Homework 2: Archival Analysis and Evaluation

The first step for this assignment should be to develop some general evaluative criteria to guide the analysis of your archive. In order to do the analysis well and provide a well-reasoned answer to your selected question, you really need to be an expert about the particular aspect of the archive you’re looking at. For instance, if you want to claim that the archive is an ethical representation of its subject, then you really need to know what the subject of the archive is, and how it represents it, inside and out. Take a really significant chunk of time with this first part. List out 5 potential general criteria you might use to guide your analysis. These could include things like organization, style, types of media, and storytelling devices (what these will be can really change depending on your archive), among others. Next to each criterion, write some thoughts on what works well and what works not as well about that criterion. Try to be as specific as possible.

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<th>Evaluative Criterion</th>
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The Four Potential Research Questions
Remember that the research questions for this project are already designed for you (you’ll design your own research question in the next unit). After we spend some class time unpacking each of these questions and what they mean, you’ll want to think through how you might actually use evidence from your archive to answer each one. Spend 10-15 minutes or so freewriting about each question listed below. What would your knee-jerk answer to the question be? What sorts of criteria and evidence would you use to answer each?

Is this archive an ethical representation of its material? If so, how? If not, in what ways could it be improved?

What values does this archive privilege or forward? How does it do this, and is this approach fair and reasonable?
The materials of the archive offer a snapshot of a particular person, event, time, or place. Each of the items in the archive offers a story or narrative. Which stories/which items are the most significant and why?

Considering the voices present in the archive, how are they a fair and equitable representation of the larger social/cultural context? In what ways might there be avenues for improvement?

Selected Question
Here, list the finalized question that you will answer in your essay, and reflect briefly and why you selected it.
Data Pool
Remember that you need really specific pieces of data/evidence to make your answer to your question well reasoned and supported. These could be things like specific documents and texts in your archive, specific types of media, stories, interviews, and so on. For a 4-6-page paper, you will probably need 4-6 really good examples to make your paper sufficiently detailed. In the pages below, list 6 data points. You should include a direct link to it, a screen shot, and a few sentences about why you think it’s important or useful for your analysis and how it might help you answer your research question.

Data Point 1

Data Point 2

Data Point 3
Data Point 4

Data Point 5

Data Point 6
Data Coding
The final step before you begin writing is to code your data. For the purposes of this project, this really means sorting your pieces of evidence into the various criteria you define. Below, simply list each criterion you will use to evaluate your archive, the data points that you will put with each, and a sentence or two explaining why you have put that data point where you have. Note: it is possible that some pieces of evidence might go into more than one category.