

Historical Contexts of Innovation

Session II: Narratives of Innovation

For archival boxes:

It is unlikely you will have time to get through the entire set of materials by simply beginning at the first folder. Start by assessing what's in it first – read the folder titles and outer label.

- What do you expect to be inside this box?
- Which folders strike you as especially interesting? Why?

Select a folder you think is especially interesting. Pay attention to the materials themselves:

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- What kinds of items are in each folder? What kinds of information do they provide? How are things organized?
- If the documents contain correspondence, do you have both sides? Are they originals or copies?

Now you can begin to peruse the content, and consider the following:

- Who wrote these documents – and to whom?
- What is being discussed?
- Why (and when!) were these documents created?

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For rare books:

What does the pull slip say about this book? What other information might you need to know?

When was this book published?

Who was it written for (or why was it created)?

What is the condition of the book? What is it made out of?

Now you can read its contents.

What is going on? What is being discussed?