

Richard Noble
G-50: Advanced Descriptive Bibliography
16–20 June 2014

Detailed Course Evaluation

- 1) *How useful were the pre-course readings? Did you do any additional preparations in advance of the course?*
 1. Very useful, interesting, and provocative.
 2. Yes, absolutely.
 3. The pre-course reading are required to participate effectively
 4. Pre-course readings were essential. Bowers and Gaskell (reviewed or read for the first time) are absolutely necessary, but cram in as much of the rest as you can. If you have a chance to do some practice collations/descriptions before you arrive, even better.
 5. I was familiar with Bowers, but it was helpful to reread him before the course. This time I found his theoretical and polemical Chapter 1 particularly helpful to appreciate the bibliographical milieu in which he was arguing for his method.
 6. As students jump right into writing descriptions, a thorough working knowledge of Bowers is essential. The secondary readings were also useful during various conversations about specific items.

- 2) *Were the course workbook and other materials distributed in class appropriate and useful (or will they be so in the future, after you return home)?*
 1. Very interesting and useful.
 2. Yes. I will be returning to the readings for my future works.
 3. Yes, I will use several of them.
 4. Useful, but we didn't spend that much time with them.
 5. The workbook was very helpful. Some of the material was not referred to in class, but I'm very glad it was included for future reference.
 6. The course workbook is great. I actually brought last year's workbook this year, and found that a helpful reference as well.

- 3) *Have you taken one or more RBS courses before? If so, how did this course compare with your previous coursework?*
 1. Yes. Very well organized and informative. The instructor and assistant were superior.
 2. Yes. This was the most intense course I have taken at RBS! But it was enjoyable.
 3. Yes. Similar, exhausting, fascinating, fun!
 4. Yes. Same high quality of instruction, excellent guidance and support, interesting materials to work with.
 5. No, this is my first course.
 6. Yes. "Advanced Descriptive Bibliography" was a much smaller course, and so lent itself to much more interaction and community building.

4) *What aspects of the course content were of the greatest interest or relevance for your purposes?*

1. Getting feedback on collation formulas for difficult books.
2. Homework and labs.
3. The intimate involvement with the physical book, and the growing understanding of the process that created that object.
4. Gaining more experience with collating and describing, and having the chance to review things with the instructor and lab instructor.
5. Identifying a wide variety of bibliographical puzzles and learning various methods to solve them.
6. To me, the heart of the course lies in the description of specific books that illustrate the trickier points of bibliographical description. Discussions built around specific examples are far more powerful than broad philosophical discussions in the absence of examples.

5) *Did the instructor successfully help you to acquire the information, knowledge, and skills that the course was intended to convey? Was the intellectual level of the course appropriate?*

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. Yes, both the instructor and the assistant were outstanding, a great way to stretch the mind.
4. Absolutely.
5. Absolutely, on both counts.
6. Yes. Both RN and James Ascher were excellent at leading discussions that led to insight, rather than simply dictating information.

6) *What did you like best about the course?*

1. Interactions with other people obsessed with books.
2. Homework and labs.
3. Moving toward understanding in the company of like-minded individuals.
4. Handling a wide variety of “interesting” (difficult) books. The lectures were great, as well.
5. The labs in which our collation homework was critiqued were the best part of the course, but the short lectures were also very helpful in contextualizing and theorizing the work of descriptive bibliography. The small cohort groups of three students also made the labs work very well.
6. Working with primary materials, and the collaborative conversations about those materials during lab.

7) *How could the course have been improved?*

1. It was excellent as it was.
2. {No response—RBS staff}
3. The great drawback of this course is time—more time to deal with more books in depth—but you can acquire the skills to work more effectively.

4. RN is an excellent lecturer, would like to have heard more from him during the week.
 5. {No response—RBS staff}
 6. My only suggestion would be to set aside some time (Thursday? Friday?) to revisit some of the items from earlier in the week to confirm what was learned from those items. Homework + Lab works great, but might be improved by Homework + Lab + Review (at least one session).
- 8) *Did you learn what the course description/advertisement indicated you would learn?*
1. Yes.
 2. Yes.
 3. Yes.
 4. Yes.
 5. {No response—RBS staff}
 6. Yes.
- 9) *How do you intend to use or apply the knowledge or skills learned in this course?*
1. It will be directly and immediately applicable to my work.
 2. I need to use the skills in my future projects.
 3. In developing my own collection and sharing information with others.
 4. Working on a descriptive catalogue of a collection in my home institution.
 5. I expect what I learned to be directly applicable to my own research on seventeenth-century English books.
 6. In cataloguing my own collection and preparing for an upcoming exhibition/catalogue on the topic of my collection.
- 10) *If your course left its classroom, was the time devoted to this purpose well spent?*
1. N/A. Our course made no extra trips.
 2. N/A. Our course made no extra trips.
 3. {No response—RBS staff}
 4. Yes, we visited SC and saw mechanical collators in action.
 5. N/A. Our course made no extra trips.
 6. N/A. Our course made no extra trips.
- 11) *If you attended the evening events (e.g., RBS Lecture, Video Night, RBS Forum, Booksellers' Night), were they worth attending?*
1. Very worthwhile and interesting.
 2. They were extremely interesting and engaging.
 3. A bit of a break from descriptive bibliography—let's one go back and focus.
 4. Yes.
 5. The lectures were exceptional. Very grateful for their programming.
 6. Yes. Lectures at RBS are always a treat.

12) *We are always concerned about the physical well-being both of the RBS teaching collections and of materials owned by UVA's Special Collections. If relevant, what suggestions do you have for the improved classroom handling of such materials used in your course this week?*

1. {No response—RBS staff}
2. {No response—RBS staff}
3. {No response—RBS staff}
4. {No response—RBS staff}
5. {No response—RBS staff}
6. One of the real privileges of this course is the ability to use materials that are in the process of giving their “last full measure of devotion” to bibliography. I think the material is appropriately treated and preserved for these purposes.

13) *Did you (or your institution) get your money's worth? Would you recommend this course to others?*

1. Yes. Time and money well spent.
2. Yes.
3. Yes. “Introduction to the Principles of Bibliographical Description” and “Advanced Descriptive Bibliography” are not for everyone, but I have found it a wonderful experience.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.
6. Yes. This course (and “Introduction to the Principles of Bibliographical Description”) should be attended by any private collector serious about developing a deeper understanding of the books they collect. The variety of experience/background in the classroom is a substantial benefit to students and (I would like to believe) instructors alike.

14) *Any final or summary thoughts, or advice for other persons considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. Very worthwhile, but be prepared.... Read Bowers carefully.
2. RBS has been the highlight of every year for me. I will be returning next year.
3. {No response—RBS staff}
4. This is an education and an experience that can't be had anywhere else. It is well worth the money and time spent, and you'll find yourself planning for future courses.
5. Many thanks to all the RBS staff for such a smoothly run and punctual program and to RN for an excellent class.
6. The world would be a far better place if more people came to RBS.

Aggregate Statistics

Number of respondents: 6

Leave

Institution gave me leave: 1 (16.67%)

N/A: student, retired, or had summers off: 2 (33.33%)

N/A: self-employed or work unrelated to RBS course topic: 2 (33.33%)

Other: On sabbatical: 1 (16.67%)

Tuition

Institution paid tuition: 1 (16.67%)

Student paid tuition: 3 (50%)

Scholarship from RBS: 1 (16.67%)

Multiple sources: SHARP-RBS Fellowship 65%, student 35%: 1 (16.67%)

Housing

Institution paid housing: 2 (33.33%)

I paid for my own housing: 3 (50%)

No response: 1 (16.67%)

Travel

Institution paid travel: 2 (33.33%)

Student paid travel: 3 (50%)

Scholarship from RBS: 1 (16.67%)

Which one category most closely defines what you do for a living, or why you are at RBS?

Book collector: 2 (33.33%)

Cataloguer: 1 (16.67%)

Librarian with no rare book duties: 1 (16.67%)

Postdoctoral fellow/researcher: 1 (16.67%)

Other: scholar in residence: 1 (16.67%)