

# Hands on History

Empowering Students and Developing Partnership through Experiential Learning

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*Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future. -Elie Wiesel*

Consider: without *archives*, there is no memory; without memory, there is no *history*.

# Session Overview

- Special Collections as Centers for Learning and Collaboration
  - Example: The American History Textbook Project (Ramapo College)
    - Internal Initiatives (pedagogical and institutional)
    - Community Initiatives
- Students as Leaders
- Lead, Don't be Led
- Future Plans

# The Value of Archives in Academia

- Local resources/collections (generally) tied to the institution's mission and vision
- Provides students with practical hands-on archival experience
- Allows students to consider coursework beyond the theoretical



“I rather think that archives exist to keep things safe – but not secret.”

-Kevin Young, American Poet and scholar

# The American History Textbook Project

Founded at Ramapo in 2009 as a student and faculty-led initiative. Given to the library as a special collection the same year.

Began as about 25 primarily nineteenth century textbooks and has grown to over 350 American History textbooks spanning 1824-2015.

**Purpose:** For researcher to critically study changes in the historical and educational narrative over time within American history textbooks and other key curricular materials.

Recent support for digital initiatives has allowed more opportunities to learn and develop different archival and technical skills associated with primary source materials.



# The Power of the Classroom

- Library sessions and workshops, particularly those engaging with primary sources from Special Collections, can have a positive impact on continued and desired library initiatives
  - At Ramapo, sessions have:
    - Contributed to library-led pedagogical initiatives (embedded collections and assignment development)
    - Led to more engaged student workers applying for positions (the expected and unexpected)
    - Unique collaborations (Friends of Ramapo, union/AFT, Holocaust Center)
    - Interest in expanding opportunities in and outside the classroom (impacting financial support)



# From Classroom to Workroom

- Past hiring concerns
  - Class sessions allow for better recruitment options by sparking interest beyond job posting
- Collection Management and Development
  - Working with collections can help build collections and projects (when applicable)
- Expanding faculty collaborations
  - Invited to be included in grant proposals
  - Faculty-student research opportunities
  - Connections to a variety of campus activities

# Building on Work

Permanent and secure Reading Room that allows for more hands-on engagement as well as cross-collaboration.

Digital Access for flexible access and assisting in preservation of more delicate materials:

<https://libguides.ramapo.edu/digitalAHTP>

Tapping into campus initiatives in digital innovation: Development of a more robust research database with student aides using Omeka and other supported DH resources.

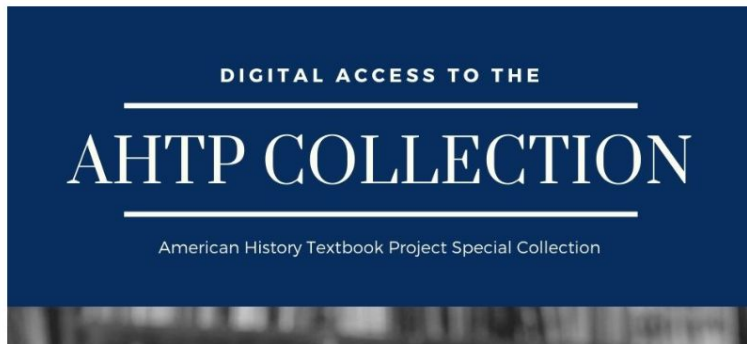
## Digital Access to the American History Textbook Project: Home

Home	FAQ and Other Information	Accessing the Physical Collection	Full Access Nineteenth Century	Full Access 1900-1909	Full Access 1910-1919
Full Access 1920-1929	Full Access 1930-1939	Full Access 1940-1949	Full Access 1950-1959	Full Access 1960-1969	Full Access 1970-1979
Full Access 1980-1989	Full Access 1990-1999	Full Access 2000-	World History Textbooks		

### About this Guide

The following guide provides electronic access to materials within the Potter Library's *American History Textbook Project* special collection (AHTP). Due to copyright restrictions, only materials available through the Internet Archives can be accessed full-text.

*If you have difficulty accessing materials or would like to visit the print collection, please contact the guide administrator and project coordinator, Christina Connor ([cconnor@ramapo.edu](mailto:cconnor@ramapo.edu)).*



### FAQ

Be sure to check the guide's [FAQ page](#) for answers to common questions, like accessing the collection.



### Assessment and Instruction Librarian



### AHTP

[BROWSE](#)[ABOUT AHTP](#)[BROWSE BOOKS](#)[REVOLUTIONARY WAR](#)

The American History Textbook Project (AHTP) was started in 2009 in order to collect American history textbooks for use by Ramapo College students. The collection has grown to over 300 volumes published in every decade from the 1820s to the present. It contains materials intended for high school and elementary school students, homeschool students, and students attending private religious schools, and it includes state-specific editions and teacher editions. The purpose of AHTP is to allow researchers to explore how the treatment of topics and events discussed in these common curricular resources has changed over time, and to consider the impact that change may have had. The full collection is housed in the Special Collections Reading Room at the Ramapo College Potter Library.

For help with the site or access to the physical collection, please contact Christina Connor ([cconnor@ramapo.edu](mailto:cconnor@ramapo.edu)).

# Students as Leaders

# The Classroom as Foundation

Use the classroom as a conversation starter.  
Understand long-term and short-term goals and how students play a role in those.

Short-term goals can allow students to explore personal interests, apply classroom knowledge while also providing visibility to collections and other projects.



# Empower Student Voices

Find ways to capture student engagement and interest. Use these reflections in talks, applications and other ways to generate interest.

These testimonials can be your biggest advocates and help lead to more involvement.



# Empower Student Voices, con't

Beyond speaking about projects, students can also help shape projects and initiatives.

Provide students opportunities to showcase their work beyond college.

Tap into different skill sets for projects.





# Don't Underestimate the Power of a Manual

On long-term projects,  
workers will change, but  
it has to appear that  
they did not.

Clear guidelines, no  
matter who is working,  
benefits projects in the  
long-term.



Additional Areas for  
Consideration:  
Lead, Don't be Led



# Bringing the Archives Beyond the Classroom

- Don't wait for the outside to come to you (*don't keep the archives a secret*). Find collaborations in and outside campus community.
- Examples at Ramapo include:
  - Collaborations with faculty (can sometimes be a delicate conversation)
  - Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies
  - AFT (union) partnership
  - Friends of Ramapo (began in the classroom)
  - NJ Council for the Humanities and NJ Historical Commission
  - High school opportunities (possible through faculty collaborations)
- Partnerships can often impact financial support

# From One Comes Many

Consider piloting an initiative to give you the foundation for future projects and opportunities.

Doing too much can be overwhelming, especially if you are a department of one.



# Know What You Need

And how to sustain it.

Projects can live or die on workforce and funding. Knowing the best (and worse) case scenarios can help you be strategic and lead the conversation.

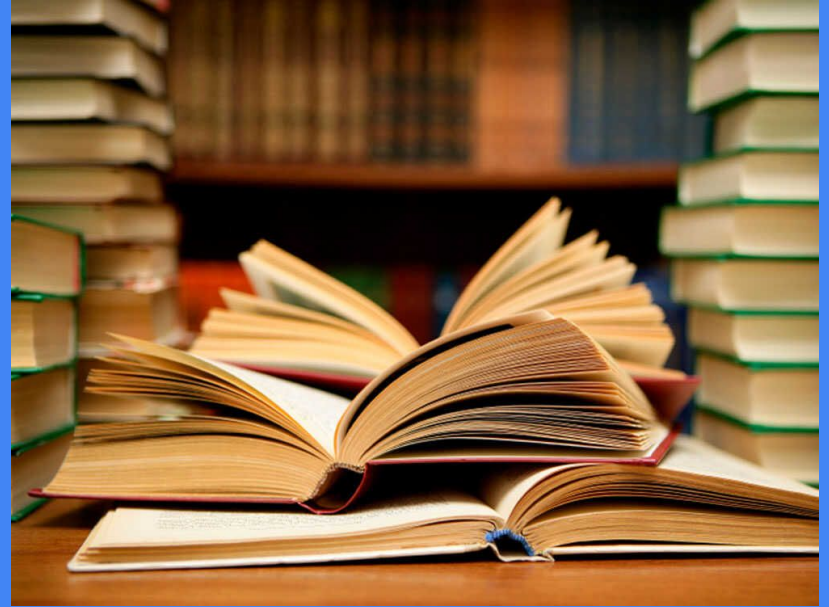


# Future Plans at Ramapo

- Expand projects beyond the American History Textbook Project
- Find more opportunities to expand student involvement
- Sustain current collaborative initiatives while exploring new partners
- Establish more stable financial sources so work isn't in jeopardy at the end of each academic year

# Thank you!

Questions? Comments?



# Contact Me:

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Current AHTP Website:

<https://libguides.ramapo.edu/digitalAHTP>

