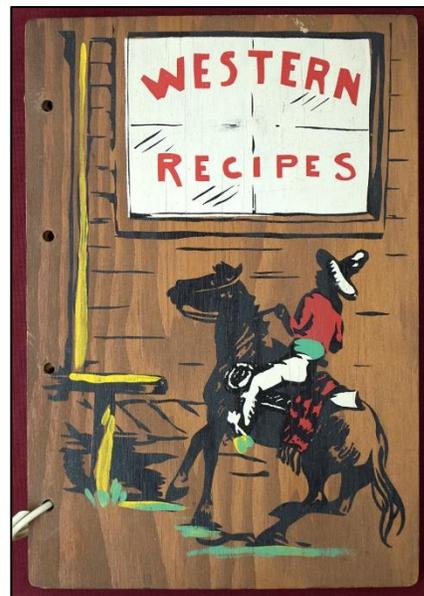


The Cook Took a Look at the Book: Using a Cookbook to Introduce Special Collections Research Skills

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Introduction

This simple activity uses one of everybody's favorite topics—food—to introduce novice researchers to the basic kinds of primary sources available in a special collections library. It also walks students through the best ways to search for materials in UNM's Center for Southwest Research & Special Collections. Students will be able to apply the search skills they gain to most other research projects, regardless of topic.



Audience

- Students in an undergraduate or early-graduate-level research methods seminar.
- Advanced information literacy / library instruction courses.
- Anyone seeking an introduction to primary source research.

Activity

Select one or more cookbooks from the Center's collections. Recommended titles include:

Woman's Club Cookbook (1906)

Recipe Roundup: Cookbook of Southwestern Recipes (1947)

Josefina Velazquez de Leon, *Mexican Cook Book for American Homes* (1956)

Catherine Ulmer Stoker, *Concha's Mexican Kitchen Cook Book* (1946)

Cocinas de New Mexico (1994)

Next, give a brief overview of the UNM Libraries Catalog, the Rocky Mountain Online Archive, the Center for Southwest Research & Special Collections webpage, major digital newspaper resources, LoboVault, and the UNM Libraries' list of databases.

Give each student or group of students a cookbook. Ask them to spend 2-3 minutes looking for a recipe or something else that interests them. Alternatively, you could pre-select recipes that lend themselves well to this exercise.

Ideally, students should bring laptops, but they could also come up to the classroom computer and projector for the next step of the activity and work together with the entire class.

Going back to what you showed the students about how to locate primary sources, ask them to locate one example of each of the following types of sources that is related to the recipe or topic they selected:

Book	Oral history	University Archives
Manuscript	Map	General Vertical Files
Photograph	Ephemera	NM Digital Collections
Newspaper article	Music	

For example, if a student selected a recipe using chilies, he or she might locate the following sources:

Book: Esperanza Ramírez, *Las mejores recetas de cocina mexicana*.

Manuscript: Invoice book (1884) for shipment of chili and other goods, Huning Mercantile Company Records.

Photograph: Photo of chili workers in La Mesilla, Eduardo Fuss Photograph Collection.

Newspaper: Ad for chili pepper ("Keep the In'ards Warm") in the Albuquerque *Evening Herald*, Jan. 17, 1916, at Chronicling America.

Oral history: Interview with Lucinda Sanchez, in which she mentions people coming to Belen, New Mexico, to trade salt for chile.

Map: Location of the Old Town Chili Parlor café on a map of Albuquerque from the 1940s.

Ephemera: Poster, *Chile Pepper Passion*, in Eduardo Fuss Photograph Collection.

Music: Song, "Los chiles verdes," on *Mexican Panorama: 200 Years of Folk Songs*, LP, 1958.

University Archives: Folder on the "International Connoisseurs of Red and Green Chili" in the University of New Mexico. Public Affairs Dept. Records.

General Vertical Files: Files on chile or Bueno Foods

New Mexico Digital Collections: Photo of adobe house with red chile ristras, ca. 1920-40, in the Elizabeth Willis DeHuff Pictorial Collection.

Be sure to point out to the students that depending on what they are searching for, they might have to think about alternative search terms or spellings. Information on chilies, for example, could also be found by conducting a subject or keyword search using terms such as *chili*, *chile*, *peppers*, or even a much broader term like *Southwestern Cooking* or *Mexican Cookery*.

Advanced: Demonstrate the "sort by date" feature in the catalog and ask the students to locate a book from before 1900.

Suggested Topics for Discussion

Students may notice that their searches bring up irrelevant records. For example, a search for *chili* sometimes retrieves information about the country of Chile. Discuss how this is simply a normal hurdle of the research process. Suggest solutions, if possible.

Depending on what topic the students choose, they might not be able to find sources. Discuss how this, too, is a common problem that researchers face, i.e., a lack of information or the need for persistence in finding it. Ask the students what they would do next. Would they continue the search? Locate relevant secondary sources and mine the footnotes? Consult an expert? Broaden their topic? Pick a new topic?

Also consider asking the students if, in the process of searching for information on their original topic, they discovered something else that interested them more. Briefly talk about how it can sometimes be better to let the sources that you have at hand suggest a topic for research, rather than growing frustrated about not being able to find the perfect source for your topic.