

Joel Silver
L-25: Reference Sources for Researching Rare Books
28 July–1 August, 2014

Detailed Course Evaluation

1) *How useful were the pre-course readings? Did you do any additional preparations in advance of the course?*

1. Did the readings. They were helpful, but the real work happened in class.
2. The pre-course readings were interesting, but most certainly not essential. I enjoyed the readings in the *Book Collector*. I did no other advance prep.
3. Yes. In other RBS classes, pre-reading was much more intense, but this reading was appropriate for the course.
4. The pre-course readings were on point and, in this course's case, quite light in quantity, but a perfect framework.
5. There weren't many pre-course readings; what there was was useful and interesting.
6. Very useful as background information; it helped to have the basic concepts and definitions already in mind when we reviewed sources during class. I did no additional advance prep, nor did I need to.
7. Somewhat helpful to give us an idea on the content of the course.
8. Helpful. A basic introduction. The course teachings created the content.
9. Somewhat.
10. Good selection.
11. Very useful and good readings to refer to in the future.
12. Useful.
13. Pre-course readings were a great, thought-provoking foundation for the course.
14. The pre-course readings were a good introduction to the course.
15. Very helpful. As a non-professional (I'm a collector), I am very pleased with what was recommended.

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. Yes, very much so.
2. YES! Worth their weight in gold! It would be great to have Volume 1 annotated a bit with brief notes as to why useful. Hard to write all info down in class when so much fascinating info was given on each.
3. These are invaluable sources, and will be extremely useful in the future.
4. They are a golden compass.
5. Fabulous workbook of reference collections. Really appreciate the organization and thoroughness of the material, and that we have it in both printed and electronic forms.
6. Yes, extremely so. It was very helpful to have the listing of sources paired with sample pages. And more than anything else, it was helpful to have the source list available electronically. I took much better notes on my computer than I would have done by hand, and the fact that the sources, and my notes, are keyword-searchable will make them more useful to me in the future.

7. Extremely useful and helpful. No doubt this will be useful for many years, and I plan on typing up my notes when I get home so I don't forget anything.
8. The workbook and samples are essential, and will be used for reference for years.
9. Very well designed, and will be used in the future.
10. Yes, I will cherish/use my notes for years.
11. Yes. I'll be using the workbook to build and update the reference collection at my library.
12. Absolutely useful. Will be used a lot in the future.
13. Very useful. I plan to keep the workbook on hand at all times.
14. Yes, the workbook listing the sources will get used often. It had some formatting irregularities, but had plenty of space for notes.
15. *Invaluable*. Perfect. I will have them for years to come.

3) *Have you taken one or more RBS courses before? If so, how did this course compare with your previous coursework?*

1. No, this is my first course.
2. Yes. Very different, as no "hands-on" study, learning, reinforcement. Still, among the most useful courses I have taken at RBS, if not THE most useful!
3. Yes. As usual, the week was intense and packed with information. Definitely commensurate with other RBS courses.
4. No, this is my first course.
5. Yes. Same high standard of excellent instruction. Very different approach from other courses—less hands-on and more lecture-based, but this was very appropriate for the subject material.
6. Yes. Same commitment to excellence as always—by both instructor, RBS staff, and my fellow students. I did appreciate the upgraded RBS facilities and the new SC library.
7. No, but I'd love to come back!
8. One previous course—"Desbib"—which was of a very different nature. Both were essential and perfect in their unique structures.
9. No.
10. Two before. No hands-on, more of lecture format—but suitable.
11. This is my first RBS course.
12. Enjoyed this one more than the others.
13. Yes. This course was a different style and caliber. The content and practice were also very different. I *loved* learning more about booksellers, collectors, and large collections. It was a nice aside from the usual "library" talk.
14. No.
15. Yes—took one last year. Was great. This year's even better.

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

1. Just about all of it. I work at a large library and we collect in almost all the areas covered.
2. Walking away with such an excellent bibliography of bibliographies. All of the material seems like it will prove useful to me.

3. Almost all of it was relevant to my subject needs, and I appreciated the wide range of topics covered.
 4. The context of the reference canon could only be offered by JS. And that “annotative” data is incredibly helpful. The list of sources is so much more valuable because of this—it is absolutely not merely a “list.”
 5. So much really useful material. Even though obviously many reference works could not be covered, there was a lot of information about how to find reference books in other areas. Really appreciated the information about finding price information in bookseller and auction catalogues.
 6. Mostly the general works—e.g., figuring out the difference between ESTC, ISTC, STC, Wing, &c. Also it was useful to know some of the abbreviations I’ve seen in dealers’ catalogs, e.g., GW. But many of the specialized materials were helpful and/or fun as well.
 7. As a bookseller, binding references in my area of specialty and general reference books had the most relevance, but I learned so much more on top of that.
 8. Historical perspectives of reference periods, lists of most cited and valued reference as well as personal anecdotes.
 9. Almost everything.
 10. Volume of information that I know nothing about and now I can pursue.
 11. English literature, book arts, and provenance, research, also sources on early printed books.
 12. Incunabula and early books. Also, later in the week the book presses and bookbinding info.
 13. Everything was useful, and will be useful well into the future.
 14. Of most interest to me was the section on America. I also think the books on researching book provenance will be very useful.
 15. References on science and history of science, but really, for book lovers, it was all captivating.
- 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. JS is a very generous teacher whose enthusiasm for the subject is infectious. Whether bookseller, collector, or librarian, he treated each of us with equal respect and treated us all as knowledgeable professionals and equals. He is a great teacher, and would make an excellent dinner guest! Great stories!
 3. JS mastered the delivery of the information—a huge amount to convey, and he did so in a succinct manner. And he still had time for many stories about bibliographies, booksellers, and vignettes from his own experiences.
 4. Yes, the patience offered alongside a well-executed time table is remarkable.
 5. Yes! I found it useful having studied descriptive bibliography to get the most out of the course, but some of the background reading helped those who hadn’t, and I thought the pace and level of the course was appropriate. We were a mixed group, and it didn’t seem like anyone had problems with the level of instruction.
 6. Yes, absolutely.

7. Yes, and then some. Lots of information on reference sources was learned, with skills on where to go to delve deeper and find more information. High intellectual level, very appropriate for the group.
8. Yes to all. Great value in learning the subject from someone with years of experience in several aspects of both the bookselling, trade, and librarianship.
9. Absolutely on target. Stimulating and valuable.
10. Yes, better than expected.
11. Yes, the instructor's encyclopedic knowledge of reference sources, peppered with entertaining anecdotes of book dealers, authors, scholars, and librarians, made for an invigorating and educational experience.
12. Yes, and yes. Absolutely.
13. Yes, and yes, very much so! JS has a wealth of knowledge, and applies great stories to make information stick. I also learned more about other areas that I am interested in and can't wait to get reading!!
14. Yes to both questions.
15. Can't begin to describe all I learned. What a *magnificent course!* Was spot-on for the student population.

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

1. JS's unflappable nature and his endless knowledge. Not only did he know the history and background of every work, but he also inserted funny anecdotes as he went along.
2. JS's great stories and fascinating anecdotes about all the sources covered. How can one man know so much about so many things? The bibliography he provided will be a great resource for me and my library.
3. JS's expert experience with each source he discussed, as well as the anecdotes about booksellers, bibliographers, &c.
4. The biased opinion of the instructor—this is not just an arrow pointing at all sources—it is curated.
5. JS. His knowledge and understanding and passion for these books is pretty amazing. He was impressively organized and could follow his list exactly the way he wanted to present the materials, but was never thrown off when questions came up that were off-topic. So much really useful information and a lovely instructor.
6. Everything. I liked the content— it was appropriate, as advertised, and just what I expected and needed. I also liked JS—he's a true expert in the field, but he wears his knowledge lightly. I liked his sense of humor and his stories (which were fun and illustrative, not digressive). He conveyed a lot of enthusiasm for the material and made it accessible and interesting—and he was kind and not at all pompous.
7. Hmm, hard to narrow down. Learning the materials, meeting new people, funny shared stories.... It was all great.
8. JS's conversational style of presenting valuable references, anecdotes, and knowledge of the people in the rare book world.
9. The instructor displayed incredible range and depth. It was a pleasure to see him in action.
10. JS's anecdotes.

11. JS's experience as a bookseller and a library director give him a unique perspective on how to find information of any kind of rare books. This dual perspective is what truly makes the class worthwhile and engaging. I highly recommend this class!
12. I enjoyed the fact that JS taught the class and we took notes. No group projects, no presentations.
13. JS—he is the most valuable piece to the class.
14. An opportunity to learn from JS's encyclopedic knowledge and to hear his entertaining stories and anecdotes.
15. *Everything*—JS is simply amazing in his *knowledge*. He has an engaging, welcoming, and very warm manner that makes it easy to ask questions. We were all amazed at the depth of his knowledge, and his easy and wonderful way of sharing it!

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

1. Making us answer the practice questions!
2. Perhaps more hands-on practice.
3. A longer course, in which we could have time to experiment with using the sources he discussed.
4. Perhaps more branches to specific genres—as breakouts or as new classes.
5. Perhaps include a session for one period with more chance to actually work in a specific reference book. I'm not sure what I'd be willing to give up from the current syllabus to allow that, however. Course might also need to have fewer students to allow that sort of exercise.
6. No suggestions.
7. I thought it was great for me; perhaps a bit more on ephemera, if it's available, as it's a burgeoning field for booksellers.
8. I don't think it can be improved.
9. Perhaps a bit of practice using online sources.
10. Advanced course next year, or several more specialized courses.
11. No suggestions.
12. N/A.
13. I would have liked more time with the reference sources. It was hard for me to really get into them and explore because I wanted to pay attention to JS and take notes on the current source he was explaining.
14. Perhaps if it were broken up into more focused courses since the course covers quite a lot.
15. A lab would have been fun. Could divide up references and questions, and do two-person teams. Would have been happy to stay one evening to do that. But don't want to drop anything so would have to be in the evenings.

8) *Did you learn what the course description/advertisement indicated you would learn?*

1. Yes.
2. Yes, I am very satisfied with the course.
3. Yes.
4. Yes
5. Yes. I found the course description quite accurate, even down to the teaching methods and course materials included.

6. Yes.
7. Yes, and more than advertised.
8. Yes, and much more.
9. Yes, and a lot more.
10. Yes, and more.
11. Yes.
12. Yes.
13. Yes.
14. Yes.
15. Yes, and so much more.

9) *How do you intend to use or apply the knowledge or skills learned in this course?*

1. I will use it on the reference desk at work.
2. I will apply this to cataloging, specifically researching materials that cross my desk. I am not a “rare books person,” but a general materials cataloger, so these reference sources will be most helpful to me.
3. Reference work, researching rare books for catalogs and exhibits, and instruction about rare books in SC.
4. With each book or artifact I buy, research or present for sale, I am thrilled to have access to the framework of reference start points.
5. In my own research, collecting, finding relevant sources, deciphering sales catalogues, writing exhibition text, and more....
6. Mostly for collection development—it will help me understand dealers’ descriptions and know where to go if I need to consult some of the reference sources.
7. I’m going to use this information to buy better books, to write better descriptions, to become more professional, and hopefully, to make more money.
8. Continue to build the reference collection and *read* the material used for catalogue descriptions.
9. Several new sources and techniques will be incorporated into my work.
10. In my bookstore/website to increase my professionalism.
11. 1) Building reference collection. 2) Training other librarians and grad students to work at reference desks. 3) Formatting an online guide for student and faculty use.
12. It will be directly applicable to my job.
13. I now have a *solid* background in reference sources to point patrons towards depending on their research needs and interests. I can also use these sources as “ready” reference for quick inquiries.
14. Researching rare books for the purposes of identifying and developing collections, cataloging materials, and creating exhibits.
15. I think I will use it weekly, as a collector and booklover very interested in information *about* the books I buy.

10) *If you attended the evening events (e.g., RBS Lecture, Video Night, RBS Forum, Booksellers’ night), were they worth attending?*

1. Yes. I really liked the tour of SC. It is always interesting to see how other libraries operate.

2. Monday lecture very interesting. I liked the SC tour, but once is enough. Booksellers' Night is always fun.
 3. Yes. Monday night lecture and Booksellers' Night were the highlights. Movie Night did not have a big draw, but the popcorn and ice cream were great enticements.
 4. They were, though Wednesday's lecture was far too particular and focused.
 5. Yes. The Nick Basbanes lecture was incredibly, very interesting, and well worth attending.
 6. Yes—I enjoyed the lecture: fascinating, accessible, intellectual, and to the point. Same with the SC tour, though I would have loved another thirty-minute “collection high spots” tour as well.
 7. Yes. The Basbanes lecture was very interesting, as was the tour of SC.
 8. Yes. Both lectures and Booksellers' Night.
 9. Yes.
 10. Yes.
 11. Yes.
 12. {No response—RBS staff}
 13. Yes. RBS Lectures and Booksellers' Night. The Nicholas Basbanes talk was wonderful!! I can't wait to read the book.
 14. Yes.
 15. Yes. Both lectures were excellent and well targeted. Did not attend Movie Night.
- 11) *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.
 2. Book cradles might be good, though we were not handling anything especially delicate.
 3. No suggestions.
 4. We didn't have contact with any of the more delicate resources and that may be my only complaint—no anecdotal application of our reference.
 5. No concerns. We used reference collections in mostly good shape, and class-members handled the books appropriately as they were passed around.
 6. No suggestions.
 7. We all handled the books respectfully, so there was no issue here.
 8. No.
 9. No comment.
 10. Books were well cared for.
 11. None.
 12. {No response—RBS staff}
 13. N/A.
 14. None.
 15. No—handled very respectfully and appropriately.

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

1. Yes.
2. Yes! I think every librarian needs this course!
3. Yes. This is a bargain given the entire experience.
4. Yes I would.
5. Yes. Absolutely.
6. Yes, absolutely!
7. Yes! And yes!
8. Yes.
9. Absolutely on both scores.
10. Yes, most certainly.
11. Yes!
12. Yes. Yes.
13. Yes, absolutely.
14. Yes. I would definitely recommend this course to others.
15. Yes—yes—yes with every penny of my own money to come!

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

1. No.
2. {No response—RBS staff}
3. In this course, the student receive the benefit of JS's years of experience, knowledge, and wit for about 350 resources—in one week!
4. This is a foundational course with profound and far reaching ripples. A truly unique opportunity to be handed the keys to finding the knowledge.
5. If you have any interest in learning about the sources for building, researching, describing, or selling collections—take this course. It was fabulous!
6. This was a great course, and RBS was excellent as always!
7. This class had a combination of booksellers, collectors, and librarians, and I think we felt each of us enjoyed and learned a lot form this class. I came here knowing that I didn't know enough, and while I learned a lot, I still have much to learn. But now, I have many ideas on further reading/development. So helpful and fun! Thank you JS and RBS!
8. {No response—RBS staff}
9. {No response—RBS staff}
10. {No response—RBS staff}
11. I had a wonderful time this week and look forward to attending more classes—thank you RBS!
12. Perhaps the breakfast could start at 7:30 a.m., giving us a little more time.
13. Great experience for *anyone* interested or involved with any aspect of rare books.
14. No.
15. RBS as a whole is just fabulous. Amanda Nelsen in particular on the staff has been extremely helpful to me. Advice for students of this course next year: Be nice to JS—he is a treasure!

Aggregate Statistics

Number of respondents: 15

Leave

Institution gave me leave: 9 (60%)

I took vacation time or unpaid leave: 1 (6.67%)

N/A: self-employed, retired, or had summers off: 5 (33.33%)

Tuition

Institution paid tuition: 7 (46.67%)

Student paid tuition: 4 (26.67%)

Institution and student shared tuition cost: 1 (6.67%)

Scholarship from RBS (Unspecified): 1 (6.67%)

Scholarship from RBS (Tavistock): 2 (13.33%)

Housing

Institution paid housing: 6 (40%)

I paid for my own housing: 7 (46.67%)

Institution and student shared housing cost: 1 (6.67%)

N/A: stayed with friends or lived at home: 1 (6.67%)

Travel

Institution paid travel: 6 (40%)

I paid my own travel: 7 (46.67%)

Institution and student shared travel cost: 1 (6.67%)

N/A: I had only local travel expenses: 1 (6.67%)

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

Antiquarian bookseller: 4 (26.67%)

Book collector: 2 (13.33%)

Cataloguer: 1 (6.67%)

Librarian with some rare book duties: 1 (6.67%)

Rare book librarian: 4 (26.67%)

Work in a museum or cultural institution: 1 (6.67%)

Reproductions Coordinator in Rare Book Library: 1 (6.67%)

Archivist with some rare book duties: 1 (6.67%)