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C-85a: Law Books: History and Connoisseurship  
1–6 August 2021

## **Narrative Evaluations**

### *1) Do you have any practical suggestions for improvements to RBS's online logistics?*

1. I think RBS did a fine job of online logistics. I had a very smooth time navigating everything during my course week.
2. Gather.town seemed very complicated and deterred participation for a novice.
3. I commend RBS and the course organizers for working out a meaningful way to present a course on physical objects online.
4. I never made it to Gather.town because (1) time was limited with all the work for my class and (2) it's an unfamiliar platform so I didn't want to invest a lot of time in it. Maybe just encourage students to come to class 15 minutes early to chat? It wouldn't meet people in other courses, but I felt I wanted to know the people in my class better and that would be an easy way to do it.
5. I thought the logistics worked very well this year. The Zoom format and Google Drive both worked well.
6. It was great! I can only suggest that we do an in-depth exercise with one specific volume. For example, look at the different parts of a book by looking at that volume. We could analyze it from different perspectives.
7. No, I thought the course ran really well online.

### *2) How would you describe your encounters with RBS staff?*

1. Extremely pleasant! I was delighted to speak with the few staff I did speak with.
2. Very helpful.
3. The RBS staff was really quite fantastic. I very much appreciate the time and effort both instructors put into the lectures, as well as the genuine interest they have shown in our projects, the very useful critiques, and their willingness to be engaged and be there to help us along. As a former teacher, I was also taken by their stamina - speaking three to four hours a day almost non-stop is a heroic feat, and I do hope they have some voice left for the weekend! Very special thanks for the stellar work that Camille Davis did - she paid 100% attention all the time, added helpful hints, looked up websites - the best contributor anybody could ever dream of. RBS is very fortunate to have her.
4. Somewhat confusing - there were a lot of communications from a lot of different people. I would have preferred everything come from one email address and information get consolidated.
5. Always helpful and enthusiastic.
6. Extremely professional, kind, and effective.
7. The staff were really excellent in support of the course: very engaged, extremely helpful in fielding the chat and other aspects while the instructors were presenting, and contributed hugely to the course overall.

*3) If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience?*

1. Yes. I attended the Tuesday Evening Lecture. It was a great opportunity and allowed for intellectual and social engagement.
2. Not attended
3. Alas, I haven't attended them - not for lack of interest but for lack of time. I would have liked to interact more with my course-mates and Gather.town is a cool toy. However, with the lectures, assignments and readings there was simply no time left for extra-curricular activities.
4. I left the Black Bibliography one early because I decided a more relevant use of my time was to do classwork. I think I would have felt differently if the lectures were in person, with a live reception after.
5. {no response}
6. I attended the opening. It was very nice, since it created a spirit of community from the very start.
7. I did not attend: RBS itself is such a time commitment that I really couldn't take on additional online events. In the past, in on-site courses, I have enjoyed the evening and other events.

*4) 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! The assigned and essential readings for Law Books are invaluable for my learning experience.
2. Very useful. Content was fine.
3. Very useful; a rich and comprehensive list.
4. I found the pre-course reading assignments useful, and they helped me to start thinking about the collection I would put together for the class exercises. I particularly appreciated the thoughts in "Morris Cohen and the Art of Book Collecting."
5. The readers were very thoughtful and informative.
6. The required readings were excellent!
7. The course reading list was tremendously valuable. I learned so much just preparing for the course.

*5) 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. The Law Books workbook is great. It will continue to serve me well into the future. All content was useful and appropriate.
2. The course workbook was excellent and will be of use going forward.
3. One of the greatest benefits of this course is the workbook, an absolute treasure-trove of pertinent information and sources, and one that will stay available for us in the future. I

am quite new to law librarianship and this compilation will be my go-to resource for years to come. For that reason alone I feel very fortunate to have taken the course.

4. The bibliographies in the course workbook are invaluable - it would be nice if they were annotated, though.
5. Very thoughtful and informative. I will continue to use the workbook in years to come.
6. The Course Workbook was amazing. Extremely well prepared and tailored for the needs of the course. It will be a go to reference for my future work!
7. {no response}

*6) 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. Above anything, I believe my instructors helped instill a great sense of confidence in me. I hope this is true for my classmates. Mike and Ryan did this in part through their delivery of instruction. Their encouragement and welcomed request for active engagement made for a positive course experience.
2. To update my knowledge of the rare books world in the 15 years since last attending a similar RBS course.
3. I think my most important takeaway was the focus on books as artefacts, and the scholarly underpinnings of this approach. I will be able to refer to many good and valid points in the future in the never-ending discussions about buying print publications in a digital age. All this was presented in a context that did not perceive the online realm as a threat or the enemy - which was very helpful. I also appreciated the focus on book exhibitions (both physical and online) that gave me many ideas for the future. The projects of participants were extremely varied and very interesting, opening my eyes to topics I never engaged with before.
4. Taking Law Books was inspiring. It validated my institution's rare book collection's value and gave me a lot of ideas on how to use and publicize the collection. I now have a project plan that I can (and will) present to my library's administration.
5. The course gave me more confidence to explore rare law books with elan and creativity. I know this will spur me on in my collecting and continued education.
6. I was full of aha moments! I have several new ideas on exhibits and acquisitions, for example. I see things from a different perspective now.
7. This was a fantastically helpful introduction to law as a field of book history.

*7) 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. The instructors did everything in their power to inform. If the student puts in the time, skills will be acquired. I learned more than I could hope for.
2. Yes.
3. They did, and I learned more than I ever hoped to learn. This was one of the richest, most engaging, most worthwhile courses I have ever taken. And, it was great fun to boot. Every minute was a pleasure.
4. {deleted response}

5. {no response}
6. Yes, certainly. Mission accomplished. What was promised and much more!
7. I am really so grateful to have had the opportunity to take this course. Both instructors were incredibly generous with their expertise and attention in helping students approach the course projects.

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

1. No. There is a want for face-to-face interaction but this course delivered in the virtual environment.
2. I think that there is no doubt that the course would have been better delivered face to face, but if it had been, then I suspect there would not have been the same worldwide group of participants. It might have been useful to have heard from an auctioneer.
3. This was such an excellent course that I would be reluctant to be critical. One thing that I found hard was finding time to complete the assignments during this very intense week. I believe it might have been easier for participants who have been practicing law or rare book librarians or archivists for years and have actual projects going; not so for me, a person very new in the profession, who really needed the instruction to tackle the assignments. True confession: I wrote my entire Exercise No. 3 while also trying to listen and not to lose any of the engaging conversation with David Lesser. That was stressful.
4. Make it longer! I would have been fine with a little more time added to the first session (2 hours instead of 1.5 hours).
5. {no response}
6. The readings could be more easily identified by means of numbers rather than by the titles or names of the authors in the PDF files. It would make the handling of readings on our side easier.
7. {no response}

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

1. Anyone interested in learning something new should take this course.
2. The course is of most use to early career librarians embarking on a role in special collections law librarianship.
3. That would be hard to tell - this course had people with the most diverse backgrounds and experiences, and I would like to think we all benefited from the course. We also benefited from the diverse body of knowledge that the group as a collective presented.
4. I think people in charge of institutional collections of rare law books would benefit - the class seems somewhat more geared towards that person - but there's information of value for collectors and scholars. In fact, I found the contributions from the collectors and scholars in the class to be incredibly informative.
5. {no response}
6. The target is perfect: educators, librarians, book dealers, collectors.
7. I wish this course were a requirement in my law school! I think everyone who studies law could benefit from this.

10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth?*

1. Absolutely.
2. Yes.
3. Definitely.
4. Yes!
5. Definitely. Mike and Ryan were great instructors and I learned a ton.
6. I received a fellowship and take this opportunity to thank again. If I would have paid, the answer would certainly be YES.
7. Yes, absolutely.

11) *On a scale of 1–10 with 10 being most likely, how likely are you to recommend this course to others?*

1. 10
2. 9
3. 10
4. 9
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10

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

1. Yes. My class was afforded the opportunity to interview a book dealer! It was fantastic to hear stories as well as general advice! This interview will go a long way.
2. I am not sure that the interview format with bookdealer necessarily achieved a great deal. I think a presentation followed by questions on that presentation would have been better.
3. We had one invited guest speaker, the rare book dealer David Lesser. He was very engaging.
4. Yes, speaking with a book dealer (David Lesser) was great. I liked that the instructors had the students do most of the interviewing so we could ask questions as they came to mind based on the discussion.
5. {no response}
6. Yes, certainly. The interview with David brought an incredible set of insights into this field of study.
7. I thoroughly enjoyed having the chance to meet David Lesser. In future, I wonder if including another bookseller (and/or a curator from another law institution) might be an idea? And maybe including a case study or two of potential items to acquire, collection development plans, or a few prepared discussion questions. I enjoyed this and think it added to the overall course.

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

1. Don't hesitate in taking this course. You'll have fun and learn a lot!
2. Spend as much time as possible on the preliminary reading.
3. Go for it, it's an excellent course.
4. No
5. {no response}
6. Take this course!
7. {no response}

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

1. My experience was amazing and leaves me wanting more time with RBS!
2. The course is something not offered elsewhere.
3. Pass - that's not my kind of thing.
4. I wish I could take a Rare Book School class every year - I'll return to work next week inspired and excited to do great things.
5. Informative
6. It is the best way to spend the summer!
7. {no response}

### **Student Data**

Number of Respondents: 7 (of 12)

*How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?*

1. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
2. I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule.
3. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
4. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
5. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
6. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
7. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

1. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
2. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
3. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
4. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
5. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.

6. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
7. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.

*Not including this year, how many RBS courses have you attended?*

1. This is my first course.
2. 1
3. This is my first course.
4. This is my first course.
5. This is my first course.
6. This is my first course.
7. 2

*Which of the following best describes your current occupation?*

1. Library discipline: Special collections librarian
2. Other Occupations/Vocations: Book collector
3. Library discipline: Cataloger/metadata librarian
4. Library discipline: Public services librarian
5. Other Occupations/Vocations: Book collector
6. Professional educator: Associate professor
7. Library discipline: Curator