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Women's History in the Digital World

Women's History in the Digital World 2017

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Jul 6th, 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM

### Recovering Women's Lives in Digital Worlds: A Collaboration in Undergraduate Primary Source Literacy and Research

Elizabeth Novara  
*University of Maryland*

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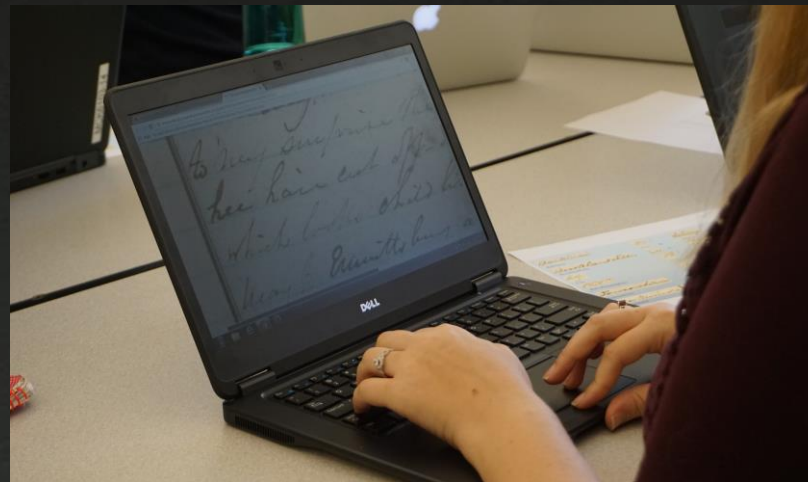
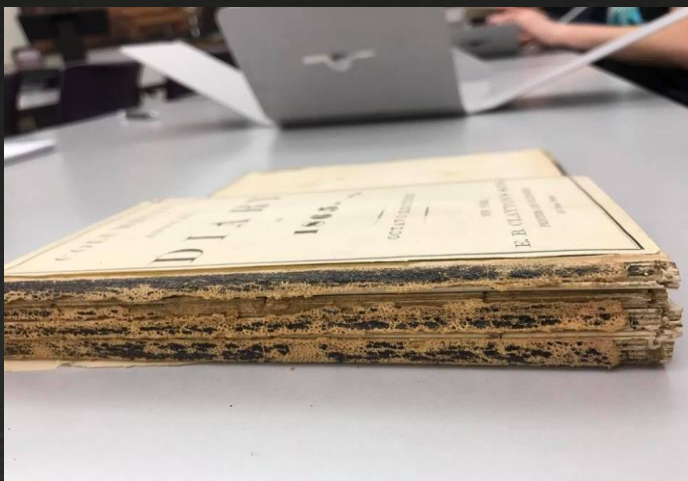
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# Recovering Women's Lives in Digital Worlds: A Collaboration in Undergraduate Primary Source Literacy and Research

Women's History in the Digital World Conference  
July 6, 2017  
Elizabeth A. Novara  
Curator, Historical Manuscripts  
University of Maryland Libraries

# Introduction



- ❧ Undergraduate course at the University of Maryland.
  - ❧ ENGL 347/WMST498V: Women and Public Memory in Material and Digital Worlds
- ❧ Two semesters – spring 2016 and spring 2017
- ❧ Collaboration between English and Library faculty member.

# Introduction

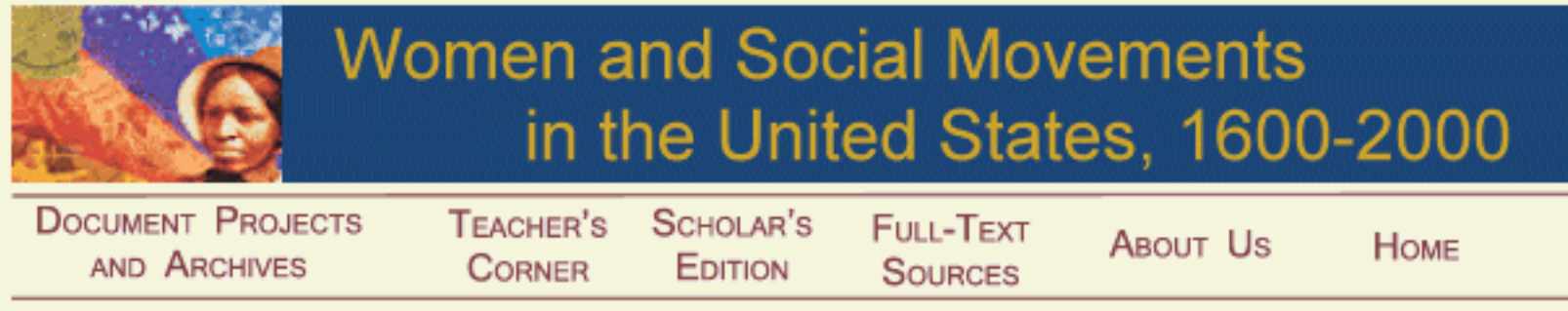


- ❧ Two projects
  - ❧ Remembering Alice Paul's Unknown Sisters (Biography Project)
  - ❧ Transcribing Madge Preston's 1865 diary (Transcription Project)
- ❧ Overview of the projects and strategies for implementing such projects in the classroom.
- ❧ Librarian/curator perspective.
- ❧ Public engagement and collaboration are keys to success.

# Project 1: Recovering the Lives of Maryland Suffragists



- Working with Historian Tom Dublin on enhancing *Women and Social Movements* database through crowdsourced writing.





# Project 1: Recovering the Lives of Maryland Suffragists



- ❧ More traditional research project and traditional library instruction role.
- ❧ Students asked to do research using primarily digital resources.
- ❧ Requested local Maryland women's names as research topics.
- ❧ Presenting research publicly at Undergraduate Research Day.

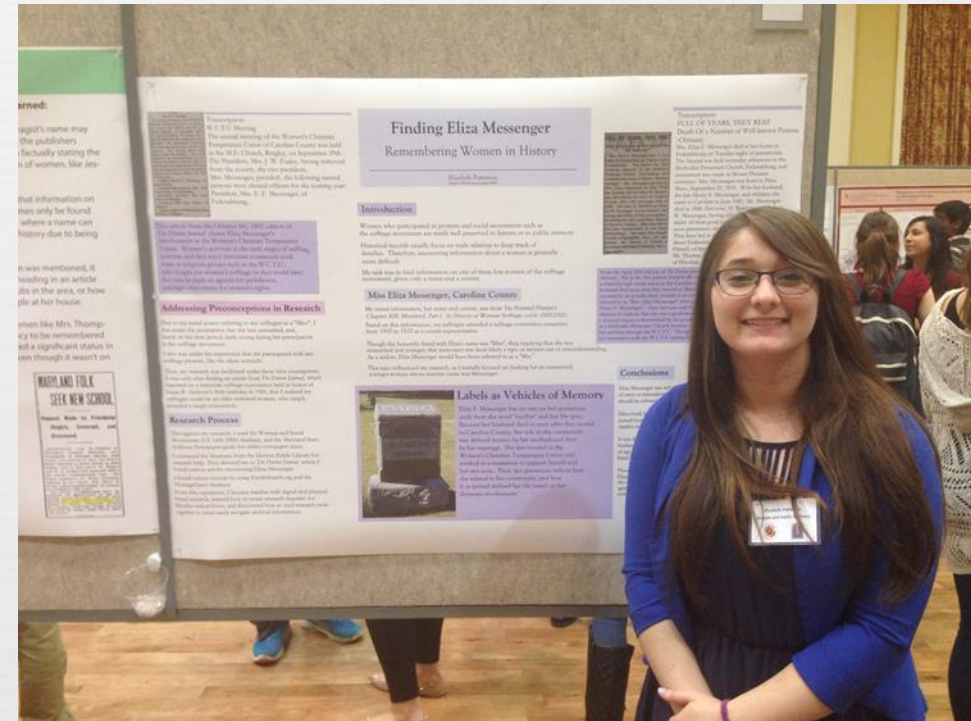
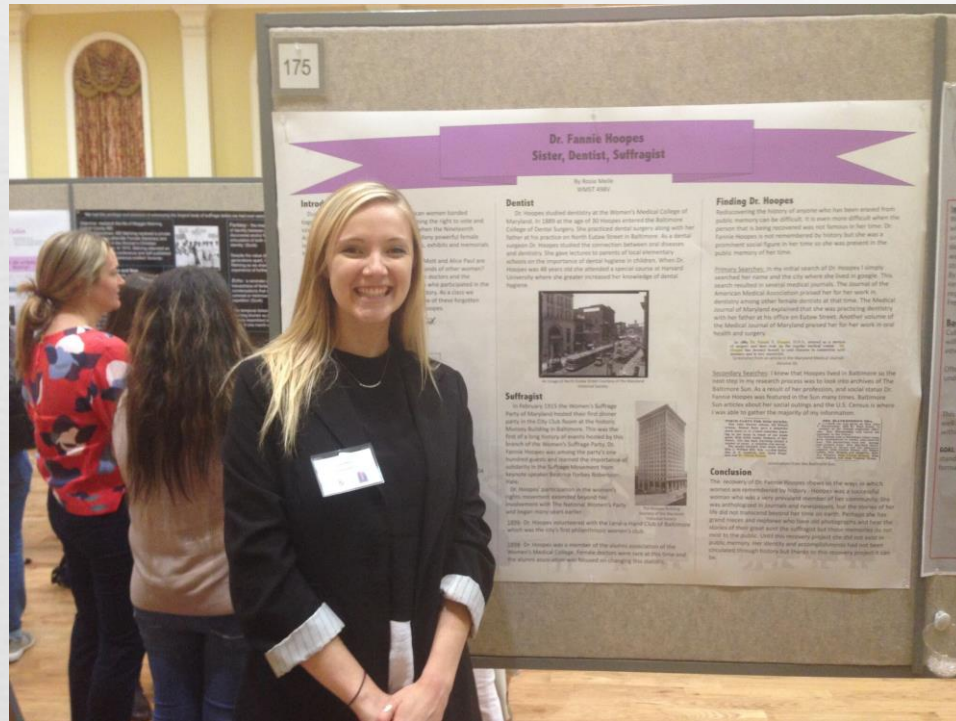
# Project 1: Recovering the Lives of Maryland Suffragists



Philippine Suffrage Movement Exhibit and Presentation, Spring 2017



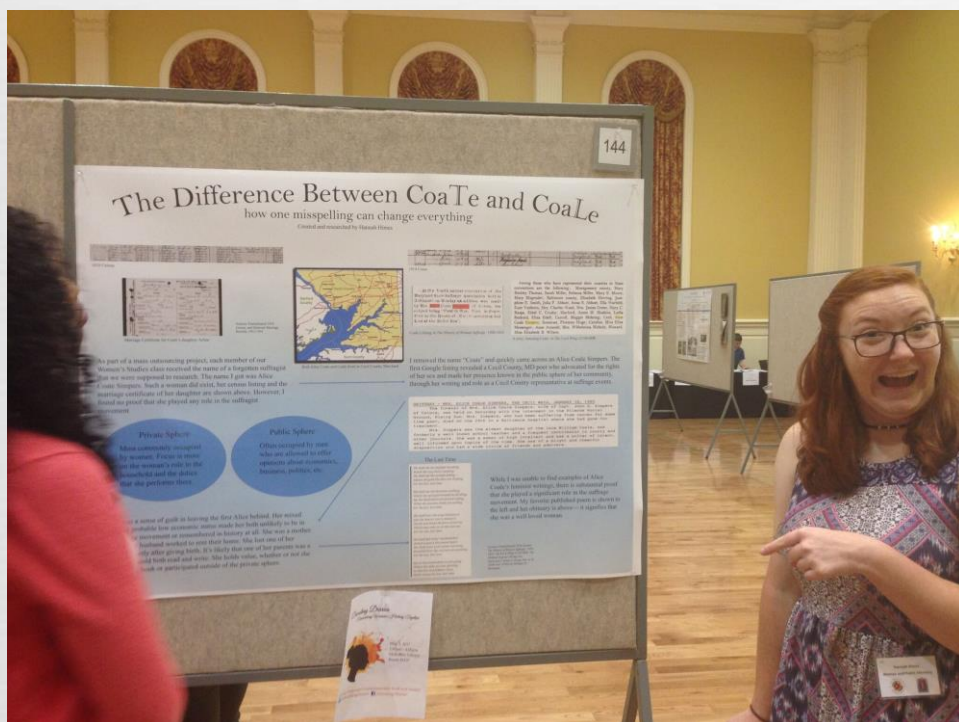
# Project 1: Recovering the Lives of Maryland Suffragists



Undergraduate Research Day Posters and Presentations, Spring 2017



# Project 1: Recovering the Lives of Maryland Suffragists



Undergraduate Research Day Posters and Presentations, Spring 2017

# Project 2 – Digital Transcription



- ❧ Transcribing 5 manuscript pages online through UMD Libraries pilot transcription website: Transcribe MD.
- ❧ Historical context for the diaries already established through previous scholarship.
- ❧ Students visited Hornbake Library to learn about handling of special collections materials and to interact with the original diaries.



# Project 2 – Digital Transcription



Reading the physical diary in the space of the archive

# Project 2 – Digital Transcription



Sign in or register

*Transcribe Maryland*  
DELVE DEEPER INTO HISTORY

Help us transcribe historical documents from Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Maryland Libraries!

Preston Family Papers



Mary Eliza Bradbury Papers

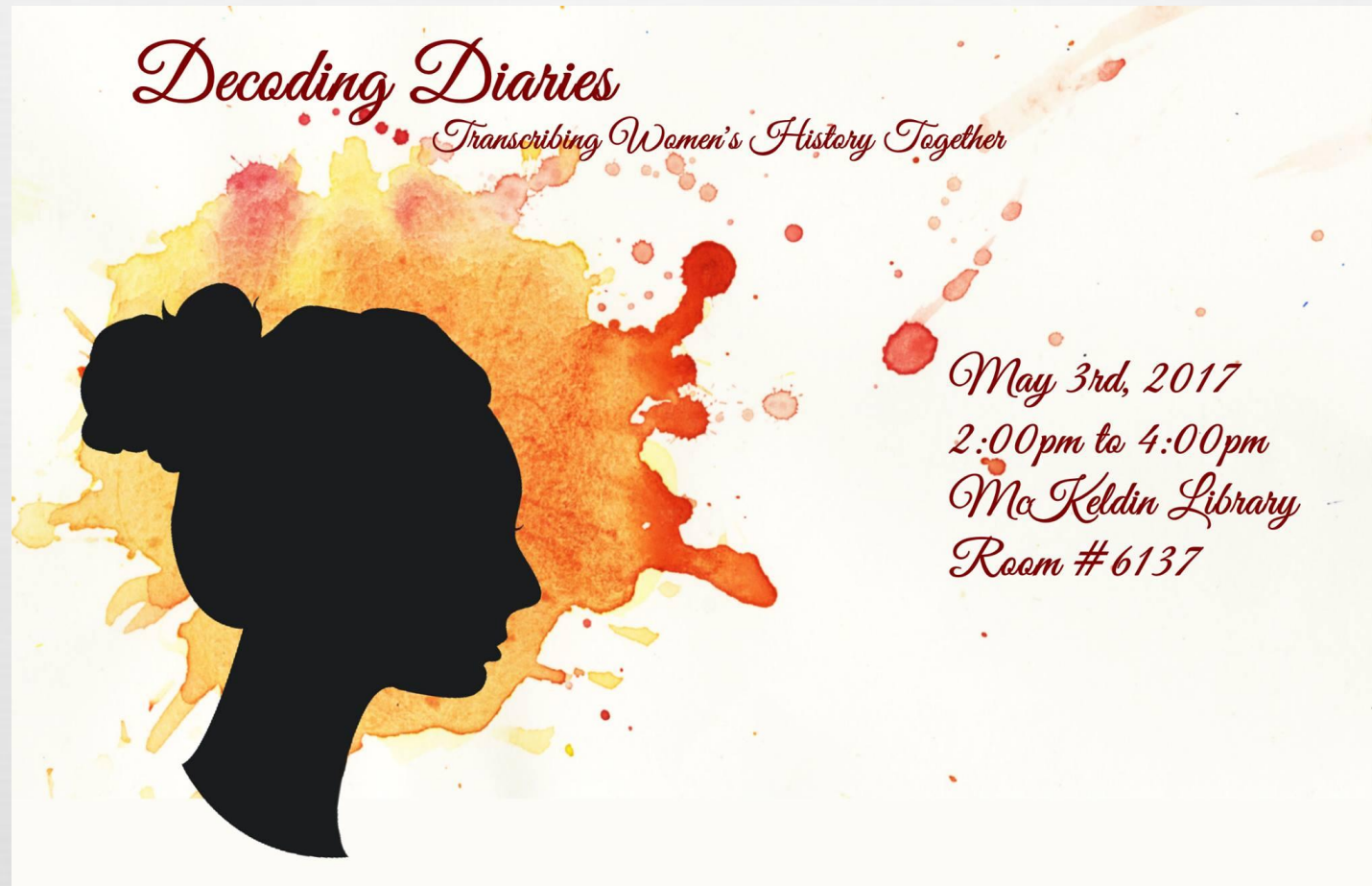


Clara Barton Papers





# Project 2 – Digital Transcription



# Decoding Diaries



# Decoding Diaries



**Transcribing: Digital vs. Archival**  
ANNE SETLIN, CATHLIN MUNZER & JESSIE STECKEL—(ENGL 3792) WOMEN & MEMORY

**Project Overview:**  
Students enrolled in ENGL 3792 were given the task of transcribing a few pages from the 1865 diary of a Maryland native, Mrs. Madge Preston. Prior to digitally transcribing, students handled the actual diary, housed in Hornbake Library. Throughout the digital transcribing process, students noticed major differences in the methods of transcribing digital and physical.

**Conclusion:**  
The physical archive and the digital archive both provide different benefits when audiences are transcribing and researching about documents like Preston's 1865 diary. We have discovered that these differences can affect the transcriber's experience and how they relate to the material. Although digital archives are more accessible for transcribing and offer additional features like zooming, the physical archive provides a more personal connection with the documents that the digital archives are unable to match. These differences must be taken into consideration when researchers are working with both of these methods of transcription.

**Digital Diary:**  
The image to the left is how the entirety of the digital diary appears. Because it is online, students could access it simultaneously from almost anywhere, making transcribing portable. The numbered pages also made it easy to find a specific page by simply scrolling.

**Scanned Pages:**  
The image to the left is a scanned page of Preston's 1865 diary. The digital archive gives readers the opportunity to interact with the text in a different environment. The digital format allows readers to zoom in or search by keyword, making research and transcription a much easier process.

**Physical Diary:**  
The image to the right is an actual diary of Preston's. The series of her diaries are only physically accessible per individual request in the archival room of the Hornbake Library. They are fairly small and extremely fragile considering they are over 150 years old.

**Original Pages:**  
The image to the right is a page from Preston's 1865 diary. The physical diary provides a more personal interaction. For example, the physical pages of Preston's diary have ink variations, personal notes, and even flowers pressed into some pages. Digitally, these unique items are not viewable.

**Personal Connection:**  
By viewing an online website, students failed to recognize the true emotional value of the diary. The digital archive provides less of an emotional connection because users are unable to notice the physicalities of the diary like size and feel of the pages.

**Personal Connection:**  
Students felt a personal connection through turning the pages of the journal inside the quiet Hornbake archive. Experiencing the diary in person gave students more intense personal connection because they got to hold a piece of history, bringing the artifact and author to life.

For more information about all things Preston, visit the Hornbake Library site: [hornbake.lib.msu.edu](http://hornbake.lib.msu.edu)



# Decoding Diaries





# Decoding Diaries



# Decoding Diaries





# Decoding Diaries



# Decoding Diaries - Reflections



- ❧ Thinking like public historians.
- ❧ Public engagement.
- ❧ Close and distant readings of the archive.
- ❧ Importance of physical and digital spaces.



# Conclusion



- ❧ The importance of regional and local information in historical recovery projects.
- ❧ Public engagement contributed to active learning and the creation of new knowledge.
- ❧ Collaboration between instructional faculty and librarian faculty was a major part of the success for this project.
- ❧ Demonstrating the value of special collections and the Libraries to the campus and how we fit into the teaching and learning mission of the university.

# Thank you!



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