

Newspaper as Archive: Contextualizing Andrew Carnegie and Public Library Munificence, *The New York Times*, 1880-1899

ANN BOURNE

Abstract: Newspapers were a primary and significant form of mass communication and of historical record during the late nineteenth century. Identifying newspapers as archives and wrangling the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database facilitate exploratory research into society's changing perceptions toward dramatic cultural shifts at this time in United States history. This investigation demonstrates contextualization of the past through analysis of articles, a preserved collection, regarding Carnegie's funding of public library buildings published in *The New York Times* between 1880 and 1899, a span of years punctuated by the funding of a reading room at the Edgar Thomson Steelworks in Braddock, just east of Pittsburgh, and the dedication of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Framing theory effectively serves such purpose. Examination and interpretation of the digitized representation of historical records found in the newspaper as archive allows expanded interpretation of collective memory: the portrait of an American icon, a nation balancing prosperity and desperation near the close of a century, and Andrew Carnegie as significant and controversial force in the development of public libraries in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era.

About the author:

Ann Bourne directs the William E. Winter Reading Room at the University of Alabama College of Communication and Information Sciences. She is pursuing a doctoral degree in Communication and Information Sciences as she investigates the library's presence in Gilded Age and Progressive Era cultural and social history of the United States.