attachment "B": List of Assignment Primary Documents:

Source: University of Wisconsin Digital Collections. *Foreign Relations of*

the United States, 1950. Korea: Volume VII (1950) *The Outbreak of Hostilities in Korea*; response of the United States and the United Nations to events in Korea, June 24-30, 1950.

Web Address: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&id=FRUS.FRUS1950v07&did=FRUS.FRUS1950v07.i0008&q1=Korean%20War>

- 1) Telegram from the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, June 25, 1950. p. 139.
- 2) Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, June 25, 1950, p. 148.
- 3) Memorandum of Conversation by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup) June 25, 1950, p. 157. (Omit General McArthur's attached memo regarding the annexation of Formosa)
- 4) Telegram from Bohlen to Kennan, June 26, 1950, p. 174.
- 5) Telegram from the Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State, June 26, 1950, p. 175-176.
- 6) Telegram from the Ambassador to the Netherlands (Chapin) to the Secretary of State, June 26, 1950, p. 185.
- 7) Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, June 27, 1950, p. 186.
- 8) Memorandum of Conversation by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup) June 27, 1950, p. 200-203. (Notes of Meeting in Cabinet Room White House with President Truman)
- 9) Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, June 27, 1950, p. 211.
- 10) Telegram from the Secretary of State to All Diplomatic Missions and Some Consular Offices, June 29, 1950, p. 231.
- 11) Telegram from the Commander-in-Chief, Far East (MacArthur) to the Secretary of State, June 30, 1950, p. 248.

Brian Clancy teaches at the University of New Brunswick, Canada.

The University of Wisconsin  
Libraries' Digital Foreign Relations  
of the United States  
From a Student's Perspective

Robert M. Morrison

At the 2010 SHAFR conference in Madison I participated in a roundtable discussion on the use of the digital *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* collection in teaching U.S. diplomatic history.<sup>1</sup>

When I first spoke with Dr. Richard Werking about the proposed theme for this roundtable, he expressed an interest in including students' perspectives in our discussion. After some initial brainstorming, we decided to survey both undergraduate and graduate students in order to determine their use of the digital *FRUS* collection as both a research and a teaching tool. At the roundtable I reported on the survey results, which provided a useful look at how students at various stages in their academic careers engage with the collection and also included a number of suggestions for possible improvements.

I designed the survey to provide the best answers to three basic questions: (1) How do graduate and undergraduate students engage with the digital *FRUS* collection in their own research and, in the case of graduate students, in the preparation of lectures and other in-class teaching material? (2) What do students think are the most positive and negative aspects of this database as a research and teaching tool, and are they likely to engage with this resource in their future work? (3) Are there any possible additions or other adjustments that might make the digital *FRUS* collection a more effective research and teaching tool from a student's perspective?

On the survey instrument I began by providing a brief explanation of the survey's purpose and a basic set of instructions for completing the various questions. The instructions provided a link to the digital *FRUS* collection site and asked those participants with no previous exposure to the database to take some time to familiarize themselves with the basic functions of the site in order to respond adequately to the questions that followed.<sup>2</sup>

The survey was divided into two general sections—one on research and one on teaching—that included similar groups of yes-or-no questions as well as more elaborate, open-ended ones. The open-ended questions were designed to elicit the most effective representation of each individual respondent's specific experience with the digital collection. Section One (research) was open to both undergraduate and graduate students, and I received a variety of excellent responses to these questions from both groups. I did not require undergraduate participants to complete Section Two (teaching), although they were invited to offer any suggestions for how the resource might best be used in the classroom.

While only a small handful of undergraduates reported any

previous exposure to *FRUS*, about 90 percent of the graduate student respondents reported consulting the collection, with 60 percent claiming to have consulted the online database for three to six separate projects.

Respondents were then required to provide a more specific explanation of their past experiences with the database. How did they engage with the site? Did they utilize the search engine? A Boolean search? Reports of specific experiences varied depending on the level of experience with the database. For instance, the majority of undergraduate respondents simply browsed the site. Some students entered various key words from the previous week's class lecture on the Cold War into the search engine. Their responses were generally positive, albeit brief.

The graduate respondents offered much more in-depth analysis. Many described some of their specific projects that utilized evidence from the *FRUS* database in the past. These ranged from studies of Union foreign policy during the Civil War to U.S. reactions to Generalissimo Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Some employed a straight table-of-contents or volume-by-volume approach, focusing on the years and regions specific to their topic and simply perusing each entry for appropriate material. Matt Jacobs of Ohio University utilized this approach while conducting research for his master's thesis on U.S.-Cuban relations during the Cold War. He appreciated the chronological layout of the volumes. However, the search engine was an integral part of his decision to consult the digital *FRUS* collection. He used this speedier and more convenient option to locate references to specific individuals relevant to his work, such as John Foster Dulles, Philip Bonsal, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara. Others also opted for the speed and convenience of the search engine, including an anonymous Temple student who employed the search option to locate material on Abraham Lincoln's foreign policy during the Civil War.

In fact, the speed and accessibility of the search engine were overwhelmingly the most positive aspects of the database in terms of its usefulness as a research tool. Some respondents with experience using the Department of State digital *FRUS* database claimed that the Wisconsin search option was far superior. According to Brandon Williams of University of Colorado, Boulder, the usability of the Wisconsin collection's search/scan feature elevated it above and beyond the State Department version. One of the Temple

respondents preferred being able to search the text directly, rather than being forced to consult an index. One student was particularly impressed with the "Boolean" feature, since it allowed him to reduce more than seventeen pages of search results to three by starting with a broad search of "World War II" and then filtering responses to include only those entries that dealt specifically with U.S.-Soviet relations.

Although most respondents described a generally positive experience with the website, both groups offered a variety of critiques when asked to describe the site's least positive aspects in terms of research. One of the most consistent complaints was the lack of updated material. Students working on more recent time periods suggested that they would be more likely to utilize the database if it covered more recent material. In the eyes of some of these respondents, the Wisconsin database was less satisfactory than the State Department's because the latter consists primarily of volumes covering the period since 1960.<sup>3</sup> A few complained that the homepage was confusing and difficult to navigate and suggested replacing the hypertext links with buttons in order to improve the overall navigability of the site. Other gripes focused on more aesthetic concerns, with one student reporting that the color scheme hurt her eyes and another suggesting that the site should be more "graphically appealing."

But some of the most relevant commentary centered on the actual performance of the database itself. For instance, there were a number of concerns about the PDF option. Students claimed that the larger size of the files hindered efficient downloading. One respondent indicated that this was another area where the State Department's site was superior, since it "allows the researcher to download specific documents, making it possible to create a digital research file," whereas the Wisconsin version does not. Other students focused their complaints on the search option; they felt that the Boolean search parameters should be expanded even further to account for confusing terms and different spelling options.

The responses were far less specific in Section Two, but there were still some points worth noting. First, ninety percent of graduate students reported assisting a professor with at least one class in which the digital *FRUS* database would be an applicable teaching tool, and almost half of the respondents said they participated in at least one class

where the professor did consult the collection for a lecture or some kind of other kind of in-class tool. A few said that they had suggested the database to their undergraduate students as a potential source for an assigned paper. Finally, students thought the most appealing aspect of the database in terms of its use as a teaching tool was its ability to provide undergraduates with an excellent introduction to primary source research. They suggested that since undergraduates are maturing in an increasingly digital age, they might be more comfortable using an interactive site like the digital *FRUS* collection than they would be hunting for documents in a library.

While these responses provide an interesting look at how students are currently engaging with the digital *FRUS* collection, perhaps the most useful contributions of the survey are the various recommendations for improving the site.<sup>4</sup> Aside from basic structural or aesthetic changes, the most popular suggestions fit within one of three categories:

1) *Updating the collection.* A number of respondents complained of the lack of more recent *FRUS* volumes in the online database (see note 3). The database does not include material past 1960, and as a result, students interested in more contemporary topics are forced to consult the more updated Department of State version instead. However, many of these students indicated they would prefer to consult the Wisconsin version if it included more recent material. One student suggested that Wisconsin should collaborate with with the State Department Historian's Office in order to update both collections—i.e., providing earlier volumes to State in return for more recent volumes.

2) *Making the site more "user-friendly."* A number of suggestions focused on the database's general usability. These suggestions included a tutorial for first-time users featuring basic navigation instructions, a complete list of Boolean search options, and a handful of examples that demonstrate some of the most effective ways to use the site—in other words, "An Idiot's Guide to *FRUS*," to quote one respondent. Others called for additional search options/criteria and an expanded Boolean option. And a number of respondents offered more general suggestions, such as enabling users to view multiple pages at once, bookmark specific pages while browsing, and, in order to decrease the size of PDF files, download individual documents instead of a

range of pages.

3) Offering more options geared specifically towards teaching. Many of these suggestions described a separate tab for "Teaching Tools" (or some other appropriate label) to be included with the other site options ("Home," "Search," etc.). The tab could provide undergraduates with a window onto the kinds of materials available in the database (in addition to piquing their curiosity and encouraging further searches) by redirecting them to lists of important or popular documents from the *FRUS* collection that feature a well-known historical issue or event. It could also provide lists of possible lecture topics for teachers, as well as a variety of model outlines, suggestions for class discussions and assignments, and a handful of relevant links for each topic. In addition, it could open a separate student portal featuring lesson plans, helpful hints and guidelines for primary document research, timelines, and instructions (or a brief tutorial) for proper citation formatting.<sup>5</sup>

As for the likelihood of future use indicated by the results of this survey, 100 percent of the graduate students participating in the study indicated that they would be likely to continue to engage with the digital *FRUS* collection in their future research, and just over 70 percent reported that they would be likely to utilize the resource as a future teaching aid as well. Of the undergraduates who participated in this survey, slightly more than half reported that they were very likely to consult the database in the future. Given the overwhelming percentage of first-time users in this group, these numbers seem to suggest that SHAFR has some potential new dues-payers in need of recruitment!

In conclusion, I feel comfortable making at least one prediction based on these survey results. As long as the *FRUS* series continues to serve as one of the foundations of primary research for diplomatic historians, the digital *FRUS* collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will continue to provide an excellent tool for teaching and researching the history of U.S. foreign relations. The talented Wisconsin staff deserves recognition for their excellent contribution to our profession. They also deserve our gratitude for their continued efforts to provide a more effective instrument for learning about the past.

Robert M. Morrison is a doctoral student in the Department of History at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Notes:

*Pasport* April 2011

1. I would like to express my appreciation once again to Dr. Richard Werking for organizing the roundtable discussion on the digital *FRUS* collection and for offering me the chance to participate in this project and present my findings. I am also grateful for the opportunity to share my findings in the pages of *Pasport*. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Zeiler, Professor of History, and Dr. Thea Lindquist, Librarian for Collections Research, both of the University of Colorado, Boulder, for their invaluable feedback in designing this survey.

2. I would like to recognize my friends and colleagues at the University of Colorado, Boulder—Doug Snyder, Dan DuBois, Brandon Williams, Ben Montoya, Chris Foss and Chris Lay—for their individual contributions to this study and for distributing this survey to the undergraduate students in their teaching assistant recitation classes. Special thanks go to Doug Snyder for his effort in collecting the majority of undergraduate responses and for providing valuable feedback throughout the course of this project. I would also like to thank my good friends Matt Shannon (Temple University) and Matt Jacobs (Ohio University) for distributing this survey throughout their own graduate departments as well as for their outstanding individual contributions to the project as a whole.

3. It is likely that many of these respondents were unaware that the State Department—the traditional publisher of the *FRUS* series—began making its volumes available electronically as recently as the 1990s, beginning with material from the John F. Kennedy administration. Consequently, the University of Wisconsin Libraries determined early on to focus its efforts on the century of *FRUS* that was not available electronically (and would otherwise likely not be available for some time). Thus by design the most recent materials in the UW collection are those from the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration.

4. These suggestions come directly from the surveys themselves and do not necessarily represent my personal thoughts on improving the database. Although I have tried to avoid suggestions that are blatantly impractical or otherwise irrelevant, I am admittedly naïve regarding the feasibility of the various suggestions in this report. My apologies to Vicki Tobias and the rest of the staff at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Memorial Library Digital Collections Center if any of the following

suggestions are unreasonable in any way.

5. During this summer's roundtable discussion, Dr. Werking remarked that although the suggestions offered in this third category were good ones, perhaps the Teaching Committee or some other willing SHAFR volunteers might offer to work with the UW Digital Collections Center staff in the preparation of any such materials. Such a contribution would not only demonstrate SHAFR's commitment to the continued development of the digital *FRUS* collection, it would also encourage more direct communication between scholars and developers regarding the most positive aspects of the site from a user's perspective. Those interested in contributing to this project in some way should contact Dr. Richard Werking, Library Director and Professor of History at the United States Naval Academy, ([rwerking@usna.edu](mailto:rwerking@usna.edu)), or Ms. Vicki Tobias, Digital Collections Librarian at the University of Wisconsin Libraries ([vtobias@library.wisc.edu](mailto:vtobias@library.wisc.edu)).

#### Enhancing Student Writing and Research with *FRUS*

Nicole Phelps

In digitizing the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, the University of Wisconsin has provided the scholarly community with an invaluable resource for teaching and conducting research. The digitized collection ensures broad access to the documents, benefiting instructors and researchers at schools with less extensive libraries. Those who work at institutions with large libraries have benefited, too. I am sure that many of us have felt the intellectual elation that can come from discovering unexpected information and connections via a full-text search and the joy—and relief!—of being able to find a document for class at the last moment without having to budget the time to go to the library.

In addition to enhancing reading lists and research projects, the *FRUS* documents can be used to craft writing assignments that are both creative and intellectually rigorous, and I will offer some ideas about such assignments here. In teaching with *FRUS*: instructors should think carefully about how the series shapes the definitions of "foreign relations" and "diplomatic history" and create their reading lists and writing assignments accordingly. Finally, I would like to raise some issues for faculty advising graduate students

and crafting funding packages or fellowships as more and more documents—in *FRUS* or in other collections—become available online.

The *FRUS* series contains documents in a number of genres, including dispatches from the field, instructions to diplomats abroad, memoranda and policy statements for use within the Department of State and the U.S. government more generally, and communications to and from foreign governments. These documents can provide models for student writing assignments that move beyond the traditional—and still extremely valuable—thesis-driven essay. For example, students might be asked to put themselves in the position of a lower-level State Department employee and write a memorandum for the secretary of state or the president that concisely summarizes a situation, provides multiple policy options, and recommends a specific policy choice. They might write a memo to another U.S. government agency—the Department of Defense or the Department of Commerce, perhaps—that explains the State Department's position on a given issue or elucidates treaty provisions with which those departments need to comply. Still inhabiting the persona of a State Department employee, they might use *FRUS* documents to craft a public speech or congressional testimony in which a representative of the department explains the department's position on a given issue. Depending on what access students have to foreign newspapers and documents, they could craft a report on conditions abroad as if they were ambassadors reporting to Washington. Stepping outside the State Department, students could imagine themselves as representatives of a foreign government stationed in the United States and craft a dispatch reporting on conditions and/or public opinion in the United States. All of these assignments could be broadened to require students to write the recipient's response, too, obliging them to engage with multiple perspectives.

Writing in numerous genres certainly provides students—and the people who read their work—with variety that can stave off boredom, but it also has greater pedagogical benefits. It helps students understand what makes each genre unique in terms of content and structure, and it also focuses their attention on differences in intended audiences, the purposes of each type of writing, and appropriate tone. By parsing out these issues in creative writing

projects, students can more clearly see what is supposed to go into a thesis-driven essay and how to distinguish argument from opinion. (Teachers might also extend the exercise to include a discussion of appropriate tone and style in student emails to professors.)

Having a multiplicity of writing assignments enables students with different interests and learning styles to discover and play to their strengths. It may reveal their weaknesses as well, so instructors might want to consider dropping the lowest grade or having each student select the piece he or she feels most comfortable with to receive greater weight in an overall grade. Alternatively, instructors might simply allow students to play to their strengths by having a set of options from which they can pick one or two assignments.

One important thing to consider when using creative writing assignments is how students should be citing their work. *FRUS* documents very rarely contain footnotes, so they can't serve as a model for citation. One option is to have students submit an annotated bibliography. Another would be to have them write a process paper that includes a bibliography and explains where they got their information and how they crafted their writing assignment; they might also reflect on how efficient and effective their research and note-taking efforts were.

The writing assignments I have mentioned so far ask students to imagine themselves members of the government and to write in that persona. The *FRUS* series also lends itself well to historiographically focused writing and conversations about the ethics of information sharing. Students could be asked to compare scholarship that came out on a subject before the release of the pertinent *FRUS* volume with scholarship that came after, focusing on what the *FRUS* documents revealed that was unknown to the public before. They might also compare contemporary journalistic accounts with the *FRUS* record, looking for consistency or gaps. These projects lend themselves well to discussions or written reflections on the relationship between democracy and national security and about the role of historians and historical writing in creating national identity. What does the public have a right to know? How does the Freedom of Information Act and the declassification process work? If the public only gets access to information years and years after the fact, what good does it do them? By the time

information becomes available, does anyone outside the historical profession care?

For students and teachers using *FRUS*, it is extremely important to keep in mind what exactly the series is. It is not a complete collection of every document created or received at the State Department; there is a significant editorial process involved in producing the volumes. Students should reflect on who creates the volumes and why. In my own teaching and advising, I have found the bibliographic essay at the end of A. J. P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* to be a particularly useful reflection on sources in general and published government documents in particular.

In addition, the *FRUS* series helps to create a very specific definition of "foreign relations" and "diplomatic history." My personal experience is with the *FRUS* volumes covering the years through the 1920s, so I cannot speak for the whole series, but those early volumes focus on high politics and economic issues. Administrative matters, consular activities, and other day-to-day matters typically don't make the cut. And, of course, they are government documents, so private activities are not covered unless the government somehow became involved. Instructors should consider supplementing documents from *FRUS* with other texts that lend themselves to other, more recent approaches to the field, including cultural and gender history. Combining *FRUS* with other digital collections such as digitized newspapers and popular periodicals, the Library of Congress's Nineteenth Century in Print collection, and sources from the Center for New Media at George Mason University would help students recognize a broader potential source base for diplomatic history.

Finally, I would encourage faculty to think more generally about the role of digital collections in graduate student training and in their own research. In most historical subfields, archival research away from a student's university is considered an essential aspect of the Ph.D. process. As more and more documents become available digitally, faculty should consider whether trips to the archive are still necessary. I am definitely not saying that people should stop going to archives; I am asking faculty to articulate why archival research is necessary and how it relates to digital research. Can the same intellectual and professional goals be met via archival and digital research? If not, what is unique about archival research that we

cannot dispense with, and should we be finding ways to encourage or require competency in digital research in addition to archival competency? As our graduate students gradually become people who have no idea what the world was like before the Internet, how should we convince them that they cannot do all of their research via the Web and interlibrary loan? Or should they be allowed to do that?

In practical terms, the people who fund graduate student and faculty research should consider whether the funding structures currently in place are well suited to digital research and new technologies. Grants and fellowships typically provide for travel and photocopying costs, and many universities have policies that prevent faculty from using professional development money for equipment purchases—equipment such as digital cameras—unless what's purchased becomes university property. Digital collections reduce or eliminate the need for travel, but they don't reduce researchers' need for time away from other responsibilities; fellowships or grants that don't require the researcher to travel but do buy out teaching responsibilities or support everyday expenses like rent and food—and an Internet connection—would be most welcome. Money should also be available for purchasing cameras for digital photos, which are significantly cheaper and take up less space than photocopies. As technology changes and funding resources become harder to come by, we need to think seriously about our expectations for students and whether or not our funding structures match our research techniques.

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