Lesson Description
Students will explore and analyze online archival collections and related resources to define and understand the purpose, process, and value in creating and sustaining archives as a means to document and understand humanity. To introduce the concept of an archive in a relevant and meaningful way, students will consider their own activity on various social media platforms as a means of archive creation. Then, in the form of a WebQuest, students will explore the digital archives available on the Harry Ransom Center website to better understand existing archives, their contents, and their purposes. To close the lesson, students will brainstorm what might comprise an archive they will compile themselves as part of a year-long self-directed inquiry project.

Objective
After applying their prior knowledge to construct a definition of the term archive, students will work individually or in pairs to complete a WebQuest exploring the Harry Ransom Center’s digital archives so they may understand and articulate the purpose, process, and value in creating and sustaining archives.

Enduring Understanding(s) & Essential Questions
Global/Thematic: Archives are compilations of meaningful information about specific entities that can be used to better understand those entities and humanity in general.
1. What is an archive? (f)
2. What sorts of artifacts comprise various archives? (f)
3. How are archives compiled? (f)
4. What is the purpose of an archive? (c)
5. How do archives contribute to our understanding of their subjects? (c)
6. How do archives — both compiling and referencing them — facilitate the creative process? (c)
7. Why are people compelled to document and preserve our personal and collective histories? (p)
Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Target standards)

**English III, grade 11:**

(1) Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to:
   (B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to draw conclusions about the nuance in word meanings;
   (C) infer word meaning through the identification and analysis of analogies and other word relationships;

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to:
   (A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts;
   (B) evaluate the interactions of different techniques (e.g., layout, pictures, typeface in print media, images, text, sound in electronic journalism) used in multi-layered media;
   (C) evaluate the objectivity of coverage of the same event in various types of media; and
   (D) evaluate changes in formality and tone across various media for different audiences and purposes.

(24) Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students will use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:
   (A) listen responsively to a speaker by framing inquiries that reflect an understanding of the content and by identifying the positions taken and the evidence in support of those positions.

(26) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate productively in teams, offering ideas or judgments that are purposeful in moving the team towards goals, asking relevant and insightful questions, tolerating a range of positions and ambiguity in decision-making, and evaluating the work of the group based on agreed-upon criteria.

**Vocabulary**

- Archive
- Archivist
- Curator
- Commonplace book
- Manuscript
- Artifact
- Synthesis
Inquiry Project—Intro to Archives and Collections

Time Required
One 90-minute block

Materials Required
- Student and teacher access to the internet
- Student journals or scratch paper (for note taking)
- Folder(s) with photos of non-digital archived material (if applicable)
- Archives and Collections WebQuest, accessible online and/or one hard copy per student or student pair/group. See the “Inquiry Project, Introductory Webquest” document.
- Images from Sarah Coleridge’s commonplace book. Contact Lori Hahn at the UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of the PDF titled “Inquiry Project, Commonplace Book sample.”

Engage
Think/pair/share: (15 minutes total)

Think:
Ask students to consider the following questions, free-writing their thoughts in a journal or on scratch paper: (1) Why are you on social media? What do you do there? (If you aren’t on any social media platforms, why do you think others are? What do you think they do?) (2) Whom do you follow on these platforms? Why do you follow them? (2 minutes)

Pair:
After two minutes, students share their thoughts in groups of two or three. (5 minutes)

Share:
Discuss students’ thoughts as a class. Specific answers will vary, but the discussion should reveal that students are effectively archiving their lives. They’re saving interactions with each other, posting news stories, sharing media they like, creating and interpreting memes, collecting photos in albums and commenting on them, and more. Ask follow-up questions: Why are these actions valuable to you as an individual? Why might they be valuable to us as a society? (8 minutes)

Introduce & Explore
Introduce the term archive to the discussion (if it hasn’t come up organically). In their pairs or triads, students work to craft a provisional definition of the term. Encourage them to brainstorm before they begin crafting — is archive a noun? A verb? Both? Could it also be something abstract? How does it relate to our discussion of social media? What other kinds of archives might there be? What might the process of creating an archive look like? Students are welcome to search online, but should be encouraged to write their own original definition. (5 minutes)

Ask each group to share their provisional definition and explain their reasoning. Students should add to and/or amend their own definitions throughout the discussion. (5 minutes)
Present the following definition of *archive* for students’ consideration:

Archives are the non-current records of individuals, groups, institutions, and governments that contain information of enduring value. Formats represented in the modern archival repository include photographs, films, video and sound recordings, computer tapes, and video and optical disks, as well as the more traditional unpublished letters, diaries, and other manuscripts. Archival records are the products of everyday activity. Researchers use them both for their administrative value and for purposes other than those for which they were created. For example, Native Americans may use archival records to establish legal claims to land and privileges guaranteed by federal and state governments; medical researchers utilize records to study patterns of diseases; authors use archives to acquire a feel for the people and times about which they are writing; historians and genealogists rely on archival sources to analyze past events to reconstruct family histories; and businesses use the records to improve their public relations and to promote new products. In short, archives benefit nearly everyone, even those who have never directly used them.

*http://archivists.org/profession*

How does this definition compare with those students wrote? Considering this definition, ask students to think about offline (i.e., not social media) archives they may have seen, created, even been included in. Have they been to any museums? Do they have physical photo albums or journals, or do they save old ticket stubs or schoolwork? Does Mom scrapbook? Have they ever been in the newspaper for an extra-curricular achievement? Discuss. (5 minutes)

Direct students to the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) website. Describe what the HRC is, the extensive and rare archives housed in its library, and the kinds of work happening there (archiving, curating, restoration, education, research, etc.). To illustrate, share with students photos taken in the HRC Reading Room of Sara Coleridge’s commonplace book (*request supplemental PDF*), explaining to students what commonplace books were and how they were used. (5 minutes)

Share with students that many of the HRC’s collections have been digitized and are available online, and they are about to explore some of those collections through a WebQuest (*see supplemental document with instructions*). Students may work independently or in pairs. The teacher should actively monitor students’ progress and provide guidance. (25 minutes)

Ask students to share the most interesting and/or surprising discoveries they made through their WebQuest with a group/individual near them. Which archives did they choose to explore? What was in them? Did they learn anything new about the archive’s subject? (10 minutes)

Discuss students’ answers to the WebQuest questions and check for understanding. (15 minutes)

Share with students that, over the course of the year, they will be assembling
their own archives (assure them details will follow soon — see Future Lessons below). Ask them to brainstorm individually the sorts of materials those archives might include. They should consider their interests, their schoolwork, milestones they know they will encounter, things they consume and create, and social/political/philosophical issues they care about. Ask a few students to share their ideas, and check for understanding of the definition of an archive (what they are, how they are created, and what they can be used for). (5 minutes)

Future Lessons This lesson is Part I of a year-long inquiry project for students. The project involves independent reading, academic research, multi-draft writing, and presentation skills, and gives students the opportunity to investigate a topic of great personal interest in-depth.

An overview and subsequent parts of the project are explained in detail in the corresponding “Inquiry Project, Overview” and “Inquiry Project, Building the Collections” documents by Balfour/Cutchen.

Resources:
The Harry Ransom Center (http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/)
The Harry Ransom Center Digital Archives (http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/digital.cfm)