

Harry Ransom/Humanities Research Center Skill Module (Required if you plan to use the HRC for Inquiry 2 or 3) Please Read the Entire Skill Module 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 within the confines of the Reading Room on the second floor, and only within the often inconvenient open hours of the library (Reading Room: 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. All materials must be returned to the circulation desk fifteen minutes before closing. 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 online. In order to access some of the items, for example all of the manuscript holdings prior to 1400, you will need to dig through the card catalogues and paper finding aids at the back of the reading room itself. The librarians at the HRC are helpful and kind, but their first priority is to help scholars who are there to do publishable research, not to shuttle you through the Reading Room labyrinth. **If you have a question or need help finding something please ask me, Brooke Hunter, your loving TA, 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.

Skill Module Requirements

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/>

2) Walk over to the HRC itself. First, stand in front of the newly renovated building and take a tour of the glass etchings on the outside. Each pain 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.

3) 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 *From Out That Shadow: The Life and Legacy of Edgar Allen Poe*.

4) 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, and yourself.

<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/info/>

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 nice receptionists who guard the entrance to the room. The first time you visit you will need to let the receptionist know that you want have never used the HRC before and that you are there to look around and search the finding aids. They will require you to watch a video and perhaps fill out a

bit of paper work. 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. Put your things in the cubbies to the right of the reception desk, watch the video, get the blue Reading Room pass from the receptionist, and, when you're done, head on into the Reading Room!

5) You are now inside the inner sanctum, very few freshman 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 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. 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.

6) 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 one of my personal favorites: <http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/exist/scriptorium/individual/TxAuHRH-29.xml?showLightbox=yes>

7) 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 from the librarian. Remember the HRC is a closed stacks collection so you will need to take this into account when planning your research time. The HRC has two different types of request slips: the yellow "rare books" call slip and the white "manuscript" call slip. The video showed you how to properly fill them out. Fill out the slip to the best of your ability using the finding aid or the online guide. The call number is absolutely necessary. Once you have filled out your slip, give it to the librarian at the big desk, browse around the reference material on the walls, and find a comfortable spot at one of the reading desks. 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 next time you come in to examine your object.

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

9) In order to get credit for this skill module you will need to write a paragraph or two about your experience at the HRC, including what you pulled from the archive.