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H-30: The Printed Book in the West to 1800  
20–25 July, 2025, 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. I found both books (*Short History of the Printed Word* and *ABC for Book Collectors*) very useful to get an overview of the topic before the course started. I also returned to both of them throughout the week to review things and remind myself of them as we progressed through the course.
2. The pre-course reading assignments were useful, especially Carter, because it allowed us all to “speak the same language.”
3. Yes, the pre-course reading was helpful.
4. I enjoyed the pre-course readings and felt I was much better prepared for the course by having read them. In some cases, the course repeated what we had read, but this served to reinforce the content for me and was helpful, not annoying.
5. Yes
6. Yes, useful.
7. Yes, they were useful and provided a great foundation to build off of.
8. They were helpful, but I could have attended the course without having read them.
9. The readings were very helpful and prepared me to make the most of the RBS week.
10. Incredibly helpful. It gave a nice foundation for the material presented in class.
11. These were extremely useful! I have no notes, and plan to continue to reference them.
12. They were useful, my only wish was that I spent more time on them.

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. I think the workbook was useful, but I wish there was more room in the workbook to write notes. MA mostly used the notebook to include names, references, and some citations for slides, which I found more helpful for some lectures and less necessary for others.
2. The course workbook was immensely helpful. I took notes throughout the class, and the workbook is the only reason I was able to keep up. The workbook provided names, dates, and spellings that meant I did not need to interrupt the class in order to get clarity. I also appreciate knowing what to expect ahead of time and the direction that the lecture will go. I also plan to use the workbook afterwards to continue my own research on the subject. Finally, even if we were not able to discuss a topic or a person, &c., I can now research it on my own because I know of its existence.

3. The course workbook was helpful. I would be interested in a list / citations of the books viewed during the museum portions of the class. The hands-on work with the printing press was great. The paper sheets distributed for learning book formats and signatures (folio, octavo, &c.) are great hands-on and visual teaching materials.
4. {private response}
5. The course workbook was very useful, helpful to follow along with the lectures and also for vocabulary terms.
6. Helpful and useful.
7. Yes, they were hands-on and helped to show how leaves, sheets, gatherings, &c. went together.
8. Sometimes it was hard to follow along, but overall helpful to have. I liked seeing the schedule. I'll probably go back through notes to glean the most useful parts.
9. It was great and I expect it will continue as a very useful resource.
10. I appreciated the slides provided a helpful framework to take notes. However, it would have been nice to have more blank space to take additional notes.
11. It was all useful! The format (folio, quarto, &c.) sheets will continue to be helpful at my work.
12. The information in the workbook was useful but confusing at times. I did better using them as a place to take some notes but mostly use my own notebooks.

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 found the course overall very intriguing. I was already interested in the social and political implications of the printed books, but I appreciated MA's emphasis on this. I think learning so much about the tools and techniques that go into bookmaking and printing was very useful, as it gave us a much deeper understanding of each detail in a book—how and why it's made a certain way are intertwined.
2. The most insightful parts of the course were the interactions with the materials as well as the printing and bookbinding demonstrations. I am not someone who learns technical skills easily through listening or reading. As soon as I physically worked the common press, I understood much better what the process was. The same goes for the bookbinding. I could read all day in the hopes of understanding, but it wasn't until I watched someone sew a binding that I had the light bulb moment.
3. I love seeing the examples from the RBS and UVA SC. The teaching collection here is world class. The hands-on demos of the printing press and bookbinding are invaluable. I appreciated learning more about the broader contexts of history that affected book history, the various aspects of production, and book collecting.
4. I loved the emphasis on how book printing coincided with the move into the Renaissance and the emphasis on observations, recording, and distributing. Every day I was more excited to go home and review our institution's collections with my growing knowledge.

5. Seeing the book in hand was especially valuable in enhancing our knowledge and providing context. As a new insight, approaching the book as an archeological object was so helpful and demystifying!
6. Cultural context, books as archeological objects, hands-on, learned so much that I will immediately be able to apply to my work.
7. Getting to see the books from the SC library was amazing. Seeing them in person really blows you to see all the hard work, artistry, attention to detail, &c. that goes into their creation. Julie, the bookbinder, was amazing, so funny and a great teacher, but gave us a real-life demonstration of how a book is bound. In addition, going into the printing room and seeing typecasts and getting a chance to work on a press really allows the knowledge in the lectures to cement and become real.
8. I learned about book history and different types of printing and binding, all of which will be more helpful professionally. Offering an intro/overview course like this is necessary.
9. I took this course because I wanted to deepen my foundational knowledge about printing and book history for this period. I leave feeling much more confident and knowing additional areas that I plan to continue my studies. It was everything I hoped for and much more.
10. The class fulfilled my goal of creating a timeline of the book by looking for identifying features in the paper, print and bindings of books. Can't wait to go back to my institution and apply my newfound insights.
11. I especially enjoyed our discussion of typography; it opened a whole new world of inquiry for me that I plan to explore further.
12. I have a new plan to spend 15-30 minutes a day with one item from our collection. I realized during this course how much more interesting material we have at my institution than I thought. I have a much better understanding of the book trades than I did before and am more confident about talking about it in class visits.

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 came into this course with very little background in book history, especially from this era, and I believe I have a much deeper knowledge now overall.
2. The instructor was fantastic and I did learn what I expected to learn. MA took the time to explain things thoroughly as well as leave room for questions. He was approachable, learned, and humble. If he did not know the answer to one of our questions, he told us. More than a few times, we looked at books for the first time together, and we all learned together what was happening within the boards.
3. I didn't really have any expectations going in, but I loved this class, and MA is a fantastic instructor. I appreciate his varied experience and perspective from bookselling and curatorship and how that informs his teaching. I appreciate MA's patience and willingness to let the students explore the materials and ask questions. RBS can be intimidating with so many teachers and students from prestigious institutions, but I felt comfortable in the course.
4. Yes, and more. The instructor was particularly good at including everyone. He encouraged our ideas, was happy to consider additional ideas, and was willing to

admit when he didn't know. This humility and open-mindedness set an excellent stage for learning.

5. Yes!
6. Yes, all that and more. Expectations were exceeded.
7. Yes, I did learn what I had hoped. This course made it very obvious that I do want to work in a special collections library after graduation and that I need to begin studying Latin, Italian, and French in order to advance my knowledge.
8. Yes, there was one lecture that was listed in the notebook, about censorship, which I would have loved to experience.
9. Our instructor, MA, is a wonder! His knowledge is exceptional and encyclopedic. His teaching is engaging and flexible to respond to any questions raised. His manner is, without exception, generous, kind, and encouraging. Outstanding!
10. See above.
11. Yes! (And more).
12. The instructor was very helpful and open to questions. I certainly got what I hoped; the next challenge is unpacking it all.

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

1. In my role in Special Collections public services, this will be useful in providing remote reference services. I also often teach with Special Collections material, and this class has deepened both my understanding of the material and how to use it in instruction.
2. I plan to bring the skills and knowledge I acquired here back to my professional work with collection development, instruction, reference, and my own research.
3. The skills and knowledge I learned will benefit and inform my day-to-day work as a special collections' librarian.
4. I am already putting it to use in planning to teach with special collections more. I expect I will also be able to create exhibits and interpret our collection so that we can increase visibility. The course may be helpful in considering new purchases for the collection, something we haven't done for some time.
5. In presentations and classes—I cannot wait to apply what I've learned back at the library.
6. To share info about how books were made with library patrons. Share info about cultural contexts of letter-forms.
7. I'm going to use this knowledge as a foundation to fuel my studies going forward.
8. I will be better able to explain RBS's mission and collections, and better connect with some of our target audiences because I now know terms, people, processes, &c.
9. To be a better colleague with my coworkers, to be a better teacher to students as we engage with our rare books. I will also use the information to be more focused in collection development and in setting priorities for preservation.
10. I hope to be able to use the vocabulary and definitions and clues to understand more about the collection I work with.

11. I feel that I now have the groundwork I need to confidently assist researchers and tour groups, who are often intrigued by the materiality of our collection and their place in book history.
12. Most of this will go towards art history class visits. I also see how this will benefit other history classes and will be contacting those instructors.

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

1. I think anyone whose work overlaps with books and manuscripts. My work, and the institution I work from has mostly post nineteenth-century books, but this class will be useful for a foundation to understand later methods of printing and book production. I do think this class is best for people with no, or minimal experience studying book history, since it really goes into the basics in a good way.
2. I think anyone who is new to the field or does not have extensive knowledge of printed books (before 1800) would benefit from this course.
3. Any early career special collections librarian, or someone interested in pursuing this area as a career (students). It's a great foundation course for book history. I'm mid-career myself and have taken a few book history courses, but am less knowledgeable about pre-1800 book history, so I found this course helpful in growing and adding to my knowledge in this area.
4. Anyone looking for a broad overview and introduction to the history of the book in the West would benefit from this course. We had a diverse group in terms of institutions and knowledge levels, and everyone seemed happy with the pace and content.
5. Librarians and collectors.
6. Librarians, professors, historians.
7. With being an MLIS student this course would be groundbreaking for other graduate students who wish to work in a special collections or academic library after graduation.
8. Anyone interested in book history. I don't think you have to be in "the profession."
9. People seeking to build a foundational knowledge of this period.
10. Anyone interested in or who works with historic books.
11. Early-career/newly minted special collections staff.
12. New librarians, people new to their role, people needing a formal refresher.

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. So many! The intensive process of paper making was particularly fascinating to me. I also found the split in scholastic and humanist thought and its impact on letterform very interesting.
2. With the first press of gold leaf into leather, I knew I had found my newest hobby.

3. {no response}
4. My prior experience with rare books was related to theological content. Having a broader approach and seeing how many disciplines have important ties to the history of books and printing was really inspiring.
5. The book—every book—carries with it history and no two books—even duplicates are alike.
6. Understanding why Liber Chronicum included both Ptolemaic and modern maps—the bridge between medieval and dawning renaissance—finally understanding what "Carolingian minuscule" is and where it comes from.
7. There were many! All the hands-on learning in this class really takes it to the next level and surpasses anything I've learned in my graduate program. MA is wonderful and does an amazing job delivering the material that is easy for a novice to understand and absorb.
8. N/A
9. Looking at rare books in a group really helped me to think about my pedagogy and ways I want to make my sessions more interactive.
10. I really enjoyed learning about certain aspects and traits or certain time periods of books through lecture and then assessing the physical book by use of Rare Book School or Special Collections items. This was a fantastic intro course. MA talked mechanics of books as well as placing them in the historical context which lends to a better understanding of why styles and methods of production may have evolved and changed.
11. While I cannot point to one moment of revelation, I feel that the progressive knowledge I have gained over the course of this week provided valuable context for the work I am already doing, making me a more confident library employee.
12. Learning about censorship and paratext, for sure.

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

1. {no response}
2. Aside from the miraculous ability to improve the weather, this was a fantastic experience that really cannot be improved upon by much.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. None to suggest- MA was an exceptional teacher. I loved this class!
6. Perhaps more discussion time? But I wouldn't want to sacrifice other parts for that.
7. N/A
8. I wasn't engaged as much with lectures that didn't include a visual component. Special Collections visits, demos, and lectures with slides were more engaging.
9. Add another week! Otherwise, I really can't imagine how it could have been improved. RBS has a higher sticker price, but you absolutely get what you pay for. This is a full week of exceptionally good professional development, offering equal value to people at every stage in their careers. A 10 in terms of value.

10. I honestly loved this course. MA was a fantastic instructor. So knowledgeable yet very approachable in every way. Terrific!
11. N/A
12. I still would have liked to spend more time on censorship, and we missed literacy as a topic. It was a content rich course, which is fabulous, but came at a cost for that lecture.

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
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10
12. 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. Yes. The printing and bookbinding demonstrations, and the people that led them were incredibly knowledgeable and excellent instructors. I was impressed overall not only at their breadth of knowledge but also how good they were at teaching in an engaging and informative way. This is not always the case for people who are experts in their field! The same can be said of the two lectures, as both were accessible while giving an in-depth perspective into specialized areas of study.
2. Yes! Our class had a binding demonstration as well as two printing ones. They really helped solidify what we learned in a tactile manner.
3. Yes, the hands-on demos definitely enhanced the lecture portions of the course.
4. N/A
5. Yes—tremendously—Jill's bookbinding demonstration was a highlight—especially valuable was each of us having a turn to gold tool.
6. Yes—printing and binding were very helpful to truly understand the book as a material object.
7. Absolutely! They really tied all the information together.

8. Yes, re: print demos, binding demos.
9. Yes, we had an excellent guest speaker on binding techniques and also did a field trip that introduced us to a period printing press. Having these experiences for hands-on learning was very beneficial.
10. We had regular visits from the UVA SC curators, MA took full advantage of the selections they brought to illustrate his lecture context. The bookbinder was terrific and gave useful insight into the craft. The section of letterpress printing was also incredibly instructive.
11. Yes! It was especially wonderful to hear from bookbinder Jill Deiss.
12. Yes, the hands-on printing was awesome; the bookbinder was informative. She gave me the idea of spending 15 minutes a day studying a book.

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

1. Do the required readings, ask lots of questions, and have fun!
2. I would highly recommend taking any course MA offers. He is an engaging, thoughtful, and considerate instructor who blended lectures, hands-on experiences, and time with the books themselves to create an environment of learning and comradery.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. A fantastic overview that covers the concrete and abstract. Felt like a college course in one week. I knew a lot of facts before starting, but now I feel like I know and understand.
7. If you are thinking about going into rare books and/or special collections, this class will give you the educational foundation you're looking for.
8. I liked the mix of lectures, demos, and special collections visits. I would stay away from lectures right after lunch; they're probably best at the beginning and end of the day.
9. If I had more time, I would have done more of the optional readings in advance. You can thrive with just the required readings, but anything extra will just enhance what you're able to absorb and the questions you'll ask.
10. Although it's an introductory class, I think MA had so much information to impart that anyone could learn in this class. Also, the people in my class were wonderful. SO many valued backgrounds and so much to learn from all of them.
11. Begin here! It's an extremely helpful foundation to book history and the rare book industry.
12. Make friends.

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

1. Amazing instructors, wonderful classmates, a beautiful campus—truly a luxury!
2. It may be hot and humid outside, but the classrooms are cool, the collegiality warmer, and the bibliographic deep-dives downright exhilarating.
3. {no response}
4. This is the nerdiest thing I have ever done, and I mean that as a compliment.  
Brilliant!
5. Wonderful, meaningful, productive, and fun.
6. A revelation. Additional thoughts: very good class mix, no one "took over" and all were enjoyed. Professor did a very good job of honoring all questions.
7. Absolutely wonderful, sad that it's already over and would love the chance to take another class with MA.
8. {private response}
9. Sign me up for next year.
10. This has been a wonderful experience which has inspired me to continue studying the history of the book. Many thanks!
11. An invaluable experience.
12. It was wonderful.