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Utilizing resources like the Archives is so rewarding that we may forget how frustrating that work can be. For an undergraduate student with a research question to investigate and pages to fill with writing, an artist's papers are more likely to infuriate than inspire. This is why research projects should frame the archive as a space for generating questions rather than only as a tool for answering them concretely.

A scaffolded assignment I call "Curated Chronologies" begins with students selecting a digitized collection from the Archives. They explore that collection thoroughly, identifying items that speak to one another or reveal a particular theme. These become the backbone of a digital timeline that students flesh out with additional research using primary and secondary sources. Over time, with the benefit of peer review, students compose interpretive texts for each timeline "node," connecting the fruits of their investigations back to the artworks and primary source documents they choose to feature. To construct the final product, students may use a free timeline-building tool that I developed for this project in collaboration with Virginia Tech's Technology-Enhanced Learning and Online Strategies Division (chronologies.tlos.vt.edu). By framing art's history as a chronological narrative, the timeline structure invites students to consider the storytelling choices that shape any account of the past. By relieving the pressure to reach an intimidating page count, moreover, this untraditional writing format encourages students to focus on their investigative work and their relationship with the archival collection that inspired it.

My students have enjoyed discussing these relationships. Reflecting on all the interesting materials from the Kenyon and Louise Cox Papers that she was not able to incorporate into her

final project, one student wistfully recalled viewing a sketch where Kenyon Cox “wrote at the bottom how blue he felt when it rains,” showing he was “affected by the weather, just like me.” If cultivating an emotional investment in their research is as important as building research skills, these seemingly mundane discoveries in the archive are the most valuable teaching tools we have.