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L-60: Introduction to Archives for Special Collections Librarians, Booksellers & Collectors
24 – 29 July ONLINE ONLY

Narrative Course Evaluations

- 1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*
 1. Yes, it provided a helpful background context for what was to be addressed. I especially appreciated the articles that discussed current debates in the field. Always appreciate videos.
 2. Yes, they were helpful. I appreciate that they were shared on Google Docs so I could read ahead of time.
 3. Very useful and interesting—theoretical, which I appreciated. Wish this could've been class focus.
 4. {no response}
 5. Yes! I really adored the reading assignments for this particular course, especially the readings about applying feminist care ethics to archival work, and the readings about DACS and the principles of archival description. I will also add that I loved how YouTube videos were included with the preliminary readings—this definitely helped me engage more, because I learn best through a combination of reading text *and* listening to audio. I don't know enough about the field yet to add reading suggestions, but [I] learned so much, and there was nothing we read that felt irrelevant or anything like that. The material was challenging in all the right ways.
 6. I found the ArchivesSpace self-introduction exercise particularly useful, it was a great way to get a sense of what was to come and it meant that I wasn't as lost when we were doing additional ArchivesSpace exercises in class.
 7. The largest reading was a bit lengthy and I do not feel it was necessary to have read that full text beforehand. I would suggest truncating that requirement to focus on the most important contents to get a fuller grasp of those key ideas.
 8. I really enjoy all of the pre-course readings. My only wish is that we had had some time at the beginning of the course to discuss them a bit, particularly the ones devoted to the history of archives and to the ethical quandaries facing archives and archivists at the present moment.
 9. The pre-readings were insightful and helpful.
 10. {no response}

- 2) *What are your thoughts on the course workbook and/or other teaching materials distributed during class? Was the content appropriate and useful? Will it continue to be useful for you after the course?*
 1. Yes, I appreciated the mix of lectures, guest presentations, and class exercises. I will definitely refer back to the shared slideshows and links.
 2. Yes, it was very helpful and useful. I will be able to refer back to everything that I printed off

and saved later on. Yes, it will be useful after the course.

3. Overwhelming at times. Not always appropriate for someone with a critical studies background such as myself. Seemed like a training ground for technical service hopefuls.
 4. Excellent content and course materials. Extremely professionally constructed. Definitely keeping a copy for my reference library.
 5. Yes! I'm so grateful for our shared Google Drive course folder where we can access the presentations, assignments, chat transcripts, resources, and beyond. I was thinking that a lot of the materials we used and shared (and the structure of our classes) could inform some of my pedagogical choices when I teach in the future. I'm grateful for the content/resources/ideas that were made available.
 6. The content was definitely useful, I plan on revisiting it frequently in the future.
 7. I realize this was an online offering but last year my online class mailed home materials to engage with directly rather than email everything out and I found that tactile pedagogy helpful last summer in a different RBS course.
 8. I thought the course was very well organized, and the course workbook and other teaching materials were clearly developed with great thought and care. The instructors made their PowerPoints available to the class and all the daily assignments were easily accessible in the course folders if the student wanted to preview them before the day started. I think the content will continue to be useful to me, particularly the lessons devoted to navigating different online platforms created so that users can search archival collections online.
 9. Yes.
 10. {no response}
- 3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any "aha!" moments, new ideas, or project plans?*
1. Gave me a much better [understanding] of archives from an institutional perspective as well as the principles for description and arrangement. I feel that I now have a few tools to be more fluent in the archival language.
 2. I will be using the DACs information and the archive space once I start working within the archives field upon graduation. Yes, I had "aha!" moments while doing the exercises and applying the lecture material.
 3. Though I was interested to learn the difference between bibliographic control and archival generosity, and enjoyed meeting participants, I can't say I acquired skills that would help me with my interests, which are creative and academic. Not a nurturing environment for crit lib BTW. Very East Coast Ivy-centric.
 4. {no response}
 5. I learned so much about using ArchivesSpace, challenges that archivists face professionally, things that are happening within the field, and above all, how important it is to develop a sense of competency and self-trust when making decisions. I really appreciated how we were told point-blank that things aren't going to be perfect, and sometimes there can be multiple answers/solutions to a question or an issue; our job is to make the best professional judgment

we can, and to document our actions, prioritizing transparency. I am hoping to be able to use the skills I learned as I write my dissertation and work in archives—I now know more about how to actually approach and navigate an archive, so instead of going in and kind of not really knowing what to make of the materials, I now have a sense of what to look for, how to use keywords, and so many other invaluable skills. There's a project I'm hoping to develop related to the archives of a literary journal at my institution, and this course will directly inform that work if/when I'm given a chance to do this. And, this experience has encouraged me to apply for some interesting library positions/fellowships in the future. I feel that what I learned is directly connected to the previous professional experience I had in ways I didn't even anticipate, so that feels exciting, and I'll have lots more to discuss in interviews and in applications.

6. I'm really interested in the idea of reparative description. As someone who teaches history, this seems like such a great way to get students involved in an archive and to bring together course material, research, and using archives. It also seems like an exciting way to introduce the profession to students who may not have otherwise gotten the opportunity to consider it.
7. I plan to take these skills to assist at my home institution.
8. I am hopeful that I will be able to use the skills and knowledge acquired in this course in both my research and my teaching. In terms of my research, I feel like I have a much better understanding of how to read/understand finding aids and how to navigate the online world of archival metadata. In terms of my teaching, I will use what I have learned in the class to create more effective assignments that help my students learn to search for and use archival material available in online repositories.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}

4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*

1. Yes, they shared a wealth of content in a short period.
2. Yes, they explained everything so the material was understandable, even though a lot of the material is very technical.
3. You're asking duplicative questions.
4. Yes and yes.
5. Yes! I learned what I had hoped to learn and more. This weekend, my brain kind of hurts, but in a good way—it's a feeling that indicates, to me, that I've learned something really challenging that is going to help me grow. I really, really appreciated learning about archival approaches to appraisal, acquisition, description—and delving into the challenges associated with digitization and born-digital materials. I could see myself pursuing a career related to helping out with born-digital materials, which is not something I felt before this course.
6. Yes!
7. I think more time spent practicing with Archive space would have been helpful even if a guest speaker had to be cut out.

8. I thought the assignments were all very well-designed and created numerous opportunities to develop the skills and information promised. While I think I would have benefitted from the ArchivesSpace assignments being a little more integrated (perhaps by having the students create their online personal collections before the class started and then working in stages towards the final product/ presentation), I understand that time is limited, especially in an online environment, and I learned so much from what we did do during class that I am more than satisfied.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}

5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. Would have liked to have more variation with fellow students in breakout sessions. I didn't get the chance to work with every classmate, who all seemed so interesting.
2. I would have liked maybe a 2 minute "stretch" break between lecture and breakout group exercises.
3. While some folks may be stimulated by unexpected content via constant breakout rooms, I'm not. In that sense, more time allotted for assignment completion instead of rush-rush-rush would be an improvement. {private response}
4. {no response}
5. Not that I can think of. I felt everything was very thoughtfully designed, challenging, well-structured, and "scaffolded" well; the activities following presentations were extremely useful. I also really appreciated how we were asked to fill out a short Google Form at the end of each day that asked us to share one thing we learned, and invited us to ask one question about the materials. Though this might seem like a small thing, I really think it helped me store information in a more permanent, long-term, reflective way. I hope to do something similar with my students. And I really appreciate how the instructors actually took the time to answer our questions from those forms! I imagine this was a lot of extra work, and I really appreciate the effort and care enacted here!
6. This is more of an RBS thing, but I think having recordings accessible would have been helpful, it's a lot of information to try to keep track of.
7. I think my biggest complaint is the structured times with Zoom fatigue, it would have been more beneficial to have a longer lunch break and 2 sections.
8. While all the guest speakers were fantastic, I would have loved to have heard from an archivist working in a different kind of archival environment than what is typically found in an elite educational institution--perhaps someone working for a local historical society, for instance, or a government archive, or the archives of an underfunded institution.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Students thinking about an archival career, professors wanting to learn more about engaging

with archives with their students, and researchers honing their skills for the primary source hunt.

2. Anyone who deals with archives will benefit from it.
3. Folks who want to pursue tech services in archives. Those who enjoy rules.
4. {no response}
5. I think that anyone who's interested in rare materials, cultural memory, navigating archives, conducting research, pursuing library work, teaching using archives, and more can benefit from this course. Anyone in graduate school could benefit from learning about archives, as could anyone who works with special collections and rare materials. And, at the risk of getting too broad, I really think that anyone who's excited about history, social justice, and activism would benefit from this course.
6. This course would be particularly useful for anyone changing careers and interested in working in archives, or perhaps an early career librarian.
7. A student who wants to expand their basic knowledge of archives.
8. In its current form, I think the course is immensely beneficial to exactly those audiences that are targeted in the course title: special collections librarians (current and aspiring), booksellers, and collectors.
9. Anyone who wants to make a career change to archives or Special Collections.
10. {no response}

7) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*

1. Yes.
2. Yes, I did. It was apparent that they put in a lot of work in the planning, compiling materials and then teaching the course. They really delivered over and above in a zoom setting that was 5 days long.
3. {no response}
4. Yes.
5. I am very very beyond grateful to have received support from RBS to take this course. Thank you so much for this incredibly enriching opportunity. I hope to take more courses in the future! I hesitate to put a monetary value on this course because it was AMAZING, but I would say yes, learning through RBS is worth every cent, and I am also very grateful for the support of RBS that allowed me to take part when I otherwise could not have.
6. Yes.
7. Very much so, in fact this exceeded my expectations.
8. Yes, definitely.
9. Yes. Absolutely.
10. {no response}

8) *How likely are you to recommend this course to others?*

1. 10
2. 10

3. 5
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 9
8. 8
9. 10
10. {no response}

9) *If your course had any virtual field trips or guest speakers, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. Yes, very much appreciated their expertise and willingness to share their time.
2. I appreciated the guest speakers since they provided another perspective and additional insight.
3. Speakers were the best part.
4. Yes all speakers were directly relevant and engaging.
5. Yes! Each guest speaker was very friendly, generous, informative, and encouraging. Each speaker invited us to reach out to them with questions via email in the future, and that was an added bonus. It was so awesome to hear from professionals about their career paths, the challenges they face, and what their day-to-day experiences are like. We also learned about how the field is developing, and what might happen in the future (for example, what kinds of new jobs might be opening up) and that was deeply appreciated.
6. The guest speakers were great! I thought they really enriched the course.
7. For the most part yes but I think there were so many speakers we got less time to practice and some institutional variance would be helpful. All the Yale speakers were amazing but maybe hearing from other schools would open up variety and some of the hands-on Archive space stuff was the most beneficial and I wish we would have had more practice assignments to work on those skills rather than so many outside speakers.
8. The guest speakers were great!
9. Yes.
10. {no response}

10) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. A great way to begin your journey into professional archival practice.
2. Take it! It really provided information for me as a M.L.I.S. student who does not have a lot of archives classes available.
3. More time for assignments.
4. {no response}
5. Broadly, my main advice would be: have fun! Don't be afraid to take a course even if you feel you don't "know enough" about archives—people in the course have many different levels of experience, and you are welcome. I truly believe that everyone brings something to the table in the classroom, and that even if you feel intimidated or less experienced, people will benefit

from your presence, your questions, and your curiosity in ways you'd be surprised by. The point is to grow, and please don't sell yourself short in terms of the different forms of knowledge that you carry with you. / And more specifically—because I have some colleagues who refuse to take online courses, I'd say: please don't be afraid to take an online course simply because it's online. Don't be intimidated by the technology; RBS has created thorough guides to help students, and tech support is consistently available. Because we met online, people from all over the world were able to attend. They were Zooming in during the middle of the night! Your classmates are likely to be really dedicated and curious, and that kind of commitment to learning is both inspiring and influential. / Accessibility can be such an issue due to work schedules, trying to get time off, affordability (this eliminated the cost of travel, food, and lodging), travel issues (which are particularly tough due to COVID right now)--and I feel that I met people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and circumstances who might not have been able to attend if the class had been in-person only. As one of my coworkers says, access is equity; I think that online learning can increase diversity. / I was able to make this course work with my schedule (and my health—I actually had COVID, but was able to attend class despite this, which was such a gift). And I was beyond impressed by the students who Zoomed in from locations all over the world! So again, my advice would be: do not be deterred by online learning! Don't be afraid to ask questions, reach out to the instructors, or communicate about what helps you learn in a digital environment. You are sure to meet some really cool people with interesting and diverse backgrounds who have similar interests, and the instructors are not only incredibly knowledgeable but have developed pedagogical strategies to help you learn online. / Whew, that was long, but I'm happily surprised by how much I got out of this course and think other people will be, too.

6. Don't hesitate, it's worth it!
7. Come in ready to learn, so much material to absorb in such a short time.
8. Not really.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}

11) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*

1. "Materials entered, DACS intervened, containment sheltered / All under the discerning care of the archivist/ Who values most the user experience of our collective history"
2. It was an informative, career enhancing experience.
3. Critical theory, stay away! Head over to California Rare Book School!
4. {no response}
5. My RBS experience included numerous poetic tensions that I will be able to apply to so many areas of my personal and professional life: memory/forgetting, grief/celebration, history/future, certainty/uncertainty, presence/absence—tensions that are at the heart of the human experience.
6. {no response}

7. Rare Book School is my happy place...this class as with the other courses I have taken has continually reaffirmed that feeling.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. {no response}