

David Pearson
C-90: Provenance: Tracing Owners & Collections
10 – 15 July in Charlottesville, VA

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. No readings were required, but I was already familiar with some of the recommended readings on book history—like William Sherman's "Used Books"—and they might be worth encouraging as background reading a little more strongly.
 2. Recommendations all useful.
 3. Yes, especially DP's handbook. When advanced readings are not strictly required, it would be useful for the list of "possibles" to be annotated to help students figure out which to consult in advance of the course.
 4. Yes, they were useful.
 5. The list was long, but I found the readings to be on topic and helpful. I purchased two books that will be useful resources for me.
 6. Yes, good starting point for content covered in class.
 7. The pre-course readings were useful, especially the books by DP.
 8. I was only able to read two of the books beforehand, DP's book gives a good idea of what to expect during the course.
 9. The introductory texts were useful, but the volume of texts on the list was a little overwhelming.
 10. It would have been helpful if specific chapters were recommended instead of a loose suggestion to review some of the books listed.
 11. I read DP's book as the only pre-reading, and while great, a lot of it was covered in the course. I would have read a different book about reading practices or marginalia listed instead, which were not as detailed.
 12. They were very useful.
 13. Course readings are useful even if they are not read fully. It prepares you for what you will be learning. Maybe add a palaeography book.
 14. Yes, and they were not mandatory which was helpful. DP's palaeography handbook was the most useful I found.

- 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. It is excellent and I expect to have it at my side for a project I will be undertaking.
 2. Outstanding workbook. Superior content. Excellent map of the week's topics and activities. Absolutely will serve as a continuing reference tool.

3. Yes. The "workbook" seems complete, user-friendly, and will be consulted.
 4. Yes, I will continue to use the workbook as a reference source in my daily work.
 5. I think the workbook was a great addition to the course. I will absolutely use it after the course.
 6. The workbook is very helpful. Will definitely be of use in the course of my work and will add to my personal reference materials that I keep on hand at work.
 7. The course workbook was a Godsend! The exercises and handouts were helpful.
 8. They are helpful, they will be stashed with the rest of my reference works.
 9. I very much appreciated the workbook with pre-typed lecture notes.
 10. The workbook was very helpful and will be an invaluable resource in the future.
 11. The materials were excellent and I will keep them as a handbook for the future!
 12. The content was appropriate, useful, and very helpful. I am sure I will return to it.
 13. Absolutely loved it! I'm a slow note taker so having it there was helpful and will be helpful to reference at work.
 14. Yes, both appropriate and useful and will continue to be so.
- 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. I had already lined up a project to input provenance data to the Material Evidence: Incunabula database, and this course provided me with a lot of tools that will be very helpful.
 2. The course will guide me in my research project.
 3. No new projects, but many instances of clearer understanding and mysteries solved.
 4. I have a book on my truck right now, which will receive an enhanced description thanks to this course. I'll put my new skills to work from day one! Overall, provenance descriptions will be much improved and may inspire some retrospective projects.
 5. It really confirmed that this is the career field for me. I feel more confident in my skills and excited to put them to use!
 6. What we covered in class will be added to my "toolbox" for cataloging rare materials. The paleography, heraldry, armorial bookplate dating, and discussion of bindings were very useful for my day-to-day work. I have many projects in mind that I jotted down throughout the course of the week that I would like to undertake including contributing data to BOD.
 7. I will be going back to my institution and re-examining some of our collection to bolster or correct the descriptions. It will also change how I look at new acquisitions.
 8. I plan on re-evaluating a lot of my older catalog descriptions and pay more attention to inscriptions and book plates.
 9. No particular plans following the course, but I completed my objective of filling in a knowledge gap from my M.L.I.S. program.
 10. Support researchers to contextualize and to deepen my own research.
 11. I came away with many new resources and techniques to help with an abandoned project I am reviving at work.
 12. While I had been exposed to many of the course materials already, this was a fantastic refresher and I learned a lot that was new to me.

13. Going to work to fill out provenance notes and identify some coat of arms. The entire course was an "aha!" moment.
 14. I thought of new exhibit topics, gained a better understanding of my collection, and talking with fellow students gave me ideas for fundraising and a sense of solidarity with many of the issues that we face.
- 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. I was very satisfied with what we covered. Provenance is an enormous field covering binding, paleography, heraldry, &c., so much of what we covered was necessarily just introductory, but the bibliography pushes us to more detailed forms, instruction.
 2. DP introduced topics, took us through understanding tools, and gave us thoughtful opportunities to engage with them.
 3. Yes and yes.
 4. Yes. As with all RBS courses, in many ways, we gained a tool kit for future work and learning. The material from this course will be a useful starting point for continued learning.
 5. The instructor was fantastic! The course description was spot on, and I learned a great deal of useful information.
 6. Yes, we covered a large amount of information in a comparatively short amount of time – well organized and paced.
 7. Absolutely! The sections on heraldry and palaeography were super informative. I now have the tools to identify a coat of arms.
 8. Yes, though I still need more practice with palaeography.
 9. Yes!
 10. Yes, although it's not as applicable to my research it will be useful in my work.
 11. I learned more than I could have imagined!
 12. DP was excellent and I learned more than I hoped to learn.
 13. Yes and more. Understanding more about palaeography and heraldry will be helpful.
 14. Yes and yes.
- 5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*
1. {no response}
 2. Heraldry demands attention to a high level of detail. Two things would have furthered my mastery. First, if possible I would recommend we work on the homework on a night there is no lecture. I was exhausted at 8 p.m. when I first sat down to work through the problems. Second, I would have benefited from several more examples of the wording of crest descriptions because the order of words is challenging.
 3. {private response}
 4. I appreciate DP's offer to answer our provenance questions during the course. It would have been helpful to know in advance that this would be an option as we can come prepared.
 5. I am sad for it to be over, so I would love maybe a longer course option.

6. {no response}
7. No.
8. I would have appreciated some more "modern" (nineteenth-century) examples.
9. {private response}
10. I think placing show and tell at various points in the lecture to mix up the format would be useful. {private response}
11. A field trip would have been nice to get out of the classroom.
12. I think more content on provenance outside of a British and/or continental European framework would have been interesting but I understand the constraints of both time and content knowledge.
13. {no response}
14. Perhaps some more American book examples or a few more nineteenth-century examples, but I also know that's not the instructor's area of expertise, so I understand why not much of it is included.

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

1. I wish that I had taken the course a long time ago! It seems like an essential course for anyone doing curatorial work.
2. Graduate students in history, archivists, curators.
3. Absolutely anyone interested in the history of the book. The course's unabashed Anglo-centrism does not detract from the lessons it can teach to those working on non-British material.
4. Antiquarian book dealers, catalogers, and reference librarians.
5. M.L.I.S. students, archivists, rare book librarians.
6. Rare book catalogers, public services/reference librarians for special collections and similar positions.
7. Catalogers, booksellers - anyone who describes books.
8. Someone who works with pre-nineteenth-century books.
9. Anyone looking to get an introduction on provenance work. It seemed to serve well as a refreshed course as well, but mostly introductory.
10. Catalogers, early modern manuscript researchers.
11. Anyone who wants to learn more about book ownership, not necessarily people who care about provenance in a strict sense.
12. Catalogers, booksellers, scholars.
13. Anyone interested in telling the ownership of books in their collections where knowledge/documentation has been lost.
14. Those evaluating collections centering on the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries with many British materials. But booksellers, curators, catalogers, and instructors could all benefit.

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

1. Yes and yes.

2. Absolutely. Most definitely.
3. Yes and yes.
4. Yes.
5. I do. Provenance education is scarce, so this course is very unique.
6. Absolutely.
7. Yes and yes, definitely.
8. Yes.
9. Yes and yes!
10. Yes.
11. Yes! I always recommend RBS. Well worth the cost.
12. Yes. Absolutely.
13. Yes and hopefully, I'll be back to take more!
14. Yes and yes.

8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. No trips.
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. We did not make any trips.
9. {private response}
10. N/A - I really wish we had an opportunity for a visit to SC.
11. N/A
12. N/A
13. {no response}
14. We did not.

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

1. {no response}
2. Come rested and open to ideas.
3. Don't be shy about asking questions.
4. Think about your real-life provenance questions beforehand, and come prepared to discuss.
5. Bring DP's book with you to class! It is a great resource to follow along with during the lectures.
6. {no response}
7. It is well worth it!
8. If you have interest in the book as a unique object you will get a lot out of this course. DP is

approachable and engaging.

9. {private response}
 10. Bring examples if you have them to share with the class.
 11. DP is great! I will gladly take any other RBS courses that he teaches!
 12. N/A
 13. {no response}
 14. Taught by a kind, thoughtful instructor who makes the material fun and manageable. Well worth your time. During an eventful week, it's not full of extra work.
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Intense, but wonderful!
 2. DP is a model of an instructor we can only hope to begin to approximate.
 3. As I have said before: "The beauty of RBS is that it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience you can repeat."
 4. It was sometimes hard work but always interesting always informative, and always enjoyable.
 5. It awakened a new passion in me for rare books and the detective work needed to trace former ownership.
 6. A delightful way to engage with others in the rare book community and learn from well respected leaders in the field.
 7. Amazing!
 8. A Dream of Heraldry and Handwriting.
 9. A great way to supplement or expand your rare books and manuscripts knowledge for any area or experience level.
 10. An intensive, foundational survey of provenance tools and techniques.
 11. RBS is the best combination of mentally stimulating and emotionally fulfilling!
 12. Who knew you could make provenance so interesting!
 13. Enlightening in more ways than one between the course and people!
 14. Hope to be back!