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L-30: Rare Book Cataloging
23–28 July, Charlottesville, Virginia

Narrative Course Evaluations

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! Very insightful.
2. The readings were helpful. It was a lot, but they were necessary and really helped prepare me for the course.
3. Yes, and I found the blog posts almost more useful than the books—I would definitely start with them to ease into the topic.
4. The reading assignments were very useful. If a video tutorial about DCRM(B) is ever created, I think that would be good to help students wrap their heads around the material prior to the course.
5. The advance reading was useful, and very extensive.
6. Readings were extremely useful. There wouldn't be time to read while at RBS, and they were essential from the very first minute of the course.
7. All of the readings were profoundly helpful—especially for someone who does not have a lot of previous materials or institutional contacts re: rare or "special" materials—and while at first I wasn't sure just how helpful the advanced video-viewings would be, I saw in class that they were actually extremely practical in preparing us to deal with the hand-press printed material in particular. I will say that many of the readings use a kind of language and vocabulary that may come naturally to more experienced folks in the field, but many of the required materials took me a bit longer to get through than some of my other peers because of my lack of exposure to this kind of scholarship. I was, however, grateful that I had plenty of time to prepare and plenty of resources to go through, which were all properly contextualized by the end of my first day. I was worried about being underprepared to keep up with my peers, but by Monday I felt confident in my preparation.
8. I found the pre-course readings very useful.
9. The pre-course readings (and the videos) helped me feel confident that I would be entering on a level playing field with the other catalogers, which was very helpful coming into a space like Rare Book School for the first time.
10. Yes, I thought the reading assignments were useful (and essential for my particular class). It was very helpful to do the readings beforehand so I wasn't coming into class totally clueless, and so that I could prepare questions.

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, very appropriate. The materials handed out for “Rare Book Cataloging” will be essential to my future as a cataloger for special collections.
2. I thought the workbook was wonderful. I liked following along with it during class and will be referring to it when I go back to work.
3. It is great, and I will definitely keep using it. Maybe it would be nice if a printed copy of DCRM(B) was provided as well.
4. DJL put everything in a thoughtfully organized binder for us that I will be able to consult at work. This is great.
5. Our workbook provided by the faculty was thorough and so useful to follow along with the lectures and various record examples.
6. Having the workbook was a great help, together with all the rest of the materials distributed, and well prepared with the majority of the information we needed.
7. The workbook was extremely useful, I was very grateful for all the materials provided to help us along through the week. It is all very straightforward and comprehensive, and I know it will help me for years to come!
8. The course workbook is great, and I think the toolkit in particular will be extremely useful in my future work.
9. The course materials and workbook are one of the all-time great resources I have been introduced to as a cataloger. The content is extremely relevant, and I expect it to be foundational going forward in my work at my institution.
10. The course workbook is so well-organized and full of helpful information! I know I will definitely be referring to it to aid in my cataloging work back home!

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. The practicum gave me hands-on experience that proved to be the most useful way to learn.
2. Learning how to correctly transcribe will be relevant to me. Having a better understanding of how to read DCRM(B) will also be helpful.
3. All of it was extremely relevant, as I have not been using this standard before. I now have tools to tackle a lot of projects with rare materials I was putting off.
4. Hearing from my classmates at other institutions, many of whom are more experienced at cataloging than me, was really insightful. I also know more about special collections and rare books librarianship as a possible career path now.
5. I feel that I am walking away with so much insight into applying DCRM(B) correctly to my institution's records—including both new and reparative cataloging.

6. Basically all of this course was intriguing and relevant, being my first approach to proper rare book cataloging.
7. So much!!! Some parts of me wish I would have waited to take this course so I could have showed up with fewer skills to learn and develop and more to hone, but I feel like I'm walking away with a much more profound understanding of my cataloging and how it works for the researchers it reaches. I know that I will be going back to my institution, which is currently unprepared to deal with rare or many pre-twentieth-century materials, and have ideas for and know how to approach certain aspects of policy, and feel confident in the cataloging that needs to be done to fulfill our goals and do justice to the materials in our collections.
8. I came into this course as a complete novice to rare books, but I now feel competent to start cataloging them. I have a backlog of materials that I need to work on, and I look forward to starting to look at them with the knowledge I've gained.
9. I particularly enjoyed the focus on how we understand bibliographic details differently with books of the hand-press period. For example, understanding that not everything called an "edition" is truly an edition opened my mind to more sophisticated decision making when cataloging these works.
10. Honestly, I'm walking away wanting to get more education—considering other RBS courses but also other types of continuing education. I've been burned out on academia for a while but it was inspiring to be in a group of people with so many other niche interests. Makes me remember how fun it can be to learn!

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. DJL and BB were experts in passing along the skills needed.
2. Absolutely!
3. Yes—absolutely!
4. Yes and yes!
5. I feel that the course promises and objectives were met, and really appreciated the opportunity to reinforce my knowledge and gain more practical experience with rare materials.
6. Very much.
7. Absolutely, that and more! I walked away from every class beaming, I can't speak highly enough of DJL and BB as instructors and fellow catalogers.
8. I am very pleased with the amount and type of information I gained in this course. The material was intimidating at first and the course seemed to front-load the week, but the lectures were thoughtfully structured to not overload us with information and to build appropriate scaffolding for developing new skills. The practicum was an excellent way for us to provide an opportunity to apply the information we were learning, and this was also well-structured in phases.

9. Yes, absolutely. DJL and BB are brilliant teachers, and their instruction met all the course description's elements.
10. Yes! For the past year or so, I've been muddling through cataloging rare books, doing the best I can as a self-taught cataloger. This course clarified a LOT for me, and provided so many resources for reference and further learning. The instructors as well as my fellow classmates were all very supportive and knowledgeable—I learned so much just by talking to other catalogers in this setting, both individually and in groups.

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

1. To catalog things myself but also to develop training policies for future catalogers.
2. I plan to apply what I learned directly to records I'm creating or updating at my institution.
3. I am planning to start applying DCRM(B) to rare materials I catalog. They are mostly modern, but some could use extra effort in description because of their uniqueness or interesting provenance.
4. I'm going to start using what I've learned in this course to catalog the materials in our rare book vault at work, many of which are pre-nineteenth century.
5. See above.
6. I came to properly catalog rare books. That's what I'm going to do back at my institution.
7. I plan to go back to my institution and make a game plan (first project: bound-widths) for the collection we, to be honest, have not really known what to do with. I also take great pride in /all/ the cataloging I do, and am happy to sit back at my desk and open OCLC with intention and drive for cleaner, "sleeker," researcher-focused cataloging.
8. Catalog rare books in my institution's collection!
9. I already have a deluge of projects that can be addressed with my newly acquired understanding of DCRM(B). I feel much more confident already when addressing the material.
10. First of all, tackling my backlog of materials back at work that I'd set aside due to knowing my own limitations. I'm also going to be training my fellow special collections cataloger on what I've learned.

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

1. People looking to learn rare book cataloging.
2. Catalogers who are new to special collections.
3. An experienced cataloger starting to work with rare materials.
4. Anyone who needs to catalog books from the hand-press period that require signatures! I would not have been able to figure out how to do these otherwise!
5. Catalogers who need DCRM(B) experience.

6. To my personal knowledge and to my institution.
7. Not sure how to answer this, but as someone who always wants to know "why" and doesn't always have the appropriate contacts to answer these kinds of questions, I benefited greatly—and relished the opportunity—to ask questions to people who not only also care about the "why," but who are authorities within the cataloging field and, in this case, literally write the textbook on it.
8. Anyone new to cataloging rare books might benefit from this course, but particularly someone without an experienced trainer or mentor who can provide expertise in the specialization.
9. Catalogers who work with, or may work with books in their institution's special collections, or anywhere else that books need careful and exacting description as objects, not just as content.
10. New special collections/rare books catalogers, but also those with some experience but little formal training. I had been cataloging rare books for about two years with hardly any formal training, just trying to navigate the rules on my own and do what readings I could. This course really helped me to have a deeper understanding of cataloging rules, and I feel a lot more confident about doing my job now.

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

1. The most noteworthy thing for me was the platform the class provided for people from all branches of cataloging to be able to share their unique experiences with special collections. We were all at varying degrees of experience with the materials and it was great to get to learn things from others that may not have been in the lesson plans. I loved it!
2. {no response}
3. I think it was learning to read and transcribe old typesets and symbols, now I feel like I can tackle everything.
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. The professionalism of the instructors.
7. There were many, but one in particular was when I sat with DJL during our first night of office hours and asked her a question I've been asking my supervisors since I started cataloging three and a half years ago, which has never been answered to my satisfaction or in a way I understand. I asked her, we looked at the documentation together, she said one sentence about it, and I immediately understood the piece I had been missing. It felt like a literal lightbulb, it had taken me years and many conversations, and she solved it for me in one sentence. There were many moments of insight and technique that I appreciated from both her and BB.
8. No lightbulb moments, but it did seem that everything started clicking together on

Tuesday or Wednesday.

9. When we took our field trip to SC, I got to see the very real benefits to the exacting description for rare books. Comparing the, in hindsight, major differences between four different issues of the same book revealed to me the kind of difference that can be made by good rare book cataloging.
10. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Maybe we should have a little more time for individual work and less for group work—we are usually very independent creatures.
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. I would have really liked more time to work with other materials—like some of the foreign language materials—but understand it's already a lot to fit into a week; there were some days that (with breaks) I spent twelve hours working on cataloging, and understand that it's not really feasible for more content to be added.
8. {no response}
9. Larger desk space in the classroom would be helpful. It would have been good to be able to type with my book right beside my laptop, rather than in front of it.
10. More desk space! It was a bit unwieldy to have a laptop, course workbook, and rare books on my table area. But I understand that this classroom setup was temporary due to construction at the library this year ...

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. 9
5. 10
6. 9
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10

10. 5

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

1. Absolutely.
2. Yes, the field trip to SC was interesting and fun!
3. It was interesting, and it somewhat strengthened some concepts we have learned about, but I have not learned anything radically new or different.
4. Yes, our trip to SC in which we tried to arrange books by date was a good learning experience.
5. I loved the trip to SC and the hands-on activities we got to do there.
6. The SC trip was really useful, and fun.
7. Yes, absolutely. Particularly our SC field trip, learning about how to identify the format of materials and the dating.
8. Yes! We had a very interesting activity that helped provide real examples of some of the concepts we'd been discussing.
9. Yes.
10. {private response}

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

1. {no response}
2. Do the reading!
3. Take it—it is definitely worth it. Leave yourself plenty of time to deal with the readings and preparatory exercises.
4. It might fall outside of the scope of this course, but I wish we could have considered more non-Western materials.
5. Be prepared to have your own cataloging conventions challenged and learn to adapt.
6. Do it.
7. Prepare, prepare, prepare—and come with questions.
8. {no response}
9. Give yourself time to sit with the readings, and return to them if they don't "stick" on the first read. All questions can be answered when it comes to the readings on signatures, but they are definitely worth patience and perseverance.
10. {no response}

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

1. If I could afford it, I'd do it again.
2. Intense but wonderful!
3. {no response}
4. A lot of very smart and enthusiastic people geeking out about books for a week.
5. Intense work; valuable experience.
6. It was worth it.
7. Uhhhh awe-inspiring?
8. {no response}
9. DJL and BB know what it takes to catalog rare books, and I am grateful for their guidance.
10. INTENSE, but in a good way!