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B-10: Introduction to the History of Bookbinding  
28 July–2 August, 2024, Charlottesville, Virginia

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. Working through the readings prior to the course helped me to lay a much-needed foundation before the start of the course. This material is completely new to me, so having a head start allowed me to feel prepared for the course. I was able to borrow almost all of the titles through my university affiliation or ILL. I appreciated that these readings were recommended and not mandatory, as I was not able to complete all of the readings and some titles were too rare to acquire easily. I also found the readings to be a useful path to stray from. I used some works mentioned in footnotes to discover specific styles of bindings that I was then able to appreciate and identify in person during the course.

2. Yes, the readings were very useful. While not referenced, they provided background information that made discussions easier

3. I had a hard time finding most of the readings—although the ones I could find were good. Perhaps fewer? Or send chapters or sections that would be allowable for educational purposes—focused a little more.

4. N/A. The course just had optional pre-reading, which the instructor had indicated were not necessary to read prior to class. I appreciate that there wasn't too much prep work or reading to do prior to class, just due to time considerations and sometimes difficulty in tracking down resources.

5. I loved the readings. I got my hands on an E.P. Goldschmidt's *Gothic & Renaissance Bindings* which was a wonderful read. Douglas Cokerell's *Bookbinding & the Care of Books* was rather dry but very informative. I heartily recommend both!

6. I found it difficult to locate many of the readings, however I suspect that has more to do with institutional access than anything.

7. Yes, they were. One book that I found helpful before the course was a book history book by Steven Galbraith. It was an excellent intro to book and print history that helped me prior.

8. I was only able to get a hold of some of the suggested readings, but I enjoyed them and they helped me get excited for the class and thinking about important themes. None were essential for my participation in the course though.

9. Yes.

10. The pre-course reading assignments were helpful, but I would pare down a few of the reference books that we were directed to in class (have them as additional reading). The ones that were “dated.”

11. I saw the comment that most of the readings were out of print and were optional. So, I didn't try to find them. And I followed class just fine. The list will be helpful for any future research I need to do on the topic.

12. Yes, the reading list was great—however many titles are hard to access or out of print and not available to purchase/access—What about a Course Reserve (digital?) if you are accepted—then you can access?

13. We did not have mandatory readings for the course—though I purchased or requested scans for several of the recommended readings and read about 5 of them. I'd like to see some resources for more Twentieth and Twenty-first-century artists

books listed as well as some practical books related to our bookbinding and gold tooling exercises. (They were so much fun I know I'll want to do more later.)

14. Although I appreciate the lack of homework, I actually think some focused reading assignments would have been beneficial. A bibliography of "preliminary advices" and "additional materials" was provided, but it was hard to know what would reinforce the session material and what would not. I also suggest a course reserve in the library, since acquiring these books could run into thousands of dollars.

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. There was not a lot of handout material, although I'm not sure it was completely necessary. This is a survey course, not a seminar or a practical workshop. As such, it's up to the student to pay attention and filter out the information that is relevant to them. The handout for book identification seemed to go over really well with the portion of students involved with appraisal and cataloging.

2. No workbook. Other teaching materials were very useful.

3. I will very much appreciate receiving the summaries that the instructor promised to send after the class is over.

4. Yes. I will continue to reference resources and class notes in the future as it relates directly to my job.

5. Though sparse, all given materials were very helpful.

6. I enjoyed and found the glossary terminology useful, as it can vary. Having a clear idea of terms will help me down the line in explanation, training and instruction

7. I was taken back by the amount of relevant exhibitions and practical exercises that we experienced together.

8. We only received a few handouts during the course, but we'll be sent select key slides afterward that I expect I'll find useful and will refer to after the course for work and future projects.

9. The course book shared with the students was very useful. Maybe a vocabulary list of specific bindery terms and styles could be added to it for future courses.

10. All of the information from class will be useful in my day-to-day work with our collections. I have been inspired to take up more binding and sewing workshops, as well.

11. An outline/schedule would have been nice to have but was not necessary/needed. All the reference books passed around during class for looking will be useful for the future.

12. Course work was balanced and beneficial—The lecture and then practical opportunities to bind sew structures helped to reinforce the lectures and vice versa. Also, the ability to see, touch, feel the actual object from SC was a bonus—not many times can you discuss the book and its aspects—then walk next door and physically see it to study.

13. It might be nice to have some of the slide summaries or content as handouts so those interested can annotate during the lectures and museums (just highlights). The contents were incredibly useful and I'm sure will come into practice in my own artistic work as well as in my positions. I appreciate that the course was not reading assignment heavy, since it encouraged us to watch the slides and absorb the lectures as part of close-looking exercises.

14. See above. Also, I know some of this material may be proprietary, but perhaps a selection of the hundreds of slides used could be archived to the shared Google Drive.
- 3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*
1. I enjoyed learning about matters of taste. It was fun to see that the concept of “tacky” is eternal. I appreciated the inclusion of books that are fragile, damaged or have undergone repair. Learning that bookbinding does not have the same rules as fine art also helped me to view the craft in a different light. Also, I was very intrigued by the miniature books, I wish we had seen more, but I imagine that could be its own separate course.
  2. I loved the medieval parts as it helped inform my research.
  3. So much! Exposure to many examples and the opportunity to examine and discuss those examples with the instructor. So valuable!
  4. Everything was great. The class really exceeded my expectations. The lectures, museum, SC visit, and practical exercises were all good and I appreciated the variety. It was nice to break up the day(s) between the lectures, museums, and practical exercises.
  5. I particularly enjoyed the museums. Getting to handle the artifacts was indispensably helpful. I had not anticipated the practical exercises, but they were very well done and very helpful.
  6. As a professional who deals more with physical materials, I found the practical exercises and demonstrations to be the most useful and informative. Yes, I have now seen a particular piece of equipment in use and hope to utilize it in the future.
  7. The explanations and practice related to material and period recognition were very helpful. The class increased my understanding of books as artifacts and art.
  8. Discussion of book structures and their changes over time was most relevant, as was handling so many books that exemplify trends and historical evolutions. Museums and SC visits were excellent.
  9. The course gave an excellent overview of the history of bookbinding, and I enjoyed the practical exercises and book viewings (museums).
  10. I think that the overall appreciation of the practice of bookbinding and structure will stay with me. Full of insights, and I plan to do more assessment of the rare books and atlases in our collections.
  11. The class was a wonderful mixture of lecture, hands-on looking at books and actual binding—with thread and paper. The lectures were a lot of pictures, but a good overview. It is always a joy to actually touch old books! And the binding sewing was a good way to learn other than sitting and listening.
  12. The combo of lecture and hands-on helped me with absorbing the amount of data over 500 years. By following the history it gave me a new appreciation with what I feel I should explore next—so much and many areas to look at besides just the high point facets of the history.
  13. The conversations we had during lectures, museums, SC and the practical exercises were the most insightful. We were encouraged to ask questions, muse about developments in the history of binding and learn from everyone in the class. The close-looking work in pairs at the beginning of the week was great for conversation starting, especially at the beginning of the week.

14. Practical exercises tremendously beneficial in concretizing the concepts studied (and fun!). I feel more confident having acquired the vocabulary and historical perspective of the bookbinding field. I don't know if I can identify bindings well, but I think I can describe them.

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 know a lot more than I did before I walked into the class. Reading a book with black and white illustrations and wordy descriptions is not how this material is learned. Having a lecture with high-quality photos followed by in person examples gave me clarity and was useful for comprehension. I also appreciated having leather and parchment specimens to examine more closely. This was the most effective way to understand other elements of bookbinding that just don't stick when reading a handout. I knew that this course was not going to be directly relevant to conservation, so I came in pretty open to whatever the course had to offer.

2. Yes, and yes.

3. Yes! Now to practice identifying and describing the various bindings. Knowing the context in which they were designed and constructed is so helpful.

4. Yes, it exceeded my expectations. KLH is a wonderful teacher and very knowledgeable. I appreciated her years of experience and perspective.

5. Without a doubt, KLH is world class and I could not recommend her enough. I learned much more than I imagined.

6. I found the instructors patient, informative and more than willing to clarify concepts and facilitate my understanding and I feel that I have learned and retained (hopefully) the knowledge I expected to learn.

7. Absolutely! KLH was approachable and knowledgeable. It was truly a privilege to learn under her.

8. I think so. Having the combination of a curator/academic instructor and binder with the hand skills assistant was a good one. They were both very knowledgeable in their areas and helped bring a nice/fun/supportive dynamic throughout the class.

9. Yes, absolutely.

10. Absolutely—I look forward to reviewing the reference materials and notes to apply the rich scope of binding history we covered in class. The hands-on workshops in combination with the lectures and “book lab” (identification) really synthesized everything together nicely.

11. My goal was to gain familiarity with the subject and that goal was accomplished. I probably couldn't identify any random binding, but I know the resources I'd use to work on it. KLH is extremely knowledgeable on the subject and you can tell she has a lot of experience. She also did a great job putting the class together.

12. KLH did an excellent job and Suzanne and Amanda with the bookbinding exercise, were outstanding—they were welcoming and supportive—you don't get access to a curator at the British Library very often and even more rare that they treat you as an equal or peer in class time.

13. Yes, I think I have a much firmer grasp of the course and trends of the history of binding in most European countries. I am able to better recognize trends in styles and identify animal skins. The practical exercises went above and beyond my expectations, deepened my bookish understandings of sewing structures, as well as blind and gold tooling. Additionally, KLH helped me have my vocabulary and kindly enlightened me

on the pronunciation of a variety of words I've likely been mispronouncing for quite some time!

14. Yes. Instructor was a treasure trove of information, answered questions thoroughly, created a positive and respectful learning environment.

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. This course is setting a foundation that supports different avenues of study. I think the most useful takeaway from the course is how many more questions I left with. This course has provided me with professional insight, and creative inspiration. I found it to be accessible yet challenging. Thorough, but also led with a sense of curiosity and levity. A well-balanced class.

2. Graduate school and hopefully a career in the future dealing with books and manuscripts.

3. I instruct university students who come with classes to the SC unit. This will help me with that! And also with acquisition—Identifying the gaps in our collections.

4. {private response}

5. I hope to apply them to my work and my own collection.

6. Identification of materials and techniques will help me plan and execute treatments.

7. My ability to identify materials will be highlighted in my freelance archival pursuits, at my local museum and in my university collections.

8. I expect they'll help me a lot in carrying out sympathetic, historically appropriate book repair work—just having greater awareness of each book's contexts. Also gained a lot of inspiration for new bindings.

9. The skills of identifying bindings, periods, geographical locations and styles are extremely valuable for me.

10. In my day-to-day work caring for and describing our rare books and atlases.

11. I will be going to university in the fall for book history, so everything is relevant, even if I will not be opening a bindery or writing descriptions in the near future.

12. —Go back and start to look at areas of the historical record— Look less at the areas of Carter's *Printing & the Mind of Man* and go back to other areas such as Zinn's *—A People's History of the United States . . .* to get more representation of others in the record/archives.—

13. I will use my knowledge for the rest of my life. Not only do I plan to take up long-stitch bindings, but I also intend to apply this deeper understanding of book binding at my job, assisting my valuation of bound materials to help those that need appraisals.

14. I am teaching an experimental book history course this coming year and will absolutely incorporate the RBS material into a unit on bookbinding, including the practical activities about which an RBS co-instructor provided useful guidance.

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

1. I would recommend this course for those who are newer to the world of rare books and primary sources, those who would like to establish a basic understanding of bookbinding history, and those who are looking to broadly understand the differences between bindings across the time and space of Europe (a little bit the USA). This

course feels like skipping a stone across an ocean of information so someone looking to sink to the bottom of that ocean will be frustrated.

2. People just starting to get into fields related.
3. Practitioners, M.L.I.S. students, appraisers.
4. Anyone interested in the subject matter—librarians, conservators, students, &c.
5. Booksellers, students of art, librarians, binders, anyone with a bent toward human artistry.
6. Librarian who are involved in instruction and acquisition of rare books, particularly in Special Collections
7. Anyone interested in description of binding in practice.
8. Anyone who describes, researches, creates, or repairs book bindings.
9. Librarians, book dealers, bookbinders.
10. Students interested in learning about book structure and the history of publishing, library and museum professionals who handle and care for rare books, book dealers, book artists, and educators.
11. Anyone who wants to better understand the history of bindings—especially decorations on bindings.
12. Academics, Librarians, Binders! Bookseller's.
13. Anyone who has an itch to understand why a binding might look the way it does. This course rewards a curious mind.
14. I was a bit surprised to find that the majority of my peers had connections to the book trade as librarians, archivists, curators, binders, booksellers, &c.—as opposed to teacher-scholars. The latter, like myself, would certainly find the course stimulating, though less so if they are looking for social/cultural context-based approaches.

7) *If applicable, what were the most original, powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any "aha!" moments you'd like to share?*

1. Cartonnage Romantique! I had only ever seen these books on website for Rare Book Sellers, which gave me the mistaken impression that they were quite high end. Learning how cheap and tacky they were/ are, and getting to see a generous amount of examples was delightful and illuminating. I liked them before the course, I love them now. On the opposite end, I thought I would be enthralled by the embroidered covers and actually was more interested in their protective enclosures. These were two examples of the real-life book making the difference. I also was surprised to see how a country's culture can seep into the making and decorating of book covers.
2. The hands-on lessons. They wonderfully informed my craft and answered questions I struggled with.
3. Honestly, it was the repetition—hearing the lecture with slides, seeing the books in the museums and in the SC field trip. A slow “aha!”
4. {no response}
5. Finishing my binding. Taking the knowledge from the lecture and seeing it in person in the museums. “Oh, that's the fanfaire!”
6. Understanding that identification of bindings is imperfect and requires practice and experience. The realization that “we can tell that is binding is \_\_\_\_\_ because of the way it is”, so to speak.
7. Each moment we handled book examples from class instruction inspired an “aha.”
8. Several during museums—getting to handle books after discussing the theory/context drove home or clarified important concepts.

9. KLH is a fantastic instructor, thoughtful and deeply knowledgeable.
10. There was quite a bit of history to cover, and once we reached the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries it was clear to see how all of the past influences of binding construction and design coalesced into established standards of practice (of varying quality) then continue to be adapted and pushed to this day.
11. All the visits with books were delightful. I can look at pictures anywhere—but it is good to actually see, feel the object. That is only possible at places that have good collections—like RBS and UVA.
12. Just the realization from the course work that there are many other areas to study and research—not just the canonical or high points.
13. For years, I thought a mottled calf binding always utilized acid, and therefore must eventually have the eating away of parts of the calf. The slight correction of learning, mottled calf might be ink and acid, or ink alone, was just one example of an “aha!” moment that may help me better correctly identify bindings in the future.
14. Seeing the completely different skillsets, areas of expertise, and driving passions that the participants brought to the table—humbling, but exciting. Seeing that Keats' injunction to Shelley, “Look every rift with ore,” is probably a gold-tooling metaphor.

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

1. I loved this course.
2. I wish we were warned when the photographer was present because it was a little odd.
3. I loved the practice exercises. They were very enjoyable. Perhaps have a few more helpers for such a large class. There was a lot of waiting. Definitely a highlight, though!
4. {no response}
5. To be completely honest, no. It was perhaps my best experience in a classroom setting to date. The professor was wonderful, and the assistants were far and beyond.
6. I would not hazard a suggestion.
7. {private response}
8. I would've loved a better balance between discussion of book structure & decoration. Especially as we progressed to later time periods, we focused mostly—sometimes exclusively—on decorative aspects, missing or minimizing some key structural evolutions.
9. Can't think of any.
10. Nap time (just kidding). This course was everything I hoped it would be and more. The workshops were excellent, and the only suggestion I can think of is to scale the long-stitch binding session down to five quires.
11. There is never enough time to cover everything—I think everything that was included was worthwhile. The tooling demonstration/workshop was great and I'm glad it was included, but the teachers could maybe have rehearsed how they would run it. It was fine, but a touch chaotic.
12. N/A
13. Perhaps a more linear demonstration of the binding and tooling demos with a projector used to magnify the demonstrator's hands. This would make it easier for others to see. Having additional stoves for tools and enough awls would also slightly streamline the demonstration.

14. I would distribute some kind of syllabus, so that topics can be anticipated, and (if applicable) readings can be prepared. My learning style happens to be terminology—and schema-oriented, so I personally would have found the material a little easier to follow if we had dealt more explicitly with fundamental concepts, and not quite so many examples. Maybe more formal description/identification exercises, too?

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? On a 1–10 scale, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10
2. 10
3. 10
4. 10. I would definitely recommend this course.
5. 10. {student wrote 100 on eval}.
6. 10. As my institution covered cost, I will speak in terms of time. I feel like this time was well spent and I gained practical skills & insight.
7. 9. The variance in the class was exciting and helpful.
8. 8. {student wrote 8/9}
9. 10
10. 10. This has been an amazing experience.
11. 8. The classes are expensive and I understand why. It would be better if I could have gotten someone else to pay— but in my case, that was not an option. It is a good course—I would recommend it!
12. 9
13. 10. Yes, I'll gladly recommend this course.
14. 10

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhanced the course experience?*

1. We had several practical book binding demos, which seemed to be a more recent addition to the course. I was impressed the RBS staff's ambition in putting on demos and making sure each individual in our large class was able to walk away having done the thing themselves. I appreciate getting to leave with my own notebook and other demo elements, but did not consider it essential to the course.
2. The field trips to the archives were fascinating and so were speakers. It gave additional perspective
3. Field trip to SC was good. I would personally have liked a tour, but it was informative to see the book examples.
4. The SC was great. The practical exercises with the guest teachers were excellent— please continue to do them in the future!"
5. Yes, going to SC was a treat. Amanda was very helpful and knowledgeable.
6. Absolutely. Trips to SC and the Conservation Lab are something I got a great deal of insight from.
7. Definitely, these moments brought the instruction to life.

8. The hands on/practical aspects and guests were great. Getting to do a few simple binding types ourselves and try gold tooling were great ways to enhance lectures. And again, museums and handling so many objects was a gift.
9. The bookbinding practical work with Suzanne and Amanda complemented the course very nicely and gave us deeper understanding of bookbinding techniques and equipment.
10. Our trips to SC expanded the material that were available to us to identify (very helpful). Amanda and Suzanne were incredibly knowledgeable about the binding craft and it was helpful to share in their expertise.
11. Aye—the visits with Amanda were very worthwhile. And any visit to SC is special.
12. Yes. The SC at UVA was outstanding.
13. Our bookbinding demonstrations for stab-stitch and long stitch bindings, as well as art demonstration of gold and blind tooling were some of the highlights of this course. The trip to SC also enlivened my understanding of styles and helped bring our lectures alive. The arrangement of this course was thoughtfully designed to give a much deeper understanding of bookbinding and elevated my appreciation of much of the expert bindings it would be so easy to take for granted.
14. Absolutely! I would add that the pacing (short sessions and variety of activities) was excellent.

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

1. {no response}
2. Pay attention and take plenty of notes, it is highly helpful.
3. {no response}
4. Come ready to learn, and see, and absorb as much information as possible.
5. Be prepared to be on your feet and using your hands!
6. Engage as much as possible with classmates and instructors.
7. Prepare to look at bookbinding from all angles engage in active discussion and be surprised!
8. {no response}
9. I would highly recommend it.
10. {no response}
11. A great combination—lectures, “museums”, hands-on crafting definitely get to talk with your classmates—they are a wealth of knowledge.
12. Dress appropriately —it was freaking hot everyday—(sorry not sure you can control the weather!)
13. Bring enough paper and pencil to take lots of notes. You need not worry about bringing any prior reading with you. Feel free to ask questions! I didn't need my laptop, and it would have been hard to use during the museum and practical exercises.
14. Highly recommend.

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

1. {no response}
2. Extremely worth it, probably one of my best choices.
3. What a delightful week!
4. I am exhausted at the end of the week, in the best possible way!

5. Ah! Leve-toi soleil!
6. Gathering with peers in an environment designed for the free exchange of knowledge is an invaluable experience.
7. If you ever happily find yourself in a “bind,” you may be learning at RBS.
8. I had a great time—interesting, friendly classmates coming from so many different areas of the book world, great collections we got to handle a ton, teachers who were very knowledgeable!
9. I enjoyed the course and learned a lot during the week.
10. {no response}
11. Lots of information, not much time, great classmates!
12. Book scholars, sellers, librarians and bibliophiles all coming together to help advance all the aspects of book culture.
13. A place where fascinating people are encouraged to be themselves, share their experiences and build a network of learning for years to come.
14. Overwhelming—humbling—thrilling—indispensable!