

**STS.050 The History of MIT
Spring 2016
Archives Visit Worksheet**

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To learn from primary source material, you must approach the material systematically. Step One is to behave just like a journalist and try to figure out: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW AND WHY. However, you also behave a bit like a scientist and keep detailed notes about where you found the material, all of its identifying inscriptions (e.g., Manuscript Collection Number), and other helpful details such as a physical description that may also offer you clues about a document's provenance, authenticity, and reliability.

I. QUICK REVIEW OF THE MATERIALS

Make a quick first pass and see how many of these questions you think you can easily answer. (Just check off the boxes). You are aiming to get an overview of the material and trying to figure out if it will be useful for your purpose.

- Who are the people represented in these materials? (Some suggestions for what to report: names, titles, positions.)

- What events or activities are documented?

- What are the dates of the materials? When was it created, circulated, annotated, altered? (Give a reasoned guess if it's not clearly indicated.)

- Which geographic places or locations are represented in the item?

- What type of item or document is it? How would you describe it physically?

- What do you think was the purpose of the item? Why was it created? What did its creators want to achieve?

- Who was the intended audience of the item? Who might have seen it? Was it for private or public consumption?

- What does this item tell you and what does it leave out? What would you like to ask about it?

- Does this item tell a story?

II. REVIEWING THE MATERIAL

Now go back and try answering the questions. Do not make up answers but if you think you can make a reasonable guess, make note of that. For example, maybe a letter doesn't have a date but the envelope does.

III. DOCUMENTING THE COLLECTION

Imagining you are preparing a bibliography, please document your materials as thoroughly as you can.

What collection do your materials come from?

What is the preferred/required citation format for the Archives/Museum/Historical Society etc. you are working in?

IV. SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT YOUR MATERIALS

What other kinds of information can you derive from your materials?

Do you think your materials are authentic? Why or Why not?

Are there other sources you need or want to consult to verify your sources?

Other Notes

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