

David Whitesell
G-10: Introduction to the Principles of Bibliographical Description
24 – 29 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. Yes—reading Bowers and Gaskell ahead of time is crucial. Even after reading it's a bit dicey! But it's really necessary to do the prep work.
 2. Very useful, I find—they are somewhat tough to read, but they make sense as you go along on the course.
 3. No, the readings were really important to understand the course from day one.
 4. Yes! Both Gaskell and Bowers were great, and helped me really get prepared for the work in the course.
 5. The reading assignments were useful, though I was lucky enough to have read Gaskell and the ABC for Book Collectors a couple of years ago, so I had to read only Bowers now. As a full-time professional, I would have never found the time to read all three books in time—I think the difference among academics and professionals, in that sense, should be accounted for.
 6. They were useful. I would like to see more clarity about how to read Bowers—may one skip notes when initially reading?—but the combination of Gaskell and Bowers prepared me well.
 7. {no response}
 8. I think the readings were very useful and critical.
 9. Very useful, especially Bowers and Gaskell. I don't think we need so many dire warnings about doing the reading on the website. That was a bit off-putting.
 10. The reading takes longer than you think, but it is all necessary and worthwhile. The biggest issue was locating an edition of Bowers which has been out of print since 2019 and is now extremely expensive secondhand. {private response}
 11. The pre-course readings were essential. Don't skip the nineteenth century chapters!
 12. The readings are crucial to an understanding of course lectures and labs. Would have been good to have the tips on note-taking and an index to Bowers in advance.
 13. Yes, however, the difficulty in acquiring Bowers must be addressed. Perhaps Oak Knoll could be persuaded to do printings just for RBS as part of our tuition use?
 14. I found reading Bowers very essential; I feel I could have skimmed Gaskell a bit and I don't think I used Carter at all.
 15. Yes! Although much was covered again in lecture. Maybe include some McKenzie responding to Bowers? Or Tanselle's simplification of Bowers's notation?
 16. Very helpful.

17. I found the course readings super helpful. While long and detailed they really helped me hit the ground running.
18. Gaskell and Bowers are must-reads. The Carter ABC was never used or cited, although I picked up a few tips reading it. Consider dropping Carter.
19. Yes, the reading assignments were useful. It would be helpful to suggest that students pay attention to certain notes in Bowers. I ended up skipping notes that came up a lot this week because I found most of Bowers's notes confusing more than illuminating.
20. Extremely. Cannot emphasize enough the need to read Bowers, especially chapter five.
21. Yes, the reading was essential and the suggestions of what to prioritize were very useful.
22. The readings were useful.
23. The reading list was incredibly useful and I appreciated the recommended order of reading as well. I would like to see Tanselle's concept of formal added, if possible, but it is a daunting list already.
24. The pre-course readings are essential, especially Bowers and Gaskell. Students need to complete these readings to get the most out of this course.
25. I thought Bowers was a LOT, perhaps focused excerpts would work better?

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, especially the museum book. I work better with examples, so anything that has examples is very useful.
2. Excellent! Will continue to use it as reference.
3. Yes, I loved the thoroughness of the workbook. It will be useful in the future.
4. I will continue to use it, yes, it's very handy as a reference. It would potentially be nice to get digital copies—maybe further ahead of the course as well.
5. Absolutely yes. The course workbook is perfectly organized and useful—I especially appreciate the list of readings and the index to Bowers!
6. The course workbook was a terrific reference tool during homework, and I expect it will continue to be as I apply my knowledge from the course.
7. Yes.
8. The workbook is one of the best I've ever seen. I'll use it in cataloging.
9. Excellent material. The museum "catalog" was particularly helpful to have a copy of.
10. The course workbook and museum workbook are incredibly useful. {private response}
11. The course workbook was invaluable, and is a resource I expect to return to regularly.
12. Very helpful.
13. Yes, excellent.
14. The workbook was amazing as a quick reference and had really useful examples. Will definitely be keeping this as a ready reference.
15. Very helpful, will keep it around for a long time (especially the index to Bowers!).
16. All materials were well organized and useful. They will be excellent resources for after

the course.

17. The workbook and materials were invaluable. I will be using them for reference for years to come. I referenced them constantly while completing my homework.
18. Workbook was fine, but I really haven't reviewed the entire workbook because I've been busy with the class. The email sent before the course with selections was good.
19. The workbook was great. I think it will be useful as refresher material.
20. Yes, and I appreciated having it ahead of time.
21. The course and museum workbooks exceeded my expectations. I will be studying and consulting them long after the course.
22. The content was useful and I will continue to use it.
23. The course workbook is invaluable and will sit in my office and be referenced frequently after the course is over. The workbook's index to Bowers's examples of what to do and what not to do is helpful.
24. The course workbook, museum workbook, and lab sheets are all gems. These resources helped me to digest the flood of knowledge I received, and I plan to use them when I return to work.
25. I LOVE the workbook; I will use it a lot and am very thankful for the collection of amazing materials.

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. Seriously thinking about finding a research project, maybe on American print shops. Will definitely use my new skills in my day job as a cataloger.
2. I walked away with new questions to ask of my research sources—I'll use the knowledge to re-examine important primary sources for a project.
3. Yes, I will include a reflection about DesBib in my dissertation and I am curious about how Latin American scholars and librarians address this topic.
4. Yes! My next research project is an editorial one, and I've learned a ton that I can already see ways to apply. And also have new ideas for my ongoing dissertation research as well!
5. I had multiple "aha!" moments, ideas, and projects every day. My brain is so full of joy that I'm even thinking of ideas and projects beyond bibliography and books! I haven't felt so intellectually stimulated in a while and it feels very good.
6. I sometimes teach special collections sessions of college courses. The Gaskell pre-reading gave me a tremendous amount of historical context to use when teaching using early printed books, and the course itself connected this to the material examination of specific books.
7. Yes.
8. I learned about bindings and cancellations. Yay! I will now be a better rare book cataloger.
9. I can't wait to make a bibliography of the rare books in our collection! I was surprised

- to learn how many mistakes printers and binders made.
10. I have learnt an incredible amount and I now feel better equipped to encounter pesky book pirates and track them down! I think I have brainstormed *c.* five new projects with staff and students here over this week—if we can get funding we're going to be very busy.
 11. There are formats and bibliographical evidences I'll never forget after attempting to collate them here at RBS. You learn from all of your mistakes here.
 12. I aim to use these skills to prepare my own catalog or Des Bib of a collection. Toward that end, Thursday's museum of Descriptive Bibliographies was highly informative and inspirational.
 13. I am interested in pursuing some form of bibliography as part of my career. However, there is a definite need for discussions amongst those who write, read, use, and catalog with bibliographical references on how to address efficiency and effectiveness of this work.
 14. I feel stronger and more confident in describing books and I received lots of great tips for how to look at books with a more analytical eye, which will be very helpful in my research.
 15. How to deal with/represent difficult collations, and be more explicit about the printing evidence.
 16. I had so many "aha!" moments, the skills and knowledge acquired at RBS will be put to immediate use at my library. Additionally, it has inspired me to do some additional research.
 17. I hope to be able to improve the descriptions of our materials in our collection. We have many legacy items that are sparsely described.
 18. Personal research and better understanding of book history. Yes, ideas for projects using these skills have been further developed.
 19. I gained an appreciation and deeper understanding of rare books scholarship. Before this course, I couldn't imagine pursuing a Ph.D. or publishing scholarly work. After taking this course and delving deeper into my interest in rare books, I'm interested in learning more and hopefully (perhaps?) contributing to the scholarly field.
 20. In my regular work and teaching, and in future research projects.
 21. I will apply what I learned almost immediately to cataloging hand press books. The workbook has also given me a basis for a plan of study and how to improve my knowledge further.
 22. I will be a better cataloger after this course.
 23. I will catalog and create signature statements with more confidence and have colleagues to reach out to with questions. I have a new methodology for collecting bibliographical evidence and adding it to my catalog records. Really appreciated being grouped with other practicing catalogers.
 24. Yes, I plan to complete several collation projects that I did not previously feel confident enough to undertake. I also have new ideas for making bibliographical

studies approachable to undergraduates.
25. I have a new set of eyes to look at the books I research.

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. I learned more than I knew I needed and it is probably still just grasping the surface. I feel like I have enough reading now to keep me busy and learning for quite a while.
2. I did learn more than I thought I would!
3. Absolutely, I learned a lot in a structured and organized manner.
4. Yes—in lab especially. It was so, so helpful to not only practice with a sample of books, but to have time to talk through the reasoning of our process as well.
5. Yes, definitely. And now I want to learn even more and take new courses next year.
6. Yes, absolutely. J.P. Ascher also worked with us to think about the pedagogy of bibliography going above and beyond.
7. Yes, and museum sessions were a treasury of information I did not expect to learn.
8. Yes, this was not promised but I am still confused by small formats. But everything else is now crystal clear.
9. Yes, absolutely, especially our lab instructor Chris Adams.
10. ABSOLUTELY, and more. J.P. Ascher was incredibly generous and gave us really challenging pedagogical tasks without undermining overconfidence to do this and do it well. I'm grateful for everything I learnt.
11. Yes.
12. Yes. I must add that the other students in the course, many of whom are experienced catalogers, were very instructive, as well.
13. Yes! Instructors were helpful and collaborative. The DesBib lecture from the end of the course would have been useful in the beginning, as it provided much context for where and why descriptive bibliography fits into the wider world of bibliography and cataloging and circumvented several roundabout class questions and discussions. (Please let Richard Noble speak to this subject too! Very clear and helpful!)
14. Yes—I felt challenged and learned a lot over the week.
15. Mostly; could still learn more about cancels, inserts, complicated interpolations; and more about how descriptive bibliography tools/concepts are utilized by different professions.
16. Absolutely, and even more than expected.
17. Yes, I do feel the course delivered all that it promised and then I learned so much. I feel much more confident in my collation skills, which is what I hoped for.
18. Yes. Yes.
19. Yes! I thoroughly enjoyed the lab. The discussions we had furthered my understanding of descriptive bibliography and of the books at hand. I learned much more than I could've hoped.

20. Yes. I only wished that there had been more early print examples in the lab sessions. By the end of the week, I wanted some more difficult examples.
21. Yes, the course description was accurate and I learned what I expected to.
22. I learned more than I hoped to learn.
23. Yes, I feel like I have better command of this skill and can use it as needed, I wanted to get a refresher on edition, issue, state, and impression in terms of creating and updating records in connection.
24. I actually learned even more than I could have imagined. I thought we were only going to work with hand-press period books, but I also learned how to examine and collate machine-press period books. Intensive collation practice was supplemented by historical evaluation like museum sessions, lectures, and the printing demo.
25. My lab instructor, Haven Hawley, was a revelation! She truly made the materials relevant for me.

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

1. Maybe flipping legion homework and museum times, so some days one is first. It would be nice to have first whack at seating in Pavilion VIII since it got quite crowded in the evenings.
2. The homework can feel quite strenuous with 4/5 books to collate per night. Perhaps a lighter homework load?
3. The first day I felt lost because it was the first time (besides the pre-course readings) I was seeing a formula. I don't have a specific suggestions, but maybe something can be done the first day to practice or familiarize ourselves with reading/interpreting simple collational formulae just to make sure we know simple but key symbols. I understand that everyone arrives with the same level.
4. Sometimes, the lectures seemed pitched slightly lower than the challenges posed by the lab books and the discussions in labs. I think I would have preferred going more quickly through the basics—relatively gleaned from the pre-readings—and have the lecture look more at the lab cases? {illegible}
5. I know it's not what Bowers would do, but I wish there was more talking about how to deal with copy-specific characteristics of the books. We are all librarians, curators, or booksellers (mostly, at least) rather than bibliographers in the strict sense of the term, so I think this should be taken into account.
6. More structured opportunity for working with students beyond one very small lab group would be nice. Perhaps shuffling the students in each lab instructor's two labs, so each gets to work some with each of the others.
7. {no response}
8. I would have enjoyed more tactile examples in the lecture. Also, I think four books a night is enough. Five is one too many.
9. One fewer homework book each day. I would have liked time to attend the evening lectures. I also felt the material on Thursday and Friday was less interesting because it

wasn't as hands-on.

10. {private response} There should be an intermediate level DesBib! I would love to explore and think through the trickier problems in more detail.
11. Extra time for homework or dinner brought to the homework facility.
12. At the outset, it would be good to have some "normal" books to consolidate foundational skills.
13. Himan collator demo.—Roundtable discussion among attendees (new perspectives on audience)—One lab day focused on writing one full description in context of specific copy.—Improve Booksellers' Night—this could have been a critical networking and discussion opportunity, especially as they often use these references. Most shops were closed, others had no idea we were coming.
14. It sometimes felt frenetic, and I would have liked more hands-on time with different books or to see more examples of different formats, &c.
15. Lectures could have gone into more depth, kind of rehashed the reading, more "modern" bibliography e.g. people mentioned in last lecture, responses to Bowers; more engagement with student questions.
16. A nap time, haha!!
17. No, this course felt like a well-oiled bibliographical machine.
18. Explain what we would not learn—for example, title page transcription—and why.
19. I found that receiving guidance during homework time was much more helpful from my lab instructor because of their familiarity with my cohort's books. Is there a way for other lab instructors to gain familiarity with more lab books? Or to have more crossover of books between cohorts?
20. While I did all the preparatory reading, it would have been helpful to have a basic overview of Bowers and top tips. Maybe a two-week course? Maybe a trip to UVA SC?
21. {no response}
22. {no response}
23. Since we are masked, maybe bigger breaks between two morning sessions so we can hydrate more? It was hard to fit all we needed comfort-wise.
24. I think the course could more strongly emphasize why bibliography is important in a broader sense, outside the academic world.
25. I would opt for less books for homework.

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

1. Rare Book catalogers, dealers, special collections librarians, book historians and bibliographers.
2. Graduate students, rare materials catalogers, curators, researchers.
3. Everyone interested in books and book history.
4. I could see a huge benefit for many of my peers—e.g. graduate students who work on book history.
5. Booksellers and auction dealers!

6. It's not perfectly calibrated for those focused on using early books in the classroom—perhaps G-20 would be?—but it is for those interested in learning more than they need to do that. Some for those wanting to read collation—it's probably more than necessary, but that's a good thing.
7. {no response}
8. Anyone working with hand-press books. Nineteenth-century scholars can use this for determining format.
9. Academics interested in book history.
10. Any academic, bookseller, collector, librarian/cataloger will benefit and they will benefit in different ways.
11. Book historians, catalogers, reference librarians, especially early in their careers.
12. 1) Advanced collectors, who aim to describe their own collections. 2) Catalogers 3) Auction-house bibliographical analysts.
13. Anyone adjacent to rare books, particularly auction and dealer catalogers.
14. Anyone looking to deepen/expand their bibliographical knowledge and understanding.
15. Folks without much experience/knowledge of hand-press printing, form collation, &c. and who want an introduction.
16. My boss! Joking, definitely rare book librarians.
17. All who are interested in doing a deep dive into books and how to describe them.
18. Bibliographers and historians of the book.
19. Anyone with a strong interest in book history, printing history, or rare books who is willing to put in the effort. This course is a serious commitment of time, energy, and thought but worth it if you have the drive.
20. Anyone who wants to understand and work closely with print books.
21. People who have some basic knowledge of bibliography or collation but haven't had much opportunity to practice, or who lack instructors or mentors to consult.
22. Librarians working with rare material and special collections.
23. Other rare materials catalogers seeking deeper and hands-on experience with very complex book structures will learn a lot of practiced skills and unlearn bad habits.
24. People who have a professional or personal interest in the physical examination of texts would benefit. Examples include catalogers, curators, archivists, booksellers, librarians, &c. The person must have a serious commitment to this topic, though.
25. Librarians and catalogers are the "ideal" audience for this course.

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

1. Oh yes. Yes, absolutely.
2. 100%
3. Yes, no doubt.
4. Yes—and absolutely. I learned even more than I was expecting to—and really enjoyed the week and the community as well. 10/10 would recommend.

5. Definitely!
6. Yes, absolutely. This course involved more thorough preparation from more people than any other class I've ever taken. The museums alone were worth the price of admission.
7. {no response}
8. Yes! I will recommend this many times over.
9. Yes and yes.
10. Yes.
11. Yes!
12. Yes! Yes! Yes!
13. Yes and yes!
14. Yes and yes.
15. Yes, and would recommend to beginners. I thought I was a beginner but I might have been wrong since this was a bit of a review. Still valuable, I just want more.
16. Completely and yes.
17. Yes! It is intense, but so worth it.
18. Yes. Yes.
19. Yes, I would recommend the course to others, though I would be sure to communicate how intensive it is.
20. Yes and yes. I really appreciated DW's lectures—I loved the one on the history of bibliography.
21. Yes, I would absolutely recommend the course to others.
22. I would recommend this course.
23. Oh goodness yes. My caution would be that as rare materials cataloging evolves over the next few years try to supplement with currently practicing staff too just so that the knowledge and pedagogy gets passed down successfully to the next generation.
24. Yes! I would recommend this course.
25. {no response}

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

1. Loved the printing demos. So excited to try a hand press!
2. Doing the printing session was very exciting and helped put many concepts into perspective for those of us who learn visually.
3. I don't think so, the museum sessions are two trips. They provide a lot of examples, context, and experience.
4. {no response}
5. I enjoyed the printing workshop very much, there's nothing like putting your hands on something to make you understand that in a deep way.
6. A visit to UVA's hand press and the opportunity to operate it were certainly memorable for starting to really understand the work of printing.

7. {no response}
8. Yes, the printing demonstration helped me understand the mechanics of it better.
9. I loved printing! I would have liked to try making paper, too.
10. {no response}
11. The printing demonstration was fabulous. {private response}Excellent learning environment.
12. N/A
13. Yes!
14. The printing demonstration with Josef Beery was fantastic—definitely a highlight of the week.
15. N/A
16. N/A
17. I felt that the presswork demonstration was very valuable. I had always wanted to try printing and now I have a tactile memory to go along with all the textual descriptions.
18. Only for the common press printing demonstration—yes.
19. I enjoyed visiting SC to learn about the printing press, though a lot of that session was waiting for others to print their sheets.
20. {no response}
21. N/A
22. I enjoyed the demonstration of how the printing press works.
23. Printing demonstration was incredibly valuable and foreshadowed what could come throughout the week. I didn't get to any of the other events.
24. The printing demo was absolutely essential. I needed the live demonstration of early printing to better understand early books.
25. Yes—I would have loved to do a trip to SC!

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

1. Do your prep before class!
2. Read Bowers well!
3. No, the guide you created is amazing and really useful.
4. Expect the homework to take almost the full 5 p.m. to 10:45 p.m. time, and plan ahead (e.g. get all other work done before coming). It really does take that long.
5. Make time to read Gaskell and Bowers, be ready to spend long hours collating, bring your own bed sheets if you sleep in the Lawn dorms!
6. It was one of the most intense, exciting learning experiences I've ever had.
7. {no response}
8. Bring a small water bottle with, and bring pencils!
9. Don't be intimidated by the course description.
10. {no response}
11. Do the reading!

12. 1) Do all of the pre-readings before the start of the course—take notes, and practice before. 2) Expect to spend every evening on homework.
13. Bring your favorite cataloging tools so you don't have to fiddle or find new stuff. It's not as complicated as people make it seem, but your days will be full!
14. Don't skimp on the pre-course reading.
15. If you read Bowers and feel lost, this course is for you. If you read it and mostly understand him, this course might be more of a review. But you will still meet and learn from incredibly smart and accomplished people!
16. Do the pre-reading, seriously, do it!
17. Bring a warm sweater for the intense AC!
18. 1. Read Gaskell and Bowers well in advance. Re-read prior to the course. 2. Examine old and rare books before coming.
19. If you stay in a hotel, choose one that's very close by. You probably don't want to start and end your (very long) days with a 15+ minute walk. Also, homework sessions really are until 9:45 p.m. (at the latest).
20. {no response}
21. Be prepared for a physically exhausting experience—I knew to expect three to four hours of homework but the reality was more like four to five (keeping in mind that one and a half hours of that were during class time).
22. I would suggest you complete the reading before coming to class.
23. {no response}
24. Don't be afraid of the rigor (you can do it!), but do prepare yourself. You must be prepared.
25. {no response}

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

1. Bibliography / Many many cool things / It's book nerd heaven.
2. Awesome!
3. In a week I understood that books have at least two timelines: the text's and the object's.
4. {no response}
5. I think I finally figured out what I want to do when I grow up.
6. Learn to see books in an entirely different way.
7. {no response}
8. So. Damn. Worth it.
9. It might be humid and hot, / But the books are cooler than thought. / The gatherings hide; / Collations elide, / More weird funny things than you caught!
10. {no response}
11. Intensive, but rewarding!
12. This was a transformational course that crystallized all of my previous studies and

- coursework—a real "capstone."
13. Eye-opening!
 14. Excellent as always!
 15. {no response}
 16. "I had a daily bliss / I half indifferent viewed / Till sudden I perceived it stir - / It grew as I pursued, / Till when, around a crag / It wasted from my sight, / Enlarged beyond my utmost scope; / I learned its sweetness right." –Emily Dickinson
 17. My brain is delightfully full.
 18. Rigorous study of books.
 19. I'm so tired but so glad I took the course.
 20. It was a great opportunity to focus on learning something very new—it's my first course, and I will be back for more.
 21. Tiring but enlightening.
 22. A great way to connect with the rare book community and an amazing learning experience.
 23. {private response}
 24. G-10 is the course every budding bibliographer needs; it is a chance to learn from the best, flex your bibliographic muscles (to the max!), and develop a network of incredible people.
 25. {no response}