

Deborah J. Leslie  
L-30: Rare Book Cataloging  
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. I think that all the readings were very useful for preparing for the class. The materials (especially Gaskell) were hard to absorb and understand before discussion, at least for me.
  2. The pre-course reading assignments were useful—particularly the Leslie/Griffin article. The pre-course exercises were also very helpful as a way to get acquainted with DCRM(B).
  3. I found the pre-course reading to be well suited.
  4. Yes, but readings that included reviews of the myriad ways things can be done, rather than the final decision of how things are done (as in transcription), is confusing.
  5. Yes, DCRM(B) was useful to read, although I skipped a bit brother {?}. Easier to digest with actual examples. TB article was interesting—again, easier with examples (and with the film). {private response}
  6. Descriptive bibliography. Tanselle was not that relevant. Neither was TB's "Descriptive Bibliography." Bibliography is just different from cataloging.
  7. I found our pre-course readings all very useful, although I felt there was some overall redundancy between the DJL and TB articles, with the former being much more accessible.
  8. Overall reading was very well chosen. Also liked that we had a pre-class/RBS exercise. Only recommendation would be to send video list at the same time as the reading list. I felt that for me, the visuals would have helped with the comprehension of the readings.
  9. Yes, they were useful. I liked the videos—I appreciate a variety of media for learning. I was glad to have the warm-up exercises, though they mostly demonstrated how much I did not yet know. They gave me ideas about what I needed to concentrate on learning.
  10. The readings are definitely useful, and I also watched some other videos on bookbinding, &c., beyond those suggested or required by DJL. It would have been nice to have seen some DCRM(B) records with bells and whistles before the class started—perhaps for works that have been digitized so that the student can compare the two. Also, the Gaskell reading is good, but it's hard to wrap the mind around it without doing it oneself. Perhaps it should be revisited in the course after the signatures, &c., lecture.
  11. I very much enjoyed the videos—all of them. They brought the material to life. I thought the pre-readings were well selected. Is it possible to find or create a video (YouTube) on collation and signatures?
  12. The pre-course readings were absolutely essential to feeling prepared for the class and getting a sense of what you will be learning. The videos on YouTube were also

helpful. During the class, I kept wanting to see the Gaskell book, so perhaps students could at least skim through it prior to class.

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 is going to be incredibly useful. I plan on keeping it with me at work.
2. The course workbook was very useful, and I will probably bring it to work and use it as a reference tool there.
3. The workbook itself is a valuable tool, and will be useful to me after RBS.
4. The workbook is excellent. So many helpful handouts. Beautifully arranged.
5. Some handouts were hard to read, for example the black letter. All had uses. I will refer to contents of handouts and notes when I return to work.
6. The whole course was interesting and relevant. I learned how to construct a record for rare materials using DCRM(B). Having cataloging examples with photocopies of title pages before we came to RBS might have been helpful. Having difficult examples with easier homework would be good. Demonstrating in class how to formulate complex signature statements (incorporating pi and chi) before we had to do statements, ourselves, would have been helpful.
7. I greatly appreciated the toolkit. It was very useful during RBS, and will remain a valued resource.
8. The course resources are great. I plan to use this at my home institution, and as I become a more proficient rare-book cataloger.
9. I really like the workbook and resources. There were so many useful handouts and URLs. I will keep this guide at my desk next to DCRM(B) for reference.
10. It will be part of my ready reference collection from now on.
11. I very much like when we all received a facsimile of one book and could talk about it together. I just can't express enough how much I learned in this course. It was entirely useful.
12. The toolkit we received is such a great resource! The charts, lists, and recommendations will be very useful to me going forward. The handouts and exercises were challenging, but were essential to my learning.

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

1. N/A
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. N/A
5. First course.
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. This is my first RBS course.
10. N/A
11. This is my first course.
12. N/A

- 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. I think just clarifying the rules. I also liked the concept of the bibliographical record as a data set.
  2. I found the construction and history of the book the most interesting, and all of it very relevant.
  3. A close reading of the minutiae of cataloging rules.
  4. I particularly enjoyed learning how to analyze the way the book has been put together and then build the signature statement.
  5. DJL selected a book for the practicum that was specific to the collection at my institution, which was very helpful for improving my cataloging. The SC “field trip” was extremely helpful for my personal collection of books.
  6. Transcription was really interesting. Collation and signatures were really interesting; I wish we could have spent more time on them.
  7. All of them. This course has greatly strengthened my knowledge as a cataloger of rare books, and has given me a greater sense of how to approach my projects at work.
  8. I really liked working with the hand-pressed materials and learning about the nuances. I also enjoyed the transcriptions.
  9. I thought the transcription portion was very interesting, because one cannot rely on visual cues or assumptions, but instead must also think critically about the title proper, other title elements, and the relationships among various elements.
  10. I now know two things: 1) I have a lot more learning to do, and 2) my department needs a rare book cataloging policy. The most useful part of the course was the physical description (and related notes on signatures, &c.) lecture and the in-class activities, because I really struggle with that in my records.
  11. Most relevant: instructor demonstration regarding signatures; reading on “good enough” cataloging; practicum, i.e., having my “own” book to keep coming back to; hands-on experience with a variety of books and title page facsimiles; the amount of take-home handouts.
  12. The lectures and workbook, as well as practicum exercises, were most interesting. I learned so much about how to handle difficult cataloging problems, and also how to find answers and resources to help me. I know I will be able to start doing much higher level cataloging as soon as I return to work!
- 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. I learned what I wanted to, and what I had set out to learn before coming, as well as additional information that will be very useful for my job.
  2. Yes, this was everything I was hoping for.
  3. Yes. The ability to work with someone who not only formulated the rules—and can thus speak authoritatively—but can give guidance on how to sculpt/adapt the rules when necessary.
  4. Yes, all very thorough.
  5. DJL covered the material promised in the course description. Too much to cover

- in five days—we need more time to go over examples. All very helpful.
6. Yes. Mostly underdeveloped! Whom to trace collation, and those darn signature statements.
  7. Absolutely; DJL was very thorough and detailed. My only suggestion would be to add a pre-course reading on users/user-needs for rare/special collections to establish a context for our practices.
  8. This class was everything described and more. I felt the class gave a great resource/toolkit to describe materials and to create the most accurate records possible.
  9. Yes. I learned what I had hoped to learn, and now feel more confident about my rare-book cataloging abilities. I could use more practice with foliation and collation.
  10. The course covers everything well, but I still have a lot of personal work to do.
  11. I think the instructor did help me acquire the skills and info promised in the course description. I realize that much of the learning is still up to me. I would have liked to spend more time on citation of sources and finding those sources, but I realize we, as a class, took a longer time in other areas.
  12. I did not feel anything was “left out”; in fact, there was a lot more to it than I had expected. I had hoped to learn the bits and pieces of rare book cataloging that I lacked as a general cataloger, but in the end I learned I still have a long way to go. This was my first formal training for special collections cataloging, and I really owe DJL a lot of credit for being able to teach us so much in a week.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. I plan on revising our cataloging policies the instant I return to work on Monday, and beginning some light retraining of the concepts in my department.
  2. I plan to apply the knowledge to my current and future cataloging.
  3. I plan to immediately apply them to my cataloging practices.
  4. I hope to have things to catalog when I get back. Otherwise, I plan to revisit some old cataloging.
  5. Retrospectively, with items I’ve cataloged at my institution, and with more confidence for future cataloging.
  6. I catalog rare materials for special collections. I expect to use this knowledge sometimes in my regular workflow.
  7. I plan to immediately implement them in my daily cataloging, and to pursue additional learning opportunities via the suggested resources outlined in our toolkit.
  8. I plan on using these skills to catalog rare materials.
  9. I will use the skills and knowledge in my current cataloging position, and in future positions in which I work with rare materials.
  10. I’ll immediately start digging into the rare books backlog, and I’ll also begin to draft a rare books policy with my other department members.
  11. Generally speaking, to simply become a more skilled cataloger. Personally speaking, to bring me more confidence about my skills.
  12. My institution has a huge backlog of materials waiting, and lacks the staff to handle it. I can now contribute in a much more effective way.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might*

*benefit the most from taking it?*

1. This course is appropriate for people who have had some more advanced experience in cataloging, and who have at least a general idea of the time period/culture of the rare materials.
  2. A cataloger who wanted to increase their knowledge of cataloging would benefit from this course.
  3. This course is suitable to both beginners and experienced catalogers. Though I have cataloged rare books for almost six years, this is my first “classroom” rare-book-cataloging training, and I benefitted substantially.
  4. Working catalogers.
  5. I think the course covered an intellectual range, from those with some rare-book cataloging experience to those with more extensive knowledge—all took something new and applicable away.
  6. The course was intellectually demanding. Only a person who is really passionate about rare books and rare-book cataloging, and who is highly motivated, should take it.
  7. While experience with rare book cataloging may not be a necessity, knowledge of/experience with general cataloging is a must have. I recommend this for any level of cataloger, and for advanced M.L.S. students.
  8. I think this class will best suit a cataloger who has a good working comprehension of AACR2/RDA. This class will enhance skills in dealing directly with the accurate cataloging of rare books.
  9. A fairly high intellectual level is needed to grasp the issues and concepts of cataloging. People who already are proficient in regular cataloging, but who have worked with rare materials some would most benefit.
  10. The intellectual level is high, but based on the folks in the class and talking with them personally, I think everyone from a new cataloger to a rare book librarian would get something out of it. But obviously you should be someone who does at least some cataloging.
  11. Someone who has been cataloging, including original cataloging, for at least one year.
  12. Strong general cataloging background is needed, I believe. Anyone handling special collections materials who also has patrons and colleagues using the materials would benefit.
- 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. Again, thinking of the record as a dataset, or in terms of descriptive bibliography almost. It was enlightening, and helped me think of ways to improve my work.
  2. Discovering that, for example, quartos were different in old books versus books printed in the 1960s was very helpful.
  3. The ability to discuss cataloging practices with an authority on the field.
  4. How the book is assembled, and all the weirdness that can occur.
  5. The special collections edition/issue/imprint info.
  6. So that’s how to transcribe all those u/Us and v/Vs! (The upper-case/lower-case things....)

7. I think that DJL's ability to relay collation in an understandable manner qualifies.
8. The realization of all the resources and tools that are made available to do accurate and in-depth bibliographical description and analysis.
9. One of the best parts of the class was hanging out with a bunch of catalogers, and learning about their situations. These people say "Yay, cataloging!" instead of "Cataloging? Yuck!"
10. Generally, I came to realize that my institution doesn't begin to use the full potential of our library's bibliographical records.
11. Signatures and collation—I was very nervous about it pre-course. It wasn't quite as difficult as I thought.
12. Hands-on practicum exercises were very compelling.

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

1. I think it works the way it is being taught now.
2. The course could have been improved with more exercises; however, I am not sure where they would fit in.
3. {no response}
4. Fewer mandatory evening activities to leave more time for homework. Also fewer examples in Latin—they add a layer of confusion.
5. More interactive cataloging of a book on the screen.
6. I think we spent so much time on transcription (which is very important) that everything after it got short shrift. We barely covered "special files." Since we could not remove the materials from the classroom, and some of us don't have laptops, completing the practicum was very difficult, especially since we only got to some of the relevant material the morning the practicum was due.
7. In retrospect, perhaps shift the TB film to in-class? I felt that imposition was more difficult to grasp off of the extracurricular film session.
8. Even more examples to work on! Practice, practice, practice!
9. I think an introductory document guiding the pre-readings could be useful. More in-class practice/experience with materials could be useful. I could have used more time on collation and foliation, and perhaps a bit less on basic transcription; those two are hard to practice outside of class.
10. It would be hard to improve without making it a longer course (i.e., two weeks instead of one). Perhaps there could be more pre-class prep work.
11. Having the instructor explain the techniques with physical books more. This was done mostly for signatures.
12. The only suggestion I would give is a little bit more content on Friday. With the long lunch and early dismissal, I felt there was a brief period of time wasted. Needs perhaps an RDA example or two.

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

1. Yes, I think it was well worth the cost, and would definitely recommend it.
2. Yes, yes.
3. Yes. Yes.
4. Yes! Yes!
5. Yes; yes.

6. Yes. No. I don't know anyone else for whom it would be relevant.
7. Absolutely, and decidedly so.
8. Absolutely worth the money! This class is a wonderful addition to relevant skills that are needed in the cataloging community.
9. Yes, and yes. I would definitely recommend.
10. Yes, and yes.
11. Most definitely, on both counts.
12. Yes, and yes! It is intense and challenging, but so full of content.

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

1. Yes, it helped illustrate the concept of concealed editions.
2. Yes.
3. Yes, though the trip to SC was a bit hurried. Still, a worthwhile trip.
4. Yes, the bibliography stuff was amazing.
5. Yes. SC.
6. The field trip to SC was time moderately well spent.
7. Yes; our trip to SC was very helpful in elaborating distinctions between edition, issue, impression, and state.
8. We went to see several Alexander Pope items in SC. While viewing those items, we were able to build on skills that we learned in class.
9. Yes, we visited SC to work on format identification. The visit may have been aimed more as an introduction to bibliography than as a supplement to cataloging.
10. The SC trip was good, but felt rushed at times. I think it would have been better if we were split into three or four groups, instead of two. But I know that might be difficult.
11. No, I think it was difficult enough to fit in all we had to learn.
12. Yes, the time in SC was hands on and thought provoking, so it wasn't a lazy field trip, but a good exercise.

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. I think they were all helpful. Like it was mentioned our first day here, aside from learning, we are here to build a community, and I met some intelligent and interesting individuals who are all working in like fields.
2. For the most part, the evening events were enjoyable. I would have skipped the Wednesday evening lecture had I known he was simply talking about a problem without a solution.
3. {private response}
4. {private response}
5. Movies were so-so. Smithsonian lecture could have been more specific.
6. I did not think any of them were a great use of my time. The videos I saw covered material from my pre-course viewing. I think the ones I missed probably did, also.
7. I felt that evening programming was informative and valuable without being demanding, which provided a welcome change of pace.
8. I attended almost all of the events. By the end of the day and going to an event I

- was tired and ready for bed. All were important in both content and networking.
9. The videos were useful and amusing. The first lecture (Smithsonian) was very engaging. I had had high hopes for the second lecture, but I feel it didn't provide much information or any solutions or future directions. I felt the speaker could have investigated a few other new points.
  10. The films were great, but the lectures were not very good. I could have used that time better to work on more exercises or get a little extra sleep.
  11. N/A
  12. I have to admit I was too tired, and had homework to do. I did not attend.

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

1. I would say revisit the material, multiple times. It helps for absorption.
2. It is okay to fail; that is how we learn.
3. {no response}
4. Be prepared to completely immerse yourself.
5. Don't be intimidated—it's fun!
6. Do the advance reading.
7. Take the course; you won't regret it.
8. Please take this course. You will meet many people who will grow your knowledge of cataloging, as well as have a world-class teacher, not to mention all who are in residence.
9. We need more space at the tables for our materials—laptop, class binder, copy of DCRM(B), notebook, materials to be examined....
10. Try to do several DCRM(B) records before coming, in order to become more familiar with the rules and the rule book's layout.
11. Look into housing outside the dorm option.
12. I've said enough really. It's a great class.

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

1. It was one of the most rewarding weeks in my professional career.
2. Delightful.
3. This class should be a borderline-requisite experience for any rare-book-cataloging job applicant.
4. It's a wonderful experience. I like the social elements. It felt like summer camp for grown-ups!
5. Totally sleek!
6. Wow! That was intense!
7. School was never this much fun.
8. {no response}
9. RBS—let your book geek fly!
10. Interesting, helpful, and very, very exhausting.
11. Terribly pleased.
12. It was a fun and sleek experience, very learning intensive. I loved meeting so many great, smart people.

## 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: 10 (83.33%)  
My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:  
1 (8.33%)  
I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 1  
(8.33%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

My institution/employer paid 100%: 11 (91.67%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 1 (8.33%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 8 (66.67%)  
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%: 8 (66.67%)  
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: 9 (75%)

Other occupations/vocations:  
Other: 1 (8.33%)