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G-10: Introduction to the Principles of Bibliographical Description
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. Yes. I would have liked to receive the workbook in advance to review.
 2. Yes! I was unaware that the video workbook and facsimiles were optional though.
 3. Yes.
 4. They were useful, though if there's ever a streamlined version of Bowers, that would be great.
 5. To a degree Bowers is a challenge without seeing books (or facsimiles) at the same time, but I know it's foundational and can't be removed. Gaskell is good for the historical/process side.
 6. The pre-course reading assignments were useful. Indeed, I will continue reading and learning from these readings in the future.
 7. Extremely useful, though very difficult to appreciate in full prior to instruction.
 8. Gaskell was a useful read in advance. Bowers was difficult to read without experience in the subject, made more sense in context.
 9. They were useful. Having been exposed to the ideas before class made it easier to understand them during class.
 10. Amazing. No notes.
 11. The readings were mostly useful. It would have been helpful to have seen an example of how a collational formula is determined from the evidence of a printed book before the class began. It seems unnecessary to require students to read all of Gaskell, much of which is more detailed than the class warrants. Bowers' notes are often of limited use; I could have skipped many of them.
 12. Yes, essential to read before attending to fully benefit from course; maybe video links to show various printing processes.
 13. Didn't have time to do them all but what I did was very useful. The Belanger chapter in particular was very useful. If there was a similar chapter on the daily activities in the printing house in an Oxford/Cambridge Companion on some such, that would also have been useful.
 14. Yes, definitely. Bowers was hard going but exposure ahead of time made it easier to get up to speed when the course began. I appreciated the curation of the reading list, also—i.e. advice on order of readings and relative importance of each.
 15. Pre-course reading was incredibly useful and the foundation for everything we did in the course. The assigned readings made me feel prepared and any prospective students should know how important the pre-course reading is.
 16. Yes, the pre-course reading was very helpful. The specific chapters from Bowers are essential to see, not necessarily essential to understand. I would not stress a need to fully comprehend every word of every page; the class does a great job making these reference books work for you.
 17. They were extremely helpful and I would say essential. You need to have a solid understanding of the basics to feel prepared. I think a very basic bibliography with basic formulas would be helpful, especially to put it into context with real world applications.

18. Yes, I thought the pre-course readings were helpful and essential for successfully completing the course.
19. Very helpful. I was able to read the important texts in advance—fortunately, because I did not have time to read them once the course began.
20. Yes! All the readings were very useful and spending time with them before class was key to understanding lectures and practice.
21. Bowers is nearly incomprehensible until you have a book in front of you. I think this is a common complaint, so my suggestion would be to find or create another video like the 1991 one but with actual collation. I know that this would take a lot of time and resources, but it could vastly improve the level of preparedness for this course, because it would make visualizing Bowers possible.
22. Yes, the readings were ultimately useful, but extremely time intensive. Gaskell is very slow reading: I find several of his explanations only made sense after looking at other sources like Sarah Werner or even Wikipedia (sorry). I appreciated the guidance for how to complete the reading, and I did read 90% of Bowers. I genuinely don't know if that was a great use of my time. So much of Bowers only made sense to me when on object was in front of me—it's a reference manual for trouble shooting. Unsure if there's an alternative, though.

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.
2. The workbook is VERY helpful. A binder helped also to store notes and other handouts.
3. Very helpful, will keep for future consultation.
4. The workbook was incredibly helpful, especially the index to Bowers. I absolutely intend to use the workbook going forward.
5. Workbook very helpful; index to Bowers is useful even though I'm not sure it matches the latest printing. It will be useful for reference.
6. {no response}
7. Magisterial. I will use my workbook forever. Really spectacular. Evident how much work and care went into it.
8. Very useful workbook, especially the index to Bowers. Will be helpful in future.
9. There was such a large amount of content provided. I'm delighted to have guides to the museum that I can revisit later, as well as future reading lists to look into for the future. The binder was incredibly helpful for finding the information I needed during collation practice.
10. Yes, I will use it for a very long time.
11. They are excellent and offer easily intelligible summaries of Bowers' recommendations, sometimes improving on them. I bet that they will continue to be useful.
12. Very helpful, will continue to use handbook upon returning to work and apply what I've learned.
13. It was all excellent—will be very useful in the future.
14. Superb. There wasn't a lot of down time to read it during the week but I expect to review the whole thing in weeks to come and to draw on it in teaching.

15. It was great to have such a thorough reference guide for the whole week. It contains incredibly valuable guides for our reading and classwork.
16. The course workbook is expertly organized and full of more information than I was able to absorb in one five-day period. I will absolutely continue using it outside the course!
17. Yes! The workbook was/will be an amazing resource. I think printed versions of the PowerPoints would be a good addition to refer back to after the class.
18. The content was appropriate and useful. I especially appreciate the structured exit reading list. I do not yet know if the facsimiles will be helpful since I have not opened the package to take a look.
19. The workbook is extremely useful. I will continue to use it as a reference work.
20. The class workbook was very useful and I'm positive that I'll continue to use chunks of it for years to come.
21. The workbook was invaluable. It's very well organized and I referenced it often.
22. Course workbook was an excellent accompaniment to lectures. Small suggestion: have more blank spaces on the course book so we may annotate it during class. Content definitely appropriate and useful. I marvel at the thoughtfulness in assembling this course. The examples provided the demonstrations of both production processes and case studies of different printing scenarios: thank you for the care put in so that elements we learned built upon each other. This was useful both in content (learning to do descriptive bibliography, or at least to start) and method (pedagogy models).

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 really like the museums. The material chosen was very relevant. It was a unique experience.
2. Learning about how the book is made and put together. That has helped me discover new details about books.
3. The lecture on geographical characteristics of printing. Found binding display in museum periods helpful.
4. The labs and museums were great for their personalized help and hands-on learning.
5. Lectures were an effective way to get at topics that aren't necessarily covered in homework. Lab content gives me a lot to think about and contemplate—re-cataloging project.
6. {no response}
7. The course made me feel more confident to pursue an incubable project on reproductive technologies that I have been putting off.
8. Definitely gave me new ideas about how to approach the books in my collection at work and in my own study.
9. I really loved learning about the tools involved in printing and about book bindings. Seeing a type mold made discussion about type make a lot of sense. Learning about paper production and how to tell what kinds of paper can give away about the format of the book was incredibly useful. My understanding of the structures of books is considerably deeper after taking this course.
10. As someone working on Nineteenth century print culture, my entire approach to my discipline changed this past week.

11. I wanted to learn generally what kinds of physical evidence books contain and how to interpret it to understand more about how they are produced, and the class turned out to be an excellent introduction to these subjects. I think it will help me a lot as I prepare an edition of a Seventeenth-century poem.
12. Lab review of homework most useful. Learned a lot of new material. Clues to use when determining the makeup of a book.
13. The course satisfied my core need of learning to describe a book, but the museums and lectures were remarkably rich. I did not envisage myself becoming engrossed by the mechanics of book production or indeed bibliographical methodological disputes! I definitely have a couple of ideas for projects emanating from this week.
14. The museums were unexpectedly excellent. Usually more than I could take in in the time given but that's fine. They were put together with acute sensitivity to a student's varying needs and interests and very well integrated with the rest of the course—which was also excellent.
15. I appreciated the small group lab sessions where we could discuss in depth our homework and ask clarifying questions. I found the work overall enjoyable and inspiring.
16. Any time I have the opportunity to be around so many fellow book lovers I feel reinvigorated with new perspectives. I am more inspired to pursue further education than I was before taking the course. Although I deal with machine-press books primarily, the opportunity to collate hand-press pieces inspires me to get my hands on older material soon.
17. The skills are not relevant to my current job, but I feel prepared to deal with collation in a catalog record in the future. I also feel excited to research different copies of the same book (book TBD) to find differences.
18. Today, I leave interested in the analytical bibliography course. I am intrigued and grateful for the instruction.
19. {no response}
20. I was most excited for the famous DesBib practice sessions, and I was not let down. I have a new confidence in my ability to make sense of books, physical structures, and in translating these structures into a collational formula.
21. I am very new to printed books, so this was largely starting from scratch. I was especially intrigued by the last lecture that offered Tanselle's alternatives and the comparisons of printing practices across regions. The final museum was also hugely helpful.
22. Lab was the most productive, to discuss in small groups the knotty problems of individual samples from a variety of periods and regions. I loved DRW's lectures and was thankful for them and him! But troubleshooting together how to (and not to) create a description was super helpful, as my lab mates would raise questions that might not occur to me. I leave this class more confident to discuss books and to do research (both with books and the scholarship on 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. Yes. I feel much more stronger in my job now. I wish I had taken this class a long time ago.
2. Yes. The course description is spot on.

3. Yes. Just need to keep practicing at my institution after the course.
4. Absolutely!
5. Yes. This course fulfilled all my expectations of content and exceeded (but in a good way) any expectations of difficulty & intensity.
6. {no response}
7. Absolutely, and much more I feel like I have acquired a new language.
8. In some ways, I am more aware of how much more there is to learn, but I feel better equipped to engage with the scholarship and the study itself.
9. The instructors were all incredibly helpful. I learned more than I had hoped to learn.
10. Absolutely.
11. Yes, and yes.
12. Yes. I have a foundational understanding of descriptive bibliography. Feel like I will need to continue self-practice to become fully confident.
13. Yes, and then some.
14. Yes, and yes. The course is exceptionally well designed—each part links up to other parts very effectively.
15. I learned what I hoped to learn, all of the instructors were helpful and eager to work with students on understanding a book. This course provides a rigorous introduction into descriptive bibliography.
16. Yes, I feel very capable at writing a working formula and description of a book to a deeper degree than I could at the start of the week. This class definitely delivered!
17. Yes—I feel very prepared to collate basic and more complicated books.
18. Yes, I was promised an introduction and I believe I have a fuller understanding of the principles and purpose of descriptive bibliography.
19. I did indeed learn a great deal of what I wanted to learn. The course description is accurate.
20. Yes—I learned all I hoped to learn and feel well-prepared for further courses and for self-study.
21. Yes, the instructors were very effective, if a little fast at times. As someone who needs a moment to translate formula to physical object, the constant reinforcement was helpful.
22. Yes.

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

1. I have more skills to prepare lessons with rare books when I am required to do so.
2. To describe the rare books at my institution. I also have some potential bibliographic dissertation ideas.
3. Will improve descriptions of my library collections.
4. The archive I work in has a few hand-press books—now I can describe them in greater detail.
5. I have a long-term goal to re-catalog hand-press books held by my institution, and this course will be useful in decision-making for that project, as well as cataloging hand-press books (and machine-press too, I think) in general.
6. I will start cataloging and describing the materials at my institution acquired recently.

7. I plan to improve my book history courses. I plan to use this knowledge to better my own description of books and manuscripts. I plan to push myself to think more about hand-press books than I have in my research.
8. I plan to deepen my understanding of the books in the collection where I work and develop my own research projects.
9. I'm interested in cataloging and preservation, so I hope to use knowledge of the materials and structure to care for books as physical objects and knowledge of how to describe books concisely to make them discoverable.
10. Constantly, in my research, teaching, all the time.
11. I need to examine copies of the poem I'm editing, and now I know how to approach the evidence they offer about their printing so that I can try to glean info about their publication history.
12. To more accurately describe books I handle for work. Let evidence reveal details about a book I may have otherwise overlooked.
13. I will use the collation knowledge on a current editorial project. But I will also reflect on the possibilities of using what I have learned in teaching. Finally, as stated above, I have a couple of ideas for DesBib projects.
14. I took it primarily for interest and to deepen my understanding of hand-press period books. I'm sure though that what I've learned will inform my teaching and curatorial work going forward.
15. I plan to apply my knowledge to working at SC and plan to use it to inform my personal research projects which involve working with Seventeenth-century books.
16. I plan to continue working as a cataloger for a rare book dealer.
17. I think these skills will be useful during professional research and in cataloging older books.
18. I am acquiring skills, interest and experience in areas of interest. Although I don't know exactly the trajectory my career will take following graduation in June. I am considering applying to a Ph.D. or to jobs where the skill would be useful.
19. I hope to catalogue my own book collection with bibliographical descriptions.
20. I'm not sure, specifically, except that the skills here seem foundational to any understanding of books as objects.
21. I hope to continue practicing collation on my own until I am proficient enough to use it in a professional setting. In the meantime, the knowledge of paper and type history will be helpful for my studies.
22. Primarily to help make SC more accessible to students. While they don't need to write a collation formula, understanding how to do this has given me confidence to develop interactive lectures and activities with hand-press books (and field their questions). I also anticipate I will use this in my academic research (helping me better use reference materials, assist me when working with early modern materials).

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

1. My fellow librarians and some of my graduate students.
2. Archivists.
3. Librarians, and anyone who works with special collections. Professionals, teachers, etc.
4. Definitely a cataloguer.
5. Catalog/special collections librarians, rare book dealers, literature faculty engaged in critical editions.

6. Catalogers and book history students and educators!
 7. Any scholar of books writ large—literary critics, art historians, book historians, &c. I only wish RBS offered an MSI equivalent.
 8. Someone with some experience with rare books looking to deepen their ability to use them for research, instruction, etc.
 9. Anyone who would benefit from understanding the bookmaking process, the structure of books, and how to describe them robustly.
 10. Scholars of print and material culture, historians, curators, archivists, catalogers...
 11. Librarians, catalogers, students of book history.
 12. Catalogers; scholars of text and book history; anyone who wants to closely analyze the physicality of books and properly describe.
 13. My only regret is that I didn't do this course 20 years ago. It's almost embarrassing to learn what I learnt this week at my age! Anyone working in literary studies, particularly early modern to Nineteenth-century should do this course.
 14. I wrote on our last day of description practice in a corner of my notes: "Irony: bibliography is not best learned by reading."
 15. Those with strong desire to understand the book as a material object, those interested in rare book cataloging.
 16. Anyone who consistently catalogues books for full scholarly application or for sale in the trade will highly benefit!
 17. Catalogers, Librarians, researchers.
 18. I'm not sure I know.
 19. Librarians and collectors.
 20. Anybody who wants to better understand books as objects.
 21. Probably booksellers and catalogers.
 22. Primarily cataloguers, book appraisers, curators, I would guess. Possibly also those scholars working in the Sixteenth–Eighteenth-century considering doing an edition of a text.
- 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. Seeing type, everything related to hand press in terms of show and tell.
 2. Seeing the printing press demo was very enlightening. Also, the hands-on museums helped to solidify concepts.
 3. Distinguishing hand press from machine press—not all signatures are meaningful.
 4. {no response}
 5. Labs were extremely helpful—being able to grasp where I went wrong was a great thing. I appreciated learning from people who have an obvious love and commanding knowledge of the subject matter.
 6. {no response}
 7. Bonding with the “trio”, my cohort, was fun. When we helped each other see things we missed it was exciting. Realizing that maybe I did like “ideal copies” after all was another “ah ha.”
 8. It was just really satisfying to figure things out and learn how to express them.
 9. Actually, seeing example of different steps of historical bookbinding as well as a type mold made descriptions of both make so much sense.
 10. There were too many. If I really try hard to pick one, it would be the fact that if normally we see a book as communicating something from the author to the reader,

this week we tuned in to the quiet whispered conversation between the printer and the binder.

11. {no response}
12. Combination of handling examples in homework and museum lab. Being able to ask instructors all sorts of questions and receive guidance.
13. Too many “aha!” moments to be specific—the course was that rich.
14. That is the thing I'd read about plenty but hadn't really come together for me as an understanding. Started to do so with the hands-on practical work of this course.
15. The homework sessions where the “aha!” moments happen, working with books hands-on is the best way to learn descriptive bibliography.
16. The labs were by far the best part of the class—essentially one on one tutoring!
17. The printing press demo made it much easier to picture format, and the paper museum was very much a powerful experience because you could appreciate the work it takes to make something we use every day and take for granted.
18. The labs, going over the homework in small groups was particularly helpful. Watching the way Irene went about solving a problem when I asked her a question during homework also served as an illuminating moment.
19. {no response}
20. I think that each museum or lab session provides at least a handful of “aha!” moments. Lab sessions in particular, when we spent time puzzling over tricky collations, were eye-opening.
21. The labs! Finally understanding the mysteries of each book that had frustrated me the night before.
22. Many “aha!”s with individual books. Amazed at the wealth in RBS's teaching collection of materials. Very much appreciated seeing the presses, the paper molds, the type matrix, &c.

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

1. I would have liked to see paper presses in action. I also would spend less time on collation formulas & more on narratives that describe the book.
2. Maybe making it longer (1.5 weeks).
3. Disappointed I could not participate in other RBS events this week. I wanted time to meet other professionals and network . . . That said, labs are critical, but it just needs to be conveyed on website and course materials this course operates independently.
4. {no response}
5. Class size seemed too large, trying to address homework/practice after museum session was a challenge due to scope of information in museum (very informative, but a lot to contemplate).
6. {no response}
7. I've already said too much . . .
8. After the practice book on Day 1, I wanted something similar on the other days, especially as more books and more aspects were added I might have appreciated an additional practice per day for some immediate feedback.
9. I can't think of any.
10. {no response}
11. No.
12. Perhaps allow lunch hour to be an optional time to start working on homework.

13. I would have loved to have had a sneak peek at the reading for the first museum—so much to get through—and I felt quite ready for it. On a smaller note, why cohorts and legions? Why not quires and gatherings!!? And non-alcoholic beer at events would be welcome.

14. {no response}

15. I think more instant feedback would be extremely beneficial, learning from mistakes is incredibly important and I felt I would get more out of the homework if I could have confirmation on if I had done a book correctly, because if not, I could take time to understand why I went wrong. It's hard to learn from mistakes a day later in lab, and there isn't enough time then.

16. No, I feel like all elements were clearly explained beforehand and my expectations were clear.

17. Hints for homework (particularly hard books).

18. I think the last museum could have been better timed. The exercise, matching bib descriptions to books, would have been more useful if I hadn't needed a break from the homework, having worked on collations for several hours before, and looking forward to it several hours afterward.

19. In DesBib the homework could be improved. There are far too many Nineteenth-century books that students are asked to describe. The collational formula of Bowers is designed for the hand press period and is ill-suited to industrial printing.

20. Generally speaking, this course couldn't be improved unless we had extra days (or weeks!) One thing I wish we could've touched on more frequently are the ways in which scholars have used Fredsonian descriptive bibliography to solve particular problems or to answer particular questions.

21. More lab time! Perhaps fewer books for homework and more time in lab going over books with our instructors. I could spend a whole evening reinforcing bad practices across 5 books, when my lab instructor could instead spend 5-10 minutes showing the correct practice and going through examples.

22. I understand that you can only gain facility in this work by doing it. I also understand that the more examples we get tossed, the more we educate our eyes. But I really was doing homework until 9:00 p.m. (or later) every night, with few (once no) options for dinner. To return the next morning by 8:00 a.m. was brutal. Perhaps I was too diligent. But I was not the only one. It is sad that almost all of us missed the lectures and booksellers' night. The addition of the practice book the first night was terrific. I don't know if a practice book every night to help speed up the homework would be good?

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. 9 {student wrote 9.6}

2. 10. This foundational course is extremely worthwhile.

3. 10. Yes, totally worth it. Will recommend.

4. 10. I will absolutely recommend this course to others.

5. 10

6. 10. I feel I got its worth and I would recommend the course to the others, 100%.

7. 10
8. 10
9. 10. Very likely to recommend this course.
10. 10
11. 10. Would recommend.
12. 10
13. 10. Absolutely. I will absolutely recommend this course to others and I will be back myself.
14. 10. Yes. Highly likely.
15. 9 money : 9/10; recommend: 9/10—great course, would recommend to those with an interest in topic.
16. 10. I was covered by my institution, which I think is an important caveat. I do think it was a worthwhile investment for them to send me, though!
17. 10
18. 10
19. 9. Yes, I would recommend it to others, though I would warn them of its difficulty.
20. 10. Yes! Very likely.
21. 9. 9/10. I appreciate the massive amount of work that goes into this, I would just have liked a little more small group time w/our lab instructor.
22. 10. Quality of instruction, of materials.

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. Yes. I really liked seeing how a hand press works.
2. Yes! The printing press demo was fun, engaging, and put concepts into action.
3. N/A
4. Yes! Seeing the common press was not only fun, but helped me deconstruct concepts regarding format in greater detail than only seeing diagrams or the finished product.
5. Printing demonstration was extremely useful to understanding and processing the vocabulary.
6. {no response}
7. N/A
8. I enjoyed the printing press visit & demonstration.
9. The printing press demonstration absolutely enhanced the course experience.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. Yes, love the hand press demonstration.
13. {no response}
14. {no response}
15. {no response}
16. We saw a printing press demonstration, which was just another great way to have real-world experience to what I had only learned of in theory.
17. The printing press demo made it easier to envision format and the printing experience overall.
18. We all got to use the common press, which was helpful and fun.
19. {no response}
20. The time spent in the printing shop was very, very fun.

21. The printing trip was fun and reinforced what I'd only seen in diagrams.
22. {no response}

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

1. See above.
2. Study Bowers beforehand!
3. Readings are critical beforehand. Skip Bowers notes, refer to after you begin collation practice.
4. {no response}
5. Give plenty of prep time for reading. Don't worry about Bowers, very obtuse—it makes sense when you have real books to work with. Homework is draining, but labs can make up for it, and you will learn how this works.
6. {no response}
7. Bring lots of food to the library, and water too. Be prepared to be physically exhausted. It is tough going—and I almost wept a few times. It will be worth it.
8. No.
9. This course does take up a lot of time. It's an incredible course, though.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. Do your pre-reading. Come well rested and ready to be hands-on. Don't hesitate to ask questions.
13. Consider how much time you spend with books: shouldn't you know more about how they come into being?
14. Do the advanced reading but don't stress if it's hard to absorb. The days are long, but the week is worth it. Also, you'll meet and learn from a lot of lovely intelligent people.
15. Do your pre-course reading carefully, it's really informative!
16. I would say be gentle with yourself in preparing for the course, then be open to re-learning things you may have thought you knew. It's a long week, but a very good one!
17. Read the pre-course materials and don't be afraid to be wrong! I learned the most from my mistakes.
18. I would tell them it is rigorous and worthwhile.
19. {no response}
20. Do the reading beforehand, be ready to make mistakes, come in with a positive attitude, and have fun!!
21. Prepare in advance but not too far in advance! You will forget all of Bowers if you read it right when you're accepted into the course.
22. Plan on working late.

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

1. Healing and empowering.
2. I am sad that it had to end.
3. Rigorous but valuable. Never will look at a book the same way.
4. So many good books/and also book people are/joyously together.

5. This was a great week and I learned a lot while also being reminded about why I chose to be a librarian (and a cataloger specifically).
6. {no response}
7. Hour thirteen? It's true. / Three collations done. Still two?! / What would Bowers do? {student drew a heart}
8. {no response}
9. It was so enriching.
10. I don't know what to say, it changed my life.
11. {no response}
12. Bow wow wowers!
13. Best academic experience for many years. I feel rejuvenated & can see new possibilities in my professional future.
14. I'm sad it's over.
15. Books make me happy.
16. Nothing to say besides: WWBD?
17. RBS is where book nerds learn and thrive.
18. Words would fail me.
19. {no response}
20. {no response}
21. Ask not what Bowers would do, but what am I even doing right now in my fourth straight hour of homework?
22. Late nights with books / Is it a stereotype? / Collation is fun.