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H-40: The Printed Book in the West since 1800  
19–24 July 2015

**Narrative Course Evaluations**

- 1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Did you do any additional preparation for your course? Are there any books or articles that you would like to see included in future years? Any that you might suggest removing?*
  1. It's time to axe Gaskell, venerable though it may be. Overall, there was a lot of duplication in the readings, and Gaskell is painfully dry and especially full of jargon. The readings were very useful as a whole, but Rota alone would probably suffice, perhaps supplemented by Steinberg.
  2. Yes, the assignment readings were particularly helpful, and I did do additional readings on topics of particular interest.
  3. The reading was useful, and will continue to be useful to refer to. Of the reading assignments, Rota was the most accessible.
  4. All pre-course readings were helpful. I did not do any additional preparation, other than knowledge that I brought with me from my work experiences.
  5. Simply could not acquire one of them—at any price. Should be considered, and other arrangements made (e.g., post sections as other instructors do).
  6. The pre-course assignments were helpful, as they provided historical context for the class.
  7. Yes, they were useful.
  8. I found the pre-course reading useful, but perhaps a tad redundant. Apart from the Text was by far my favorite.
  9. After ten pages of one of the readings, I could not go on. It was too dry. I had studied bibliography before, though, so I didn't seem to be lacking any background information when I started the course.
  10. Pre-course readings were helpful, but very dry and hard to read. I am a visual person, so having the hands-on examples and videos were much better than the reading.
  11. They were very comprehensive and useful. The Gaskell was more reference oriented, and I awaited this class for it to be fully useful as a book I can now turn back to for clarifying points.
  12. I found the pre-course readings to be very useful. I particularly enjoyed Apart from the Text.
  
- 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. The workbook is full of useful content, especially illustrations. I'll have to refer to it along with my notes, however, since there's limited context and written text.
  2. I'm so grateful that the PowerPoint presentations will be delivered to us electronically, as they contain links to online videos that I'd like to watch again (and again, and again...).
  3. Yes, the workbook was helpful during class exercises, and will be a good, quick reference.

4. The course workbook is a helpful future resource. I especially appreciate the timeline, although it may be improved by showing periods during which technologies, for example, were in use.
5. Yes—I think the materials were helpful, but a more comprehensive/conceptual overview would have been helpful. Still some confusion at the end on some of the technologies covered and their time frames, &c.
6. The course workbook provides a concise summary of content discussed during class; I will most likely reference it again.
7. Yes, appropriate and useful.
8. I'm very appreciative of the workbook! I will definitely use it as a reference.
9. Content was useful and appropriate, and I plan to keep the workbook for reference. I liked the use of YouTube/Vimeo videos in class to show the printing process.
10. The workbook was very helpful when called upon to use it. There were only a handful of times it was useful. The PowerPoint slides and video were very helpful in illustrating techniques and processes. The workbook and PowerPoint slides will be useful to refer to later on down the line.
11. I will certainly use the material and my notes in the future.
12. The course workbook is very interesting because it is very visual, and helped me to understand the variety of technologies we discussed in class. I could take notes next to these illustrations, which I found helpful. I look forward to receiving the PowerPoint slides from our instructor; that will be very helpful.

3) *If you've taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*

1. N/A
2. Most of the prior courses focused on older history, so this course was quite different in the content relating to modern technology (chemical, electronic, and digital), which I enjoyed.
3. N/A
4. This course was comparable to previous RBS courses in depth and breadth.
5. Number three of three, but still excellent. All have been excellent—this one just a little more nerve wracking.
6. Less hands-on experience than previously; also, less social history presented.
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. Very different—my previous course was much more based on discussion of provocative readings and cases. This course was largely lecture and delivery of information.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. Both were truly excellent.

4) *Which aspects of the course were most interesting and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. The SC visits looked at the sort of materials I encounter professionally, though these sections often felt somewhat winding or unrelated to the time period we were focusing on that day.
2. I have a deeper appreciation for more modern books than I did previously. EH put

- modern (nineteenth- and twentieth-century) book development into a context that I had previously undervalued. I'm quite excited to start exploring these themes more deeply.
3. Learning the context and movements that lead to changes in the form of books was most important to me. I also really appreciated the time spent learning and identifying printing and illustration processes.
  4. I was pleased to learn so much about nineteenth-century illustration processes, especially with hands-on comparisons, as well as bindings throughout the course time period.
  5. Yes—EH is deeply knowledgeable, and the topics were very relevant to me as a collector.
  6. Appreciated the history of the printing processes; in-class analysis of books was particularly helpful. BH's presentation on *Jane Eyre* was most interesting to me as an individual.
  7. The first two days (earlier period) were the most useful for me. Also, the hands-on exercises were very helpful.
  8. I was particularly interested in learning about images and their production, and found our exercises in class supremely helpful in that regard.
  9. I liked learning the technical aspects of the printing processes, the "how did they do that." Learning to distinguish/describe different types of nineteenth-century illustrations and bindings will be most relevant for my job.
  10. The discussions on the social history and culture as we moved through the decades. It was small discussion, and didn't take up a whole lot of time, but made it easy to place the context of the printed book better. The exercises at the end of each day were very helpful to continue the other discussion and the understanding of the content.
  11. The opportunity to make side-by-side comparisons cannot be underestimated as a learning tool. Having read the three books to prepare for the class, I can say definitively that hands-on matters.
  12. I experienced several "aha" moments each day. What was really interesting to me were the connections made among technological innovations, changes in taste, and market factors—the way all the factors came into play and affected each other and the physical book.
- 5) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Was anything left out or undeveloped? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*
1. Yes. I'm not sure what I hoped to learn, but I got a lot! It was a good balance of the high-level overview that the scope necessitates, along with detailed looks at certain aspects.
  2. Yes, absolutely, and I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the insightful class discussions on the modern book trade in the digital age, the role of modern fine-press and artists' books, &c.—issues with no definitive conclusions (other than "it's debatable") and plenty of room for continued thought and conversation.
  3. Yes, I learned what I had hoped to learn. Some finer points may have been left out due to the brevity of an RBS course, but everything promised was delivered.
  4. Yes. More work with publishers' bindings would have added to the course.
  5. Would have liked some discussion of end papers. Excellent use of materials. Many, many materials. They illustrated the content beautifully. Again, needs more

- comprehensive handouts or learning aids. So much material. I took voluminous notes, but need a better framework.
6. I was a little disappointed in the amount of social history presented during lectures, and wish we could have spent more time analyzing twentieth-century materials. Otherwise, I would say the course content was as described.
  7. Yes.
  8. Yes, no, and very much yes.
  9. Given that the title of the course was the “Printed Book in the West,” I think I would rather have spent more time on twentieth-century printing and binding, rather than get into e-books. But otherwise, it seemed like a reasonably well-distributed survey.
  10. Yes! And more! I learned so much more than I was expecting to learn. While the instructor has taught this course for many years, he came to class with a high level of enthusiasm and excitement that a first-year teacher brings. The material/content/discussion did not feel outdated, or “just tired of delivering the same topic over and over.”
  11. There is so much material covered that I am looking forward to going forward and really processing all that we learned. Perhaps the social dimensions of the history of the book were put on the back-burner, but the instructor was upfront about that decision, and the thoroughness of the technical/material progressions allowed suitable time and exploration.
  12. I do feel I learned what I had hoped to learn—a more comprehensive picture of this period of book history.

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

1. Hopefully I’ll be able to describe book materials, typefaces, and illustration techniques, and give approximate dates for undated items.
2. I plan to use these skills and this knowledge to further my independent study and personal collecting goals, which include finding ways to share the knowledge gained at RBS with others.
3. The things I learned will be useful every time I work with a book of this time period. I hope to tell the stories of these books more effectively.
4. In special-collections instruction, reference, exhibits, and in evaluating donations to the library.
5. As my first course on the physical book, the course gave me an entirely new way to look at books and evaluate them.
6. The broad survey provided context with which to evaluate my institution’s collections. I look forward to continuing to build knowledge in this area.
7. In my scholarship.
8. I hope it will allow me to better understand and form opinions on the materials we process, and converse about them with more knowledge and vocabulary.
9. I hope to be able to better recognize and describe the books I am dealing with in my job (largely 1840s–1922, non-rare materials).
10. The skills that I have learned during my time here will be used to acquire material for my special collections, and in the hopes of developing a history of the book course at my institution.
11. This is foundationally essential material for my present and future book-related education and job goals.
12. 1) I have a completely new view regarding one of our collections, which I now

realize has been undervalued/misunderstood; 2) I have about twenty-seven new ideas for exhibitions using our collections.

- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Well balanced. Intellectually, I never felt overwhelmed or bored. Anyone in the rare book field would probably be a good fit for it.
  2. The intellectual level was engaging and thought provoking, both during and outside of class time. In our class, we had representatives of academic libraries, the arts, personal collectors, and the book trades, and everyone seemed to benefit very well!
  3. Ideal for people with relatively little book history background or knowledge of this specific era of book history—some vocabulary/experience may be helpful, but isn't required.
  4. Anyone interested in learning about the technological developments (and reactions thereto) of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century time period.
  5. A broad range, but it is challenging.
  6. Someone looking for a broad introduction to printing history.
  7. Very in-depth, technical analysis of book history.
  8. Not so intellectual as to be unreachable, but most definitely very academic—an educated person would find it most comfortable.
  9. It is an introductory survey, not a detailed/advanced treatment of the topic.
  10. Anyone who works with rare/special/unique/specialized collections should take this course. Anyone personally invested in the history of the book for collecting and/or educated on the topic should take the course.
  11. It is certainly directed to the intellectually inquisitive. The richer one's own intellectual background is, the deeper one can approach the materials, but it is generally accessible material.
  12. We have a wide variety of backgrounds and interests in our group, and I think everyone was engaged at a high level and challenged.
- 8) *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. Too many to recall. There was almost always an "aha" moment when looking through the magnifying loupe at a page. The Janson's History of Art exercise was especially rewarding and instructive.
  2. I particularly enjoyed our conversations around the modern artists' book, and the definition of a "book" and the role of artistic interpretation. I still don't think a shoe can be a book(!), but the discussion was quite thought provoking.
  3. The exercises analyzing books from different time periods really helped me synthesize everything we learned.
  4. The visit to the "Introduction to Bookbinding" class's display of publishers' bookbinding was extraordinary.
  5. Styles of binding by decade—fabulous.
  6. The focus on printing processes was helpful.
  7. The hands-on exercises with the books were the most useful and educational parts of the course.

8. Exploring the evolution of a textbook from first to fourth edition.
9. I came to understand the technical aspects of printing processes so much better—especially Linotype and half-tones.
10. The physical making of a book today!
11. Clearly placing and understanding terms that I have heard thrown around is truly a joy. Things clicked into place throughout the week.
12. I never understood that wood engraving was both an important artistic medium, and a very heavily used commercial process and why. I had “aha” moments every single day of class.

9) *How could the course have been improved?*

1. Plan the SC sessions beyond just batches of nice books to look at. Allow for questions and appreciation, but structure this more, like in the lecture sessions.
2. I don't have any particular suggestions; the balance of time in SC and the classroom was perfect, though I always love SC, so I wouldn't have been disappointed to have had more of it.
3. N/A
4. More work with publishers' bindings.
5. {private response}
6. More hands-on activities. Also the structure was a bit confusing, as so many of the techniques crossed decades. I would have preferred to have looked at techniques throughout eras (i.e., Monday—printing processes; Tuesday—illustration; &c.), rather than an era structure.
7. Perhaps a little bit more willingness to address issues related to the “sociology of the book” would make the class even more interesting.
8. Perhaps a bit more time with exercises/hands-on sessions, but honestly I'm hard pressed to think of suggestions.
9. To my mind, fine-press/artists' books were overrepresented, but someone with different interests might find the time spent on them appropriate.
10. N/A
11. More time looking at the books.
12. Possibly having the PowerPoint slides printed for us to take notes on, but I'm not sure about that because the discussions also had a great flow to them that I valued.

10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*

1. Yes, definitely.
2. Yes, absolutely, on both fronts.
3. Yes, I would recommend the course.
4. Yes; yes!
5. Of course! Always at RBS!
6. Yes, of course.
7. Yes.
8. Yes! And indeed I would.
9. Yes, and yes, if someone is interested in a fairly broad/shallow survey.
10. I would completely recommend this course to others invested in the topic.
11. Most definitely.
12. Yes, and definitely yes.

11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. Somewhat. See Q9, above.
2. Yes, absolutely; see note above about SC. I also deeply appreciated BH's presentation on Jane Eyre, and the Janson exercise.
3. Yes, visits to SC were very valuable.
4. Yes—we went to SC primarily.
5. Yes—SC and Thursday, both.
6. Yes.
7. Yes.
8. Yes, SC and sub-basement of Alderman, both of which were fascinating.
9. We made three visits to SC to see fine-press/artists' books. I think that was overkill. I would rather have spent one of those periods visiting a working offset/modern print shop.
10. We went to SC, and it was time well spent.
11. Yes. SC sessions were treasured time. The time spent in LT was the most enjoyable of, if not my life, then certainly of the week!
12. Yes, seeing examples from SC definitely enhanced the experience.

12) *If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience? Any that you could have done without?*

1. Both of the lectures this week were well presented, but felt somewhat tangential to rare books, specifically.
2. Yes, as the time spent outside of the classroom among other RBS classmates is perhaps equally illuminating and educational.
3. Yes. I enjoyed all events. Especially loved the SC exhibit tour.
4. All evening events were informative.
5. Smithsonian lecture—no. Least valuable in three years. Second lecture—very good. Movie Night—very good.
6. I enjoyed all of the evening events this year, and felt they enhanced the learning experience.
7. The Nancy Gwinn lecture was a bit of a dud.
8. I loved Booksellers' Night. One of the lectures I may have skipped due to it being quite far from my subject area.
9. I only went to the Wednesday lecture. It was okay, but I didn't feel I would have missed much by not going.
10. N/A
11. I enjoyed all of the extra optional events. They were fun and very interesting.
12. I attended all the events and found them all interesting and worthwhile.

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

1. Relax and have fun. EH is an excellent, engaging teacher.
2. I suspect the conversation around the future of the book will change every year! If you have a chance to take this, it is highly recommended. It will challenge your

- conceptions of modernity, innovation, and artistry—all constructively.
3. N/A
  4. {no response}
  5. Come with some pre-knowledge. It will help. The course covers a lot, and it goes fast.
  6. {no response}
  7. EH is a very knowledgeable and engaging lecturer.
  8. It's a unique experience that will immerse you in book academia, and I don't think you can replicate the experience anywhere else.
  9. The syllabus is so broad, I think it helps to come with some idea of what you want to get out of the course. Also, ask questions! I learned a lot from the answers to my classmates' questions, as well as my own.
  10. It is worth the time and mind power!
  11. A unique educational opportunity, well worth the time and effort. It is exhausting, so perhaps an intellectual pre-marathon-like training would be advised.
  12. I am still struggling with fitting all the concepts into a timeline, but working that out for myself before I arrived did help.

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

1. Delightful, it's true/Go to RBS often/but avoid the Lawn.
2. And I quote from a giddy classmate: "Please allow me to geek out for just a moment, but I love this!"
3. This experience was hugely energizing, and will change the way I work with books.
4. As usual, I am a changed person—in terms of my book knowledge—after one week at RBS!
5. I come here on my vacation for a reason—it's grand!
6. A privilege to be here!
7. Interesting and helpful.
8. I leave RBS with more questions than I arrived with, but never have I felt so inspired and equipped to begin answering them.
9. Books books books.
10. Amazing! Brilliant! Educational! Cool! Fun!
11. One week of rare books/we came, we saw, we conquered/not to kick habit.
12. I'm too mentally exhausted to create this now—I'll have to send it in later!  
Okay...it's a summer retreat where I can leave other things behind and focus deeply on something that I love.

## **Student Data**

*Number of respondents:* 12 (of 12)

*How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?*

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 7 (58.33%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:  
3 (25%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 2 (16.67%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 1 (8.33%)

I had an RBS course tuition credit from a previous year: 1 (8.33%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (8.33%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (8.33%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (8.33%)

*Which of the following best describes your current occupation?*

Library disciplines:

Archivist: 1 (8.33%)

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 2 (16.67%)

Special collections librarian: 2 (16.67%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

B.A./B.S.: 1 (8.33%)

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (8.33%)

Professional educator:

Associate professor: 1 (8.33%)

Book trades:

Antiquarian bookseller: 1 (8.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (8.33%)

Post-doctoral fellow/researcher/scholar: 1 (8.33%)