

Mike Widener  
C-85: Law Books: History & Connoisseurship  
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. Very useful background.
  2. Very useful. I had already been using the list to research legal history, rare books, &c., before signing up for the class.
  3. Excellent pre-course readings. Excellent background for the course. Not too much; not too little.
  4. Just read part of the pre-course readings. They were useful.
  5. Quite useful. The readings gave me a nice head start.
  6. The pre-course readings helped me to learn important vocabulary, key time periods, &c.—*very useful*. I did not do additional reading; the course readings were substantial.
  7. The readings were useful, but since I don't have a law library background, I had to educate myself a little more thoroughly on the fundamentals.
  8. They were definitely very useful. I didn't do any additional prep.
  9. This was my second RBS course, and RBS is the week of the year I now look forward to the most. I read all of the required and suggested readings, and I found them all interesting and time well spent.
  
- 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. The workbook will be a fundamental reference source for me.
  2. *YES!* Very useful, and I will save them all for future reference.
  3. Yes, and I will spend more time on them. Maybe add them to the pre-course material.
  4. The workbook was brief, appropriate, helpful in all regards.
  5. Loved the workbook—especially all the websites and sources listed.
  6. The workbook is a *gold mine* of vocabulary, brief topical readings, organizational structures, best practices, websites, &c. I will use this workbook for many years!
  7. Workbook and class materials were very useful.
  8. Yes. Very informative and useful.
  9. While I learned a great deal in class, the materials and resources included in the workbook will be my most valuable take-away from this course. I will use them professionally, and I will share them with my colleagues. The workbook is gold.
  
- 3) *Have you taken one or more RBS courses before? If so, how did this course compare with your previous coursework?*
  1. No.
  2. No.
  3. No.

4. No. I had not taken any RBS course before this one.
5. First RBS course.
6. No prior course.
7. This course was on par with other RBS courses, without a doubt.
8. No, this is my first one. But I'll consider further classes.
9. Yes. Both courses I have taken far exceeded my expectations.

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

1. Practical information on how the rare book trade works and the visit and conversations with dealers. The instructor also was a font of information in general.
2. First two days: history of legal publishing. Assignment #1: dealer catalog entry. Demonstration of books from rare book room.
3. All of it, especially learning the sources of Roman law.
4. All.
5. The course was not only a great introduction to rare legal materials, but also a good primer/refreshers on the history of law.
6. I am a near-novice, so I found the vocabulary and history sections important. Also, though, meeting these rare book dealers and a number of rare book librarians helped me to develop an intuitive sense of collecting, curating, marketing, &c.
7. For my purposes, the Anglo-American law portion; but I must add that the instructor made the other portions interesting.
8. They were all very relevant. The practical parts of the content were of greatest interest to me.
9. General knowledge that I can build on to become more knowledgeable in this field of study. Practical information about collection building.

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 to both. The course was well thought out and at the right level.
2. *YES!* The course was challenging, and I had a *great* time! Intellectual level was very high. Student participation added a lot because of how smart and enthusiastic everyone was.
3. *ALL* excellent.
4. The instructor knows his job very well. I am grateful to him for whatever he taught me.
5. MW is a wonderful instructor and very generous in sharing his experience.
6. Absolutely! This was a *smart* course, and the instructor did not shy away from expert terms of art (e.g., incunables). However, it was also a *practical* course that emphasized the importance of, and techniques for, building focused local collections.
7. MW did meet the goals set for the course and *then some*.
8. Absolutely!!
9. Yes, and yes.

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

1. In general, the informal, flexible nature of it and the opportunity to see and touch many interesting works.
2. I loved the book history portion and demonstrations.
3. Variety of lecture, discussion, show-and-tell, assignments (very helpful and thought provoking).
4. The input and information I received from people in the class. A great group.
5. Viewing and touching the materials in the rare book room made the reading and lectures come alive. Very nice! Enjoyed getting to know my fellow students.
6. The variety of activities: readings, lectures, rare book viewing, projects, field trips, &c.
7. The instructor: his knowledge and enthusiasm simply made this course great. *Period.*
8. It's very practical and MW made the course a lot of fun! I especially liked the assignments because they kept me engaged.
9. Access to the instructor and his vast knowledge of the subject.

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

1. Maybe a little less overlap between the PowerPoint slides and the explanations thereof, with some of the same actual items later.
2. I can't imagine it being better than this. It was amazing!
3. Maybe tying in the pre-course readings with the in-class lectures/books/bibliography.
4. {No response—RBS staff}
5. Perfect as it is.
6. I really can't think of a way to make it better. Don't lose the wonderful mix: Craig's pizza-box demos; visits to local booksellers, &c. This mix of activities, including lectures from a world-renowned expert, made this an exemplary learning experience.
7. {No response—RBS staff}
8. It's wonderful as is.
9. I would like additional information and demonstration about the practical aspects of book maintenance, preservation, and storage, especially cleaning and storing rare books.

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

1. Yes.
2. Yes. Course description exactly matched the content. I learned exactly what I hoped to.
3. Yes. Again, reviewing history while discussing bibliography may be useful for deeper contextual understanding.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.
7. Yes.
8. Yes.

9. Yes.

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

1. To apply for grants and develop a rare law books collection.
2. Understanding of legal history and publishing in Europe and U.S. will help me as a Foreign, Comparative, and International Law Librarian.
3. I select material for my library, and I am involved in library administration. This course will absolutely help me do both better.
4. Create a collection development policy. Use dealers' catalogs and websites to identify very rare items in our collection.
5. The course will help me to manage my school's rare book collection and, with a bit of luck and money, expand it.
6. I intend to complete an annotated bibliography of the Reeders & Rossetenstein South African law collection and YLS, and pitch/possibly commence the Calabrese "Father of Law and Econ" collection at YLS.
7. The course helped me understand the nature of law books in my collection and provided me with tools to curate the collection.
8. I learned so much here, and will apply these knowledge and tips to my day-to-day job since I manage the law library's rare books and special collections. I now have a go-to guide that contains a lot of useful info.
9. I will use the workbook and information learned in class to organize and begin to make accessible my rare book collection.

10) *If your course left its classroom, was the time devoted to this purpose well spent?*

1. Yes.
2. *YES!* Everything was wonderful, and I learned from every single experience.
3. Yes, I enjoyed meeting Reece, Lesser. Good connections. Also enjoyed the down-time with my classmates.
4. Yes.
5. I enjoyed the visits to the dealers.
6. Very well spent. Not too long/intense, but sufficient time for interaction with the dealers, perusing of their collections and catalogs.
7. Several trips were made to the Yale Law Library rare book room to see and feel what the instructor spoke about. *This* is what RBS is all about.
8. Yes. We went to see the rare books at the rare book room. It was a great experience. And we went to an open house at a dealer's store front. Great experience!
9. Yes. More of it, please. Loved meeting the dealers.

11) *If you attended the optional events (e.g., RBS Lecture, Bibliographical Press Tour, Beinecke Library Tour, receptions), were they worth attending? Please specify.*

1. N/A.
2. YES, they were great. I appreciate the food and coffee breaks.
3. N/A.
4. Yes.
5. Yes.

6. Yes.
7. {No response—RBS staff}
8. Yes. I attended the receptions and the press tour. They all were wonderful!!
9. Yes. Would like additional practical demonstrations on preservation, handling, and storage.

12) *We are always concerned about the physical well-being of the collections used during RBS courses. If relevant, what suggestions do you have for the improved classroom handling of such materials used in your course this week?*

1. N/A.
2. None.
3. None. Very well managed. Alisa was very helpful.
4. {No response—RBS staff}
5. The materials were handled carefully, and I enjoyed handling them.
6. None. We handled them carefully. Book trucks and foam supports, &c., were well utilized.
7. {No response—RBS staff}
8. N/A.
9. The collection materials were well cared for during this course.

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

1. Yes—except for the housing. I didn't think that was value for the dollar.
2. *Absolutely!* Even with the scholarship, I spent a lot on this trip, but it was worth every penny.
3. Absolutely. Yes, most definitely. Library administrators overseeing rare book collections must attend MW's class.
4. Yes. I did. I sure will recommend this course to other rare book librarians.
5. Yes. There is another RBS course that I intend to recommend to a new librarian.
6. Yes!! RBS is more than just an immersion in rare books—though it certainly achieves that end. It is an opportunity to engage with brilliant scholars, curators, dealers, and enthusiasts of history, material cultures, patron education, and more.
7. This class was well worth it. I was hesitant to take it, quite frankly, but I am very glad I did now.
8. Yes, and yes!!!
9. Yes. I always recommend RBS to anyone interested in this field.

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

1. Substantially, it was well worth the time and money, even though it's not inexpensive.
2. This course was some of the most fun I ever had! It was challenging and intellectual, with the perfect balance of history and practical skills. I loved RBS, and I hope that I can come back for future courses! It was one of the best experiences I have ever had. Should be mandatory for every law librarian!

3. This class is not only for rare book librarians and enthusiasts, but also for administrators, as it provides a deep understanding and appreciation of the role of a rare book collection and the rare book librarian; conveys the importance of both to the library and patron base; invaluable!
4. {No response—RBS staff}
5. I really like the intensive one-week format. Good way to learn.
6. RBS is an intense experience—a semester-long course in a week. It is not for the faint of heart; it is an entire experience of magnificent and worthy proportions.
7. {No response—RBS staff}
8. RBS courses are really fantastic. You won't regret if you decide to take the courses. They are totally worth it!!
9. Thank you for making this important education available.

### **Aggregate Statistics**

*Number of respondents: 9*

#### **Leave**

Institution gave me leave: 7 (77.78%)

I took vacation time or unpaid leave: 1 (11.11%)

N/A: self-employed, retired, or had summers off: 1 (11.11%)

#### **Tuition**

Institution paid tuition: 7 (77.78%)

Student paid tuition: 1 (11.11%)

Scholarship from RBS (Director's): 1 (11.11%)

#### **Housing**

Institution paid housing: 5 (55.56%)

I paid for my own housing: 2 (22.22%)

N/A: stayed with friends or lived at home: 2 (22.22%)

#### **Travel**

Institution paid travel: 5 (55.56%)

I paid my own travel: 2 (22.22%)

N/A: I had only local travel expenses: 2 (22.22%)

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

Cataloguer (Law): 1 (11.11%)

Librarian with no rare book duties: 1 (11.11%)

Librarian with some rare book duties: 3 (33.33%)

Library/University Administrator: 2 (22.22%)

Rare book librarian: 1 (11.11%)

Retired: 1 (11.11%)