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L-30: Rare Book Cataloging  
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 thought the pre-course assignments were useful, though it may have been more helpful to have the course exercise classes a bit earlier when I was doing the readings.
2. The pre-course reading assignments were so useful that my colleague who attended several years ago had already instructed me to read them as part of my onboarding for rare books work at my current position.
3. I did find them to be very useful. I think if I had come into the course without having reviewed certain rare book specific principles and terms, I would have felt unprepared. I especially liked the videos and the blog posts.
4. Yes, they were relevant and interesting. I particularly appreciated the video content, as it was very helpful to see the process that generated the sorts of materials we were working with.
5. Yes, very useful. The videos were really helpful in visualizing the processes that we were looking at, even if we didn't talk about them specifically. It was more reading / watching than I had initially realized or budgeted time for, but I see how it was very useful.
6. OH YES. Terry's joke about origami concentration camp in the 1990s video. Cut it out, and do an errata cut or something.
7. The pre-course reading assignments were extremely helpful in exposing me to relevant concepts, which made the course not feel so much like drinking out of a fire hose. I found the videos particularly useful as a visual learner.
8. I did find the pre-course readings and videos very helpful. In fact, there were many resources that I was assigned in library school and upon starting my current cataloging position, so the opportunity to revisit them was a welcome one. I want to make known exactly how appreciative I am of having the pre-course readings divided into required and encouraged. Knowing what to prioritize was so valuable to me, who found herself with even less time than usual to tend to those. I do think it would have been helpful to have had 3 weeks to do the pre-course cataloging assignments. The two weeks leading up to the course were extremely busy and if I had even just one more week, I would have been able to take more care with them.
9. Yes, I'm very glad that I made time to do all the reading. I felt much better prepared going into this densely packed week of instruction and hands-on practice. Quite a big chunk of Sarah Werner's book was assigned, but it's very readable and I plan to finish it when I can.
10. The pre-course reading assignments built a foundation of knowledge that was applied in the in-person course. The books, blogs, and videos will be long-term resources for me as a rare book cataloger.
11. I found all of the readings useful, and they were necessary for understanding the class material. {private response}. Equally useful as the readings were the “warm-up” activities, as they led me to actually process and absorb what I had read. I might have liked a bit more lead time to work on them, though.

12. Two of the readings appeared a little repetitive. Terry Belanger's article and the assigned chapters in Gaskell were very similar. I understand the importance of having a strong grasp on the material before arriving, but I feel like one of those readings would have achieved the goal.

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. The course materials were great and very well organized. I can see myself consulting the resources often going forward.
2. Having printed lecture notes was wonderful, and the effort and dedication to printing updated, error-free copies was above and beyond. I plan to continue using my binder as part of my regular work.
3. I love the workbook!!! There are so many helpful items that DJL and JG included. I can't wait to bring my binder into the office and show it off to my colleagues!
4. The binder is incredible! I wrote my notes directly on its pages, because I know I'm going to refer to it constantly in my work.
5. Yes, definitely. I will absolutely continue to refer to the teaching materials as I catalog, for many years!
6. Yes, across the board. It will be useful. All of the materials will help me whenever I need to refresh my memory or perform the cataloging.
7. The course workbook was an extremely valuable resource for this week, and I anticipate continuing to use it as a reference for years to come. I especially appreciated our instructors' diligence in printing out updated pages for each of us when we discovered errata in the slides.
8. Excellent! I am so grateful to have such a comprehensive binder and collection of digital resources to bring home with me. I am already thinking of how I can apply certain DCRM(B) examples from class to the book I am currently cataloging. The detail of the presentations and related examples have truly helped me understand rules I previously failed to comprehend, and now I can continually refer back to this binder whenever I have questions in the future.
9. Fantastically useful. I will be guarding these closely and referring to them for many years to come. DJL and JG were so thoughtful and attentive about noticing errors and passing out replacement leaves (cancel leaves!) throughout the week.
10. The course workbook will be invaluable for the rest of my career. I would be hard-pressed to find this type and depth of information in a format that is as useful and practical as this workbook anywhere else.
11. It was all extremely thorough. DJL's binder will be a key reference on my shelf for years to come.
12. I thought the course workbook was fantastic! I found it to be the perfect combination of information and examples. I plan on using it as a reference for many years to come.

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. {no response}
2. Thanks to this course I now feel fully comfortable cataloging in DCRM(B) and moving back and forth between it and standard RDA. Instructions regarding transcription, the proper use of Genre fields in DCRM(B), and entity tracing were particularly useful.
3. This course made me a better cataloger of all materials, not just rare books. Over the past few months, I had been feeling a bit disillusioned about why resource description matters, and being at RBS and taking this course has reinvigorated me. Not only did I learn so much about rare book cataloging but being amongst other catalogers with different perspectives and experiences allowed me to learn and grow even more.
4. Overall, I found the course empowering. I have wanted to work with DCRM(B) for some time now, but I wasn't sure how to get started. Throughout the week I frequently found myself reflecting on how my new skills would complement and expand my existing workflows. It is so exciting to have a clear vision for these next steps.
5. This course was really interesting and useful for me as I start to do more special collections work, and reinforced my belief in the importance of a combination of documentation and a community of practice with accepted norms.
6. There wasn't one particular moment that was most relevant; the whole course was amazingly useful.
7. {no response}
8. Our group cataloging exercise was beneficial for cataloging purposes, but also for learning more about my classmates' approaches to cataloging. I have only ever worked in one institution as a cataloger, so my experience is very specific to the one my colleagues and I jointly experience each day. It was a privilege to learn more about other institutions' local policies, the materials my classmates' catalog, how they approach their decision making, and how they interpret certain pieces of information. Talking that through with DJL and JG as a class was extremely valuable.
9. I'm grateful to have the skills and knowledge to write signature statements, understand collation formulas, and write other new kinds of notes. I feel like I could catalog almost anything now with at least some level of confidence.
10. The in-class exercises, the homework, and the practicum impressed all of the information into my mind in a way that private reading and studying would never be able to do. It was challenging in the best possible way. In addition to increasing my overall rare book cataloging skills, it exposed (in a gentle and appropriate way) weaknesses in some of my foundational cataloging practices. I can't imagine better instructors.
11. I'll return to my typical workflow and assignments, but I will do so feeling much more confident.
12. I left with a new research idea, specifically having to do with statement of responsibility.

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. Both instructors were excellent and always willing to answer questions.
2. I had mistakenly expected there to be instruction on identifying binding materials and other physical features from a cataloger's perspective, which was mostly out of scope of what the class covered. This is understandable given the breadth of material covered.
3. Yes, I did! I feel more confident approaching a rare book and using DCRMB to catalog it, and better still, I know where to look for help if I need it. You never really finish learning, but I feel so well equipped to return to my institution and begin using my new skills.
4. Yes, I learned a great deal about printing processes and book formats. These are skills that I've attempted to develop independently but found challenging to hone using only digital surrogates.
5. I learned a great deal. It was really helpful to go through the material so thoroughly—I feel like I have a much better understanding, even if I know I will still have a lot of questions. Because most of the material I catalog is not in English, I knew that I would come out of the course with a lot of remaining questions, but this was absolutely a necessary and useful first step!
6. Yes.
7. Almost! I am very happy with everything I have learned from this course, although I had also hoped for more information about binding descriptions. I guess I'll have to come back and take a different course that is specifically about bindings! I can't imagine any more information being packed into this week.
8. Absolutely. My expectations for what I would learn and how accomplished I would feel by the end of the course have been surpassed. I feel that I have been armed not only with cataloging resources, but with a confidence in my own abilities as a cataloger and with the new community of catalogers that are my classmates. This is an experience I will continue to feel the effects of throughout my career, I'm sure.
9. Yes, I learned everything I hoped to learn and more!
10. Absolutely. The instructors covered everything in the course description. I learned everything I had hoped for and much more.
11. Yes. I feel comfortable working with the DCRM(B) and feel like I could do a pretty good rare book bib record. I know that I would still have to refer plenty to my references, other models, &c., but I know that even very experienced catalogers do that, and at least now I will know that I'm looking in the right place, have a better sense of what I can consider authoritative, &c.
12. I wanted to take this course in order to boost my rare book cataloging confidence. I now feel prepared!

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

1. {no response}
2. I plan to continue working as a special collections cataloger fielding a wide range of rare, aged and unusual materials.
3. After completing the move back into our library following a renovation, I am eager to begin cataloging an upcoming stream of newly acquired rare books. Thinking even further into the future, I am leaning towards focusing my cataloging career on rare materials, and I know the skills I learned here will prepare me for that shift.
4. I wanted to acquire expertise in this domain so that I could expand the breadth of my cataloging responsibilities. I now feel that I can confidently ask to work on hand-press books.
5. I will use it to improve my catalog records for special collections, especially as I am given increasing opportunity to work with such items. I also hope to use it to work within my own cataloging community to create better standards for rare book cataloging.
6. To do my job better and create more descriptive records for the pre 1830's books my institution handles.
7. As a special collections cataloger with no prior rare book cataloging experience, this course gave me the skills I need to return to my institution and jump right into helping our special collections cataloging librarian work on our backlog of rare books.
8. I will be revising my cataloging practice for the better! My previous instruction in cataloging did not provide a lot of in-depth explanation as to why certain rules exist and why they are written as they are. DJL and JG were so helpful in giving me a deeper understanding of why cataloging rules exist in their current form, as well as what community accepted practices are.
9. I plan to apply these skills and knowledge to both reading and creating bibliographic records for rare materials, plus doing more informed research in external reference sources and exploring other areas of rare book stewardship.
10. I will begin using the skills and knowledge from this class immediately when I return to work in my daily workflow. I will also pass this information onto my fellow catalogers. This will also immediately change the way I am approaching some current rare book cataloging projects.
11. I will work more "sleekly" (as DJL would put it) with rare books, cataloging them more efficiently, effectively, and properly.
12. I plan on putting my skills to work immediately upon my return to work. I also plan on sharing details of the course with my team.

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

1. Catalogers who are currently working with, and those who may in the future, work with early modern books.
2. Catalogers entering or planning to enter work with early modern materials.

3. Everyone! Even if you don't exclusively work with rare materials, the skills and practices I learned this week would enhance anyone's cataloging practice. As an early career cataloger, I was nervous to take this course, but I found that learning amongst a diverse cohort of others really helped me to gain confidence in my cataloging practice. New catalogers: don't be afraid, this course is also for you!
4. Experienced catalogers with an interest in paper-based non-graphic special collections materials.
5. Any cataloger who will be working with special collections.
6. Catalogers who are doing more rare book materials or book conservators, archivists, or similar who find that they have to catalog the books they're experts on.
7. People with solid cataloging experience who want to learn ways to supplement typical RDA/MARC cataloging with more detailed description focused on issues specific to rare books would gain a lot from this class.
8. Anyone who is currently a cataloger of rare materials that is hoping to strengthen their practice, and anyone who is a cataloger but new to rare materials. I do think having a decent amount of experience in cataloging is a necessity though.
9. Practicing catalogers for sure, ideally with at least a year or two of cataloging experience under their belts, if not more. It's essential to already have a thorough understanding of MARC, AACR2/RDA, LCSH, &c. This is not for just anyone with an armchair interest in metadata or description.
10. Any rare book cataloger should take this course. I also think that technical services managers, who oversee rare book catalogers, should take this course. Almost all other rare book catalogers that I know in theological libraries have taken this course and recommend it to all of their peers.
11. Obviously, this course would be useful to any rare materials catalogers. However, I think it would also be extremely useful to a cataloger who only periodically works with rare, or "medium rare" resources. It gave me a better sense of what aspects of a book would be most useful for making note of, adding access points for, &c. I can do a full and proper "rare book" catalog record, but I will also feel more confident working with books that may not be "rare" per se but might still benefit from more bespoke cataloging.
12. Any cataloger who wants to challenge themselves would benefit from this course.

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. {no response}
2. I found the group cataloging, both the class-wide exercises as well as the pair-work, particularly informative opportunities to learn from each other's reasoning with the instructors' guidance.
3. {no response}
4. Again, learning to analyze a book as an object was a high threshold, one that I finally cleared this week.

5. Not a specific moment per se, but I really appreciated the opportunity to form relationships with the two instructors and am looking forward to staying in touch with them and turning to them for advice in the future.
6. I want to say that having JG and DJL working together was a perfect balance. JG has a great breadth of knowledge with standards and developing standards; DJL has an expertise in materials and the practices of hand pressed books.
7. It was so satisfying to go from knowing nothing about signature statements or descriptive bibliography to figuring out the signature statements for my practicum books completely on my own. I was then able to use that signature statement to determine that my pagination was incorrect and identify and correct the error. Such a relief!
8. Having DCRM(B) rules explained to me in the plainest way possible! It is so difficult to have folks in the industry speak in everyday language about why we do certain things in cataloging. The amount of jargon or precise but awkward language that often gets thrown around is so off-putting. I really appreciated DJL and JG approaching this in laymen's terms (to a reasonable extent) and not assuming we already had a high level of knowledge.
9. Getting hands on-practice by doing all the pre-course reading, in-class and take-home exercises, and practicum, which for us was creating a full-level, DCRM(B)-compliant record for each of two items: a hand-press book (pre-1830) and a machine-press (post-1830) book. It's a demanding class but a very worthwhile one if it's right for you.
10. There were "aha!" moments in each session. It is hard to single out any one as particularly more important than the others. I'm sure this will sink in when I return to work. Both instructors spent some time with me during class breaks answering important questions related to my specific work projects, and their answers in that context probably stand out as above-and-beyond what the course promised.
11. I'm not sure I can say there was ever a lightbulb suddenly flashing on; it was more like a gradual turning up of a dimmer switch throughout the week, but definitely to full brightness by the end.
12. I actually feel confident creating a signature statement now! I will absolutely ask a colleague to review my work, but it doesn't scare me anymore.

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

1. [I found myself wishing the course were two weeks; one remote with the main lectures, then an in-person week with the foundations under us so that we could spend more hands-on time working with materials.
2. As noted in a previous question, better balance of evening activities between programming and homework would have been preferable. More encouragement for after-class group work would also have been appreciated. It also would have been nice to examine examples of more modern materials for which the rare book approach is still appropriate due to their unusual character.

3. I would have liked slightly more in-class time to work on the practicum. This is mainly due to my slower cataloging pace, but I did feel I had to spend a lot of time outside of class working on it.
4. {no response}
5. I wished there would have been more geographic and maybe linguistic variety in the books we looked at and the examples that were given. I understand the emphasis on English, and respect the areas of expertise of the instructors, but I feel that it would have been beneficial to be exposed to a wider variety of printing practices from places other than England. I also thought that the amount of homework was a little bit heavy—I wasn't expecting to spend most of my evenings on homework after spending long days in class.
6. No.
7. {no response}
8. I think the balance between the lectures and practicum is a difficult one, especially when everyone works at different speeds. I did feel quite rushed for the practicum, though, and ended up prioritizing evenings to work on that and skipped RBS evening events as a result (my own choice).
9. Nothing comes to mind.
10. I can't think of anything to improve, beyond the normal revisions that the instructors make with new standards and cataloging situations.
11. I would suggest, if possible, some compression of the content, and the time spent in and out of class. I didn't realize there would be so much homework. Pulling eleven or more-hour days (I didn't have a chance to do the lectures or other activities) got me to the point where I cared more about being done and moving on, so that I'd have more free time for rest.
12. None that I can think of. I feel like the course was organized exceptionally well!

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. 9
3. 10
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 9
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. The field trip to UVA SC was terrific and a very valuable addition to the course.
2. Yes, visiting the SC and examining their various copies of different impressions and editions of works was informative and helpful.
3. We took a field trip to SC which I really enjoyed. DVM was a wonderful speaker, and it was so interesting to see him present the Alexander Pope volumes and the different editions of Babbitt. I also thought this field trip broke up the usual schedule of lectures in an interesting and engaging way.
4. Yes, I did get some new information from our field trip to SC.
5. Yes, definitely! We took a field trip to SC, and Professor Vander Meulen's sessions were really interesting and useful.
6. Yes. It was fantastic to see the differences between imprints.
7. Yes, I felt that our field trip to SC provided insight into certain aspects of the course material by providing more examples to look at in person.
8. We had a fieldtrip to the SC library with Professor Vander Muelen that was excellent!
9. We had a short field trip to UVA's SC. There wasn't enough time allotted to each of the two activities there. {private response} But it was nevertheless a worthwhile component that enhanced the overall course experience.
10. Absolutely. The field trip to the SC auditorium on campus was enormously valuable. The professor clearly invested a lot of time in preparing for our visit.
11. Yes, the field trip was a fun and an interesting break. I think it helped me understand better the concepts of edition, issue, &c., and why they matter.
12. Possibly, although that might have taken away from the cataloging work, which is why we were there.

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

1. Print a copy of DCBM-B and bring it along. It is difficult to toggle between the various digital resources used in the class.
2. I would reassure them not to be intimidated by the course's reputation for difficulty.
3. {no response}
4. I'd suggest that they bring a print copy of DCRM(B), one with which they are already very familiar (marking sections, for example).
5. It's a very intense week, but you will come out with a thorough understanding of DCRM(B), new friendships, and valuable relationships with the instructors.
6. For rare book cataloging, it would either be helpful to have a foundation in MARC cataloging OR have a foundation in the structure of the book. This should be a course for someone in either rare books or cataloging to transition into the other field of knowledge.

7. Don't stay in an Airbnb and try to rely on the bus system—it is not as reliable as Google Maps or their website makes it seem (or at least, it wasn't this summer). I ended up taking Lyfts and/or walking to and from my Airbnb which was about 2 miles away.
8. It will be a lot of work—prior to and during the course—but it will be so worth the effort.
9. Go into it with an open mind, humility, eagerness, and good questions! If you are someone who can't take criticism or thinks you're always right, you're not going to have a good time. DJL and JG will push you to become a sleeker cataloger, and they dish out what it takes to make that happen. But they are amazing resources and so generous with pointers and wisdom. And please, speak up so they can hear you, and don't do distracting, unrelated things on your laptop during class where others can see, and don't manspread.
10. I encourage anyone to take this course and to be prepared to be challenged in the best possible way by instructors who are truly legends in the field and who care deeply about their students and the field of rare book cataloging.
11. Buckle up: it will be intense!
12. Be ready for the work! I was advised by many friends that this class was challenging, but rewarding.

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

1. Fantastic.
2. A delightful learning experience together with colleagues and mentors that are remarkably congenial about being particular.
3. Extremely informative and career-changing.
4. I have discovered a supportive and nurturing community in RBS. With my institution in particular and intellectual pursuits generally under attack at the moment, it has been hugely bolstering to spend the week here.
5. My RBS experience was intense, educational, exciting, exhausting, and rewarding!
6. I want to come back next year.
7. The kindest book nerds/All learning lots together/Having such a blast!
8. A truly incredible experience filled with books, good company, and a lot of humor.
9. I'm a Swiss Army rare book cataloger now!
10. Stretching yourself; never the same with rare books; legendary instructors and class material; honing your current skills while learning new ones.
11. {private response}
12. Do it!