

Lisa Conathan & Bill Landis

L-60a: Introduction to Archives for Special Collections Librarians, Booksellers & Collectors
19–23 July 2021

Narrative Evaluations

- 1) *Do you have any practical suggestions for improvements to RBS's online logistics?*
 1. {no response}
 2. Nothing I could immediately suggest - I'm impressed
 3. I think it went really smoothly.
 4. It was very well spaced with breaks and instruction. While online can be exhausting, this was very well done and everything was well communicated.
 5. No, this was very well done. As well as could be expected. But I didn't use the lounge between meetings at all. Just needed a screentime break.
 6. The online class went very smoothly! I'd recommend a better way to gain access into the class early for the office hours.
 7. Not really. 1 suggestion would be, instead of doing nearly all exercises with pre-selected items/records, it could be useful to have enrolled students bring their own materials into the seminar. We did this once or twice, which I thought was great, but we didn't really have the time to delve into the specifics of arranging & describing our own personal records or those of our colleagues. Overall, however, I thought that the RBS online course was well-run, helpful, and interesting.
 8. I was really happy with the online experience, no suggestions for improvements.
 9. no
 10. Nothing comes to mind, it was all pretty seamless (though I'm sure not for the tech-wrangler).
 11. If online classes continue to be an option, it would be helpful to make prospective students aware that multiple screens (or at least a very large single screen) are useful. It was occasionally challenging to work on a laptop, especially during the breakout sessions when I was toggling back and forth between the Google drive and the Zoom screen.
 12. None that I can think of.
 13. {no response}
 14. It's a lot of documents to manage but they were generally very well-organized. Not sure why Dropbox was there. I don't think we used it. Zoom worked well, as did Gather town when I used it.
 15. Perhaps recommend a large monitor or multiple monitors. Trying to access material in multiple windows on a small screen was difficult at times. Otherwise, Google Drive worked well and everything was laid out wonderfully.
 16. No
 17. It worked pretty well for a zoom class with multiple breakout rooms each day. The Gathertown app was well-done and exciting as well. I think the Google shared folder format worked really well, although my personal tech skills caused me a few issues. I think RBS did a great job with the logistics.

18. It would be appreciated if course scheduling would be more considerate of time zone differences.

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

1. Suzanne was delightful!
2. extremely courteous and helpful
3. Suzanne was very patient, understanding, and eager to help.
4. Suzanne was wonderful! :)
5. Excellent very helpful and informative
6. Every member of RBS staff that I interacted with was extremely friendly, competent, and helpful!
7. Friendly and helpful, I thought.
8. They were promptly responsive to my queries.
9. excellent, both online and via email prior to school
10. Fine. It was nice to hang out a bit in Gather.
11. Excellent! I so appreciated both Bill and Lisa's teaching styles - very informative and engaging! Also so helpful to have Suzanne in the class, she was right on those technical issues and definitely helped to keep things moving along.
12. Everyone was friendly, willing to help, and prompt when help was required.
13. I have found RBS staff always to be very pleasant, helpful, and professional.
14. Very positive and helpful.
15. Always excellent. Very friendly and knowledgeable staff.
16. Excellent! Very accessible and approachable, especially in an online environment.
17. Fantastic! From the very beginning with creating my account, I had a tech problem with my preferred name; super fast response and fix from RBS. And the course instructors themselves - I just can't express how patient and supportive and engaging everyone is.
18. All of my encounters have been positive. RBS staff always offered assistance when needed and provided all necessary information and tools to successfully attend the class and complete all assignments.

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. {no response}
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. I did not attend
5. I was not able to attend any this week
6. I unfortunately was unable to attend the evening lecture.
7. After Zoom classes, honestly I wanted time away from my computer and Zoom, so I did not attend any supplemental events. Were they in-person, I absolutely would have attended!
8. {no response}

9. Sorry, couldn't work that into my schedule. That's the disadvantage of being home and online, life gets in the way.
 10. Couldn't make it, though I hope to find the recording of the lecture itself.
 11. N/A
 12. The lecture was fantastic and very informative. It was very much a good use of my time.
 13. {no response}
 14. The opening reception was a good way to meet a couple people. Other than that, I dropped in on Thursday and the rooms were entirely empty. It's tough after zooming all day.
 15. {no response}
 16. Did not attend.
 17. Yes, the Tuesday lecture was very interesting and a nice way to share the experience with others in my class and with the other class participants during the same week. Although we didn't see each other in person, having the shared experience was valuable.
 18. N/A
- 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. {no response}
 2. Yes -- and deeper topical bibliographies welcome
 3. There were a lot of pre-course reading assignments so I'll probably have to revisit many of them in the future on my own time. From what I've read, all of the readings provided really helpful, foundational knowledge.
 4. Yes! I felt all the reading prepared me to come in with specific questions and a good framework for the course. It wasn't too much or too little.
 5. I thought the readings were spot on and I look forward to checking out the additional resources list.
 6. The pre-course readings were helpful to familiarize myself with archival terminology before the course. I wouldn't say that reading the entirety of the Meissner work was necessary.
 7. {deleted response}
 8. I found it all extremely valuable, and to be a vital part of the course.
 9. Yes, but I barely got through the only required textbook, it was just too much. Mostly just skimmed the book.
 10. Yes, the pre-course reading was useful and helped us pretty much dive right into the nitty-gritty.
 11. Very helpful in providing me with an intellectual framework and also introducing the language. I had forgotten a lot since my introduction to archives in library school!
 12. The readings were very useful as a foundation to jump right into the classes.
 13. I felt that the pre-course reading assignments were very useful in terms of mental preparation, of reasonable length, and informative.
 14. Very useful.

15. The pre-course readings were very helpful as a grounding for the class discussions, and I would argue the Meissner book was essential reading if one was not already familiar with the field.
 16. Moderately. Readings were not as important to this class as the hands-on/interactive activities.
 17. Yes, very useful. The readings gave me a baseline understanding of the terminology used in the session. And they played into and explained a lot of the experience I had working with archives that I didn't have the words to describe or define. The Meissner book was a great source to start with to learn a bit about all aspects of archives, and it was a surprisingly engaging read. It you can use "easy peasy" in a textbook, that's a good thing.
 18. All of the pre-course readings were relevant and useful.
- 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. {no response}
 2. yes.
 3. I did not use it very much.
 4. It was all very useful. The daily feedback questions gave me the opportunity to process each day which I think helped with retention. I will be downloading and using all the resources from the google drive. I'm so grateful to be able to go back and get those.
 5. The teaching materials were very appropriate, clear, and easy to follow. The content was exactly what I hoped to learn about. It will continue to be useful for a long time after class.
 6. Content was extremely useful and I will likely refer to it in the future.
 7. {deleted response}
 8. The instructors and RBS staff did a great job of keeping track of materials used and providing links, so I intend to download much of it for future use.
 9. All exercises were relevant and useful.
 10. Certainly appropriate and useful at the time and some of it will continue to be later as well.
 11. The course materials for this class were amazing. It was wonderful to be able to "see" the materials as PDFs and working with them as part of a small group added relevance to the lectures. I really enjoyed the variety of the materials we looked at and discussed.
 12. The exercises we worked on during the course were really the backbone of the course. They really helped to manifest the topics we were discussing and gain a greater understanding. As this class was taught virtually, it also helped to connect with other students virtually and exchange ideas.
 13. {no response}
 14. Yes, I think it will continue to be useful.
 15. All content was well-thought out and relevant to the course. I believe it will continue to be very useful after the course.

16. The arrangement of course materials was excellent. Very easily accessible and followed a sensible organization for each day and period.
 17. The teaching materials were well-selected and interesting. We worked with several different types of materials and got practical experience with the tech side of ArchivesSpace. Learning the tech side will help me understand how the public view corresponds more to the actual material and that will help me help patrons more. I will definitely access the material in the folder after the class and use it in my work.
 18. I felt all the materials were helpful and instructive. It would be nice to see additional materials provided where we could delve deeper into the content shared in the course. I plan on using some of the resources provided moving forward as I felt they could be used as helpful resources.
- 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. {no response}
 2. Yes - all very valuable for my professional work as a handler of archives and manuscripts.
 3. I took good notes to bring back to discuss with my employer, and an idea that we could possibly think about implementing at my institution.
 4. So many! I have been able to apply some things immediately in discussions with my staff and I feel I have a much better grasp of where I need to direct future conversations and work.
 5. Lots and lots of aha moments. I will be implementing so many things I learned in class it is too long to list them. I will use archive space, reorganize my archive area at work, try to get funding to buy appropriate supplies, and ask the cataloguers to employ the mpls approach when processing the collection.
 6. I will use the knowledge acquired directly in my work with my institution's archives. Especially information about accession, description, and arrangement. I also will use tips on how to most efficiently search archives and finding aids.
 7. {no response}
 8. The class gave me a framework for thinking about archival organization in a way that will be more beneficial to end users.
 9. The course was so comprehensive, I feel it will inform a lot of my archival work going forward as both a doctoral student and when I return to the library profession.
 10. This course helped me understand archives much better and caused a complete re-think to my approach to archives in public services, both with patrons and in the classroom.
 11. Very helpful to have this much more thorough grounding in archival practice - I collaborate regularly with the archives staff and have always been a bit mystified by their process. I also found it very helpful to question about when/how to acquire a new collection - will definitely be thinking about how it might be better to "pass" on a particular collection if we cannot house/preserve/provide access to the materials.

12. There were a few topics, such as the metadata resources, that I will definitely be taking back. Our discussion on standards led me to contacting an archivist friend of mine, who is going to help me understand a bit more about certain standards.
 13. As desired, this course certainly left me with a much better understanding of the language of archival description and organization, and an improved conception of how a collection goes from acquisition to accession to description and organization and finally to patron use. Though my own work is mainly with our rare book collection, what I've learned this week will help me to break down some of the unnecessary barriers that stand between my colleagues who work predominantly with archives and me. I also plan to incorporate more archival collections into my regular instruction.
 14. I learned so much about archival description that I will take back to the job. The idea that AD is iterative and flexible, that it doesn't have to be perfect, and can exist in many different forms and levels of granularity.
 15. The knowledge gained here will be incredibly helpful in assisting me to streamline my work and be "on the same page" with colleagues.
 16. The most important "aha!" was the emphasis on making the collections known to researchers and users. That it is more important than giving access to let people know of a collection's existence. This is very important for me to move forward in my work, coming from a library background.
 17. Lots of aha moments! Great ideas for public services - knowing more about copyright and permissions, learning about Wikidata and SNAC resources, new ideas for instruction and outreach. By learning more about how archival collections are accessioned and processed, I will be able to help my colleagues with tasks and also be more supportive of them in their work.
 18. I plan on using the information we learned about archival description and arrangement to review and update some of the materials I have created for my own organization so that they are more conducive for user use and better aligned with current standards in the industry.
- 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. {no response}
 2. Yes - and more.
 3. Yes! Yes! More!
 4. That and more!
 5. Yes, and much more than I ever thought I would learn, I learned in this course.
 6. I hoped to gain confidence in speaking about and working with archives, and I certainly feel I gained that.
 7. {deleted response}
 8. I was starting from almost zero in terms of archival experience and knowledge, and the class gave me a good feel for the field, in such a way that I'll be able to use this information in a variety of circumstances going forward.
 9. I wasn't sure what to expect, and had little working knowledge of archives. This course exceeded my expectations.

10. Absolutely
11. Yes.
12. I think they went above and beyond what I was expecting. I most definitely picked up knowledge that will hopefully be helpful to my institution.
13. Very much so! Please see more immediately above. The instructors were extremely organized. They gave freely of their expertise, but always made sure that the students' questions and experiences were heard and discussed when appropriate.
14. Yes.
15. Overall, I think the course was very accurately described in the course description. I did learn what I expected, and much more.
16. Yes. Instructors did an amazing job of covering so much material and key issues with the amount of time allotted for the week in an online environment.
17. Yes, I learned what I had hoped to learn and more! The guest lecture on born-digital material was eye-opening and made me realize that it's not a job for dabblers. And by learning the tech side of ArchivesSpace and how Excel documents can be just downloaded in to the system, I'll be able to help our processing archivists more.
18. I feel I did receive the training I had hoped for with the addition of seeing my work in a new perspective and with a more clear understanding.

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

1. This was a very Yale-focused course and while I appreciated the knowledge shared, what Yale does is not feasible for those of us at lesser funded institutions. It would have been great to more guest speakers from different sized institutions.
2. Would love to visit their repositories in person at another date
3. N/A
4. {no response}
5. I cannot think of anything.
6. None that I can think of offhand.
7. {no response}
8. I would have liked more time spent on theory and philosophy.
9. {no response}
10. More mention of other archival management systems or ways of storing and using archival data. At some points it felt like an ad for ArchivesSpace.
11. This was a great experience - I can only imagine how fantastic it would be in person, with the chance to actually see and touch the materials and interact with my fellow classmates.
12. This may have been because the class had to switch to online, but I thought the first day was confusing, in some ways. It felt like we jumped right in without any preamble. By the second day, though, the structure of the class was much clear.
13. {no response}
14. The course was a little heavy on ArchivesSpace content. It served as a useful vehicle for working with archival description, but many of us may never work with it again. More discussion of alternatives would be good. The one exercise

where we were intended to follow along with Bill while also doing our own work was difficult but manageable once I got caught up.

15. I think Bill and Lisa were able to use digital files to great advantage. Still, maneuvering in and out of the windows could prove difficult at times. Having an exercise on one page, then DACS standards for reference on another, then a Zoom breakout window, and potentially documents or other digital files for reference could prove to be an unwieldy combination.
16. No.
17. Only if they could mail out bagels and coffee! Really, I thought the class went really well. In the online environment, we may have had even more interaction as a class than we might have in person.
18. Much of the content was addressed for those working with formalized institutions and entities, such as libraries, universities and book selling agencies. It would have been nice to have had a component to the course that addressed how archival management tools and methodologies could be adapted for those working in alternative ways such as in Indigenous cultural heritage management. It would have been helpful to learn more about any work or methods that have been created or thought of to address culturally sensitive approaches towards managing information and content of source communities.

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

1. {no response}
2. A wide variety of librarians and booksellers -- everyone.
3. Archivists who are looking to take on more responsibility in their jobs.
4. I think keeping this type, of course, accessible online for people will greatly increase the number of folks who can attend. While it's nice to get in the archive, it's not mandatory to get good, concrete takeaways.
5. Librarians working with collections, special collections. But really all librarians could benefit from the focus on linked data which many of us are still trying to understand. Could do a whole class on just that.
6. Anyone who has little to no experience with archives (like me) should not be afraid to take this course - I learned a lot from Bill and Lisa and all my classmates and did not feel lost during the classes.
7. {no response}
8. Archivists, librarians.
9. Exactly who it was marketed to in the title.
10. Other folks with a very heavy book background who need to understand archival collections and description.
11. Definitely other librarians, and I think the booksellers also got a lot out of this course. I certainly learned a lot from everyone in the class!
12. I think anyone who needs a general understanding of archives would benefit from this class.
13. The marketed audience -- special collections librarians, booksellers, and collectors -- are really the people I think would, and do, benefit most.

14. Almost anyone working with archival materials from processing archivists to public services archivists and librarians.
15. Anyone working in an institutional environment who is unfamiliar with archives and the unique difficulties they can pose.
16. The course description was extremely accurate in targeting librarians and booksellers, but teaching faculty may benefit as well.
17. Anyone who works in libraries. The wide range of professions of the people in the class demonstrated the wide interest in this topic, and everyone had something useful and applicable to their work they could take away from the class. It was mentioned that the professionalism of the archival field is a fairly recent thing, and I think many people even in the library field don't know exactly what an archivist does or what work they do. This class opened up my eyes to the profession and gave me more respect for what they do and the decisions they have to make in organizing material.
18. Individuals working archive adjacent or are part of a larger organization that has an archive component.

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

1. {no response}
2. yes
3. Yes.
4. Absolutely
5. Absolutely.
6. Definitely!
7. {no response}
8. YES!
9. Yes.
10. Definitely, though probably a better question for my institution since it paid.
11. Yes!
12. Yes, I feel like it was worth the cost of tuition.
13. Most certainly!
14. Yes, it was fantastic.
15. Yes
16. N/A
17. Yes, definitely!
18. Yes.

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

1. 7
2. 10
3. 8
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10

7. 9
8. 7
9. 8
10. 10
11. 10
12. 10
13. 10
14. 9
15. 8
16. 10
17. 10
18. 7

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

1. {no response}
2. Great additions - the speakers were very helpful
3. Yes, very.
4. Yes, it was wonderful to have some content experts come in where we could hear straight from people who do the more specialized work on a daily basis. Also helped us gain more networking contacts for future projects/questions.
5. Guest speakers were very knowledgeable and interesting.
6. Yes, I did feel the speakers were all time well spent.
7. {deleted response}
8. The guest speakers were excellent.
9. Yes
10. Mostly, yes. One speaker went on so long there was no time for discussion, which is always disappointing.
11. Yes.
12. We had a few guest speakers and their presentations were very informative.
13. We did have several guest speakers (three, I believe), who all contributed valuably to the conversations.
14. Yes, the guest speakers were very helpful.
15. Yes. All the speakers were excellent.
16. Yes. Each guest speaker had much to contribute to the major topics covered in the course. There were some technical difficulties with the last speaker (Mr. Custer) which caused to go over time, but it was not his fault.
17. Oh yes. Melissa, Alice, and Mark all gave very informative and interesting presentations and I learned a lot from each.
18. Yes

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

1. {no response}
2. Go for it -- its a dynamic class

3. Clear your whole schedule for the week so you can really dedicate your focus to the class.
4. Please do keep the online component. I think that will greatly increase my own ability to attend in the future and will definitely allow expansion of the classes to more people.
5. Just don't be intimidated by the subject matter. It is not as daunting as it may seem when you sign up.
6. Take this course! Based on the feedback from my classmates, people of many professionals and familiarity with archives will take something away from it.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. Be prepared to keep up! Discussion moves quickly, you need to be completely engaged.
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. {no response}
15. {no response}
16. Depending on what level of familiarity they have with archives, I would advise them to do as much research/reading on archivespace as possible, as arrangement and description is a significant portion of the class (and one of the most complicated).
17. Rare Book School is an intensive and demanding experience, but it's a collaborative one. Sharing the work and exercises with the class has been a great experience, but you do have to be prepared to pull your weight. Doing the advance readings is important, and you should be comfortable enough (in person or on zoom) to share your thoughts and ask questions.
18. Be sure to be prepared for any time differences (verify broadcasting times and plan accordingly) and verify early on that you have access and editing privileges in the software that the instructors are using.

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

1. {no response}
2. "Less processing, more product!"
3. Pay librarians more.
4. So good.
5. Bill and Lisa led this community of scholars through the wilds of the archival hinterlands and back to a place of peace and understanding.
6. My week at Rare Book School met and exceeded expectations!
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Really instructive and insightful, and engaging from start to finish.
10. Finding aids are not / failed catalogue records. Take / them for what they are.

11. I had forgotten how much I love being a student, being exposed to new ideas, interacting with my peers in learning something new. It's been a joy!
12. Well worth it.
13. intro to archives / archival description is / an art and a joy!
14. It was energizing and informative. Thank you so much!
15. Continuing education at its best.
16. {no response}
17. I had a fantastic time meeting new people, learning new things, and hearing about others' experiences.
18. I came, I learned, and I'm a better cultural heritage steward for it.

Student Data

Number of Respondents: 18 (of 18)

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. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
4. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
5. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
6. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
7. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
8. I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule.
9. I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule.
10. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
11. My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used vacation or unpaid leave days.
12. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
13. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
14. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
15. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
16. My situation does not fit any of the options above.
17. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.
18. My institution/employer gave me professional leave time.

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

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

7. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
8. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
9. I paid 100% of my tuition costs myself.
10. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
11. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
12. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
13. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
14. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
15. My institution/employer paid 100% of my tuition costs.
16. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.
17. My institution/employer paid part of my tuition costs, and I paid the rest.
18. I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive all of my tuition expenses.

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

1. 1
2. This is my first course.
3. This is my first course.
4. This is my first course.
5. 6
6. 1
7. This is my first course.
8. 2
9. This is my first course.
10. 1
11. This is my first course.
12. 5
13. 1
14. This is my first course.
15. This is my first course.
16. This is my first course.
17. This is my first course.
18. This is my first course.

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

1. Library discipline: Library administrator
2. Book Trades: Antiquarian bookseller
3. Student working towards a/an: Ph.D./D.Phil.
4. Library discipline: Special collections librarian
5. Library discipline: Other
6. Library discipline: Special collections librarian
7. Professional educator: Associate professor
8. Book Trades: Antiquarian bookseller
9. Student working towards a/an: Ph.D./D.Phil.
10. Library discipline: Special collections librarian
11. Library discipline: Cataloger/metadata librarian

12. Library discipline: Cataloger/metadata librarian
13. Library discipline: Curator
14. Library discipline: Library administrator
15. Book Trades: Auction House Staff
16. Library discipline: Special collections librarian
17. Library discipline: Public services librarian
18. Other Occupations/Vocations: Other