

Using the Harry Ransom/Humanities Research Center for your Inquiry

Read this ENTIRE document BEFORE you go to the HRC!!!

The HRC is one of the jewels of humanities research on campus. It is a working research center, so if you choose to examine part of its collections you will need to be respectful of the other scholars. The HRC is a non-circulating library with closed stacks; this means you can only examine the objects you wish to use after you have specifically requested them and within the confines of the Reading Room on the second floor (the Reading Room's hours: Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m.-12 p.m). No material is pulled within thirty minutes of closing time, and all materials must be returned to the circulation desk fifteen minutes before closing (ie, you'll need to block out several hours for your research; showing up at 4:30 on Friday afternoon will not go well for you). Although the HRC has many collections of books, magazine, films, letters, and other material objects related to important cultural events, not all of its treasures are listed in the main database. In order to access some of the items, you will search databases and finding aids only available in the reading room. The librarians at the HRC are helpful and kind, but their first priority is to help scholars who are there to do publishable research, and we need to respect this. **If you have a question or need help finding something please ask your TA, Meghan Andrews (meghan_andrews@mail.utexas.edu), first.** Learning to navigate the HRC might seem daunting at first, and indeed there is a high learning curve for first time users, but if you persist you will have the opportunity to bump elbows with some real treasures.

When you talk with the receptionists and Librarians at the HRC, do NOT refer to this course as a Signature Course; you may refer to it by its title ("Originality in the Arts and Sciences"), call it an honors research course, and name Drs. Scala and Laude as the professors. There have been problems with how Signature Courses used the HRC in the past, but we do have permission for you to use the archive for this project. The safest bet is to just say you are doing research for a paper at leave it at that. If they press you, you can say that Meghan has obtained permission for you to use the HRC from Margaret Tenney, and if there are any further problems, have them contact Meghan directly. **Please note that you are required to sign up for specific Reading Room dates; as you will see, the Reading Room is small and the staff, while excellent, is already very busy, so we need to carefully manage the number of students we send per day. Please email Meghan if you need to sign up for additional days.**

Steps to Using the HRC

1) Begin your familiarization with the HRC online. <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/guide/> Spend some time looking through the *Guide to the Collections of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center* (link above). You should also spend some time surfing through the HRC's website more generally (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/>); look through the research and collection links in particular. Take a gander at what has recently been added to the collections:

<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa/new/> . You may also search the HRC's holdings at the UT library site: <http://lib.utexas.edu> .

2) You can do much of the groundwork for finding your artifacts online, and all materials will be requested online. However, you must physically go to the HRC to examine the artifacts, and they **CANNOT** be removed from the reading room. Some items require 24 hours' notice, while others require a three-day lead time, but most can be retrieved for you that same day (you should be prepared to wait about twenty to thirty minutes, however). The first time you visit the HRC you will need to complete a short orientation and create an account before any request you have submitted online will begin to be processed.

3) Carefully read the section on "Using the Ransom Center Collections" (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/info/>) before heading to the HRC in person.

4) Walk over to the HRC itself. First, stand in front of the building and take a tour of the glass etchings on the outside. Each pair of glass signifies an important collection. You will find a guide to the glass etching just inside the door in the grand foyer; please put it back when you're done.

5) Take a gander at the Gutenberg Bible in the foyer, the first photograph, or wander through the exhibit on the first floor. The current exhibition is *Banned, Burned, Seized, and Censored*.

6) You are now ready to head up to the Reading Room. You will need your UT ID card. You are not allowed to bring anything into the reading room except yellow paper, pencils (both of which are available in the Reading Room), a laptop, and yourself (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/info/>). If you would like to bring along your other version of your artifact, that is *generally* acceptable (though it is not a given), but please be aware that you must register it at the desk outside the Reading Room. All other items must be stored in the lockers provided.

The Reading Room is on the second floor and can be reached by taking the elevator to the left of the main entrance or by using the stairs. When you enter the glass doors of the Reading Room you will find one or more very pleasant receptionists who guard the entrance to the room. The first time you visit, you will need to let the receptionist know that you have never used the HRC before and that you are there to use the archive for a research paper. They will require you to watch a video and then use the provided computer to create a new Research Account. The video will tell you how to request items from the closed stacks (no browsing the stacks here!) and how to check in with the other librarian who guards the Reading Room inside. You will use your account to request materials online (even while in the Reading Room).

Put your things in the cubbies to the right of the reception desk, watch the video, create your account, and, when you're done, check in with the receptionist to get a blue sheet of paper and head on in!

7) You are now inside the inner sanctum. Very few freshmen have the opportunity to breathe the air you are now breathing! Lucky you! The receptionist gave you a blue slip of paper with your name on it; you will need to give this immediately to the librarian inside the reading room at the big desk to your right. She keeps track of all the people who enter and leave the Room to avoid theft. Before you exit, you will need to retrieve your blue slip from her and hand it again to the receptionist in the entrance to the Reading Room. She will also ask you to open your laptop to make sure that nothing has been secreted there. As you look around the room you will see scholars at the many desks doing the same work you are about to do. You will see reference books lining the walls, busts of famous authors, a bank of computers just beyond the librarian's desk, a grey file cabinet and card catalogues against the back wall.

8) Head on back to the file cabinet and look at the tall table next to it. The file cabinet and the card catalogues hold the paper finding aides that are not necessarily available online. You can flip through the files in the grey cabinet (MAKE SURE NOT TO LOSE THE PLACE OF THE FILE, USE ONE OF THE RED "OUT" FILES TO MARK THE PLACE OF ANY FILE YOU REMOVE) they are alphabetically ordered by author's last name (e.g. Milne, A.A.), subject (Africa), and collection (Pfortzheimer). If you can't find something online, don't forget to check the card catalogues and the file cabinet. The card catalogues in the back are also ordered alphabetically. There are more general finding aids (a list of what's in the file cabinet, and a guide to using the card catalogue) on the tall table.

If you're interesting in the medieval holdings of the HRC you can preview some of them on digital scriptorium:

<http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/exist/scriptorium/browse/browseMaps.xml?field1=locations> .

Simply follow this link and scroll to the call numbers that begin with HRC, click on that link and then on the "view image" link on the following page. The Bede Compendium is a perennial favorite:

<http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/exist/scriptorium/individual/TxAuHRH-29.xml?showLightbox=yes> .

9) Requesting something. **The first time you visit the HRC you will likely not be ready to request an item for viewing.** Once you have taken the orientation and know how to navigate the various receptionists and librarians you can begin your research in earnest. Go back through the online finding aids; spend some time flipping through the grey filing cabinet in back. **Get to know your object to the best of your ability BEFORE you request it from the HRC.** When you have decided on an item you would like to look at you will need to request it. Remember the HRC is a closed-stacks collection, so you will need to take this into account when planning your research time. You will make all requests online even if you are inside the Reading Room. Please follow the instructions at the computers in the Reading Room, or click the link to "Request Item" if you found it in an online database. One of the librarian helpers will bring out the materials for you on a cart. When you are done researching for the day you may request that

the item you pulled is kept on the cart if you plan to return the next day. This will make your wait time less the next time you come in to examine your object.

10) When you are done researching return your item to the cart or desk. Ask the librarian for your blue slip of paper and return it to the receptionist outside the reading room. Congratulations, you're a real humanities researcher!

11) In order to get credit for this skill module, see the instructions on the course website.