

Will Noel & Dot Porter
M-95: The Medieval Manuscript in the Twenty-First Century
05–10 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. Reading list was appropriate and useful.
2. The articles were very interesting.
3. Yes, I really enjoyed reading the assignments all together, which really set the pace/outlook for the course.
4. Yes, I really enjoyed the readings, and will probably be assigning some of them in the future myself.
5. Generally, yes. For this class, it might make sense to replace some traditional articles with assignments to explore websites or online tools in advance.
6. Pre-course reading useful, but not necessary.
7. Yes. Read up on paleography.
8. They were interesting, but it would have been better to engage with them more in class. (In fact, I don't think they were touched upon at all.)
9. Yes, the readings were helpful. I retook a paleography seminar (informal, no credit, ten hours total) at my institution, and I played with some of the digital-humanities tools mentioned.
10. I would have liked some class time, even a short period, to discuss the readings together as a group. They were not referenced in class.
11. Yes. {private response}
12. The readings were useful for me because I was able to gauge what I would learn in the course, and what many terms mean in the digital world. Terms like optical character recognition, open data, metadata, &c.

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. WN and DP *seriously* need to consider compiling a workbook (either digitally or with printed hard copies) for the following reasons: 1) screen shots of various websites; 2) technology troubleshooting; 3) step-be-step instructions for the tools—even if only to get started; 4) schedule; list of URLs presented in class; 5) sample transcriptions modeling how to expand abbreviations (not everyone knew about this).
2. Everything was electronic, no handouts. That said, a few written materials (even if transmitted electronically) would be helpful: a syllabus and a summary of electronic resources. Documentation for even simple steps of how to use major tools for common tasks would also be helpful.
3. Would have been nice to have handout/list of all the sites/books referenced.
4. There was no course workbook, but all the digital resources distributed were/are

- very helpful.
5. The tools and resources discussed in class were great—both as tools for me to continue using, and as inspiration for finding/creating other tools.
 6. N/A
 7. Yes, absolutely.
 8. The intense study of a single manuscript was very absorbing.
 9. Very useful, all of it. Will definitely be using it in the future.
 10. As someone with a previous background in both medieval manuscripts and some knowledge of digital resources, I would have appreciated a greater emphasis on resource creation—working with Wget was probably the most exciting/useful thing I learned.
 11. {private response}
 12. In general, I'll say that many course materials, if not all, were useful. I will be using all of it in the future.

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

1. Some more planning and thought needs to go into this course (this is only the second time it's been offered), but with some more guidance and structure, the course promises to be excellent—the content is fascinating and useful, it just needs to be arranged in a better way.
2. Better integration with trends in the field—I loved hearing about projects underway. The two topics (digital stuff versus manuscript stuff) didn't always coordinate well. Lastly, we didn't get to see a variety of manuscripts. Perhaps could be a showing of four to five manuscripts?
3. N/A
4. Great, like the others!
5. N/A
6. My first course was also co-taught, and I think that format works very well.
7. {no response}
8. It was terrific (as was the other). The other course was much more devoted to discussion, which I personally enjoyed—perhaps some lecture or solitary work time could have been used for discussion (perhaps involving the preliminary readings).
9. N/A
10. Both were wide ranging and well paced; both packed a lot of knowledge into one week.
11. This is definitely the best RBS course I have attended!
12. {no response}

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 enjoyed using a wide spectrum of tools to study one manuscript—and the faculty selected a manuscript that I would like to continue studying.
2. Working with one manuscript all week allowed me to explore it in more depth. I learned how to use some new tools that will be very useful.
3. Very relevant, and the instructors emphasized why these concepts were important. I definitely came away with new project plans to bother my home special-

- collections librarian with.
4. I have a lot of new ideas and better insight on how digital resources might help my research and teaching. I'm especially excited about all the digital projects we learned about like POP, the Schoenberg Manuscript Database, and DP's collation tool.
 5. I'm motivated to get my institution to collaborate on digital projects more. It's clear to me that regardless of what an individual institution can achieve, the future of scholarship relies on bringing manuscripts together in new ways.
 6. Anything WN had to say was interesting and relevant. The concept of full open access is very attractive.
 7. How digital modeling can be immersive for special-collections instruction. Scalar—could replace with tandem or with LibGuides.
 8. I feel I acquired a lot of new practical skills, which is great. I'm especially looking forward to putting these tools (T-PEN, especially) to work in the classroom.
 9. I realized that what I really want to do is medieval archives and manuscript work, not just professor/traditional-academic paths. I hope now to do my dissertation on a manuscript instead of materiality of books in medieval literature more generally.
 10. I'm excited to use some of the resources we looked at (T-PEN, e-codices) in my teaching. I will continue to use SDMS in my own work.
 11. All aspects of the course! Yes, I have ideas and project plans I can hopefully implement at my institution; thank you, DP! WN, thank you for sharing your extensive knowledge, especially regarding diagrams and collations.
 12. The one most inspiring aspect of this course was the notion that I myself can be digitally literate, and that I can think in completely new ways about the physicality and digitally structured nature of manuscripts. I plan on directly applying these skills to my own research.
- 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, the instructors were very kind and helpful, but here are some ideas: 1) provide clear directions; 2) use pointers (hard to see relevant parts of the screen at times); 3) for more complex procedures (e.g., Wget), it would be helpful to explain why/how these operations are important (i.e., why is it useful?); 4) class website where we can link manuscript projects? This is a hard course to teach, because of the different levels of expertise with manuscripts and technology—more resources will close this gap.
 2. Yes.
 3. Useful tools/skills were quickly previewed and practiced, but we were shown online tutorials to reference that should be helpful if we want to use them in the future.
 4. I learned all I hoped to learn and more!
 5. Yes! I'd love more resources for how to keep growing and learning about digitization—what kinds of codes might be useful, and how to learn/practice them, for example.
 6. I learned more on the technical side than I had hoped to learn. I learned to enjoy creating in Scalar.
 7. Learned and relearned things. I learned more in this week than in two years of

- library school.
8. Yes, I did! Instructors were very helpful and attentive, which was great in the workshop-like environment. Might have been nice to learn about how to make your data most visible in search engines, but I guess I can find out on my own.
 9. No; yes, and more; yes.
 10. I wanted more hands-on coding/hacking experience. It's great to know that a transcription tool uses XML under the hood, for example, but I want to know how to start developing my own resources.
 11. Both instructors helped me all week long. Extensively. They also made available extra time for us by missing their breaks or arriving early.
 12. I did learn all I hoped I would! No complaints here. In fact, I learned even more.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. DP's collation tool is amazing! Hopefully, I will get the courage to try out Wget again.
 2. WN's presentations deepened my overall knowledge, as did the one-on-one conversations with him about my manuscript. This will help in everything I do. DP's knowledge of software tools was terrific. Wget will be invaluable.
 3. I'd like to go back and practice what we learned on the manuscripts at my institution's holdings (which are largely uncataloged and under utilized).
 4. I will be taking many of the digital tools we talked about into the classroom (T-PEN, Scalar, &c.). I'm not sure yet how they'll help me in my research, but I'm sure they will! (Could ultimately be the need for a new project.) Also, I learned several useful tidbits about codicology from WN while working on my project.
 5. Working with my institution to create online tools that can be utilized independently by staff and students; generating new and more access to our collections.
 6. WN's concept of looking at your book through the "stratification" is a very useful tool in teaching. Thank you!
 7. 1) Working with libraries to develop better collections/access to tools; 2) supporting independent scholarship down the road.
 8. {no response}
 9. To complete my dissertation and establish a career.
 10. I teach in a place with no medieval manuscripts. Digital resources are key for my students, and I look forward to bringing these resources into the classroom, with an important critical distance gained through my own work with actual manuscripts.
 11. I learned so much that I will have to sort through it to discuss with colleagues what we are capable of working on now—and in the future.
 12. Many ways. I plan on using T-PEN to transcribe Anglo-Saxon Alfredian and late Anglo-Saxon texts, along with Anglo-Norman texts, and to digitally visualize certain texts in new ways. Text encoding and social media also open up brand new ways of collaborating, as well as the extra training in reading the manuscript itself.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. High—people who have already done some manuscript study will get the most out

of it.

2. {no response}
3. Librarians, students of medieval literature, archivists, coders. Very tough, but rewarding for anyone interested in the digital lives/avatars of manuscripts.
4. The intellectual level was quite high. Appropriate for grad students, faculty, and librarians with advanced manuscript experience.
5. The class seemed geared toward researchers; I'd be interested in seeing a wider range of backgrounds. Medieval manuscript knowledge was important, but there was a lot to be gained for others in the library and rare book worlds.
6. Someone who studies or collects and provides access to such material. The mix of students in this class was perfect.
7. Anyone who ventures toward pushing for open access and liberating scholarship from the shackles of mediocrity.
8. An oddly framed question. In its current form, the course is widely accessible. Were it to have more focus on the preliminary readings, it might have developed a more scholarly lean, which might be nice for some, but off-putting to others.
9. I'd say it wasn't too intellectual—not much theory other than digital surrogacy, but that was pragmatic—but it *did* require a lot of problem-solving skills, intellectual curiosity, and research skills.
10. I think this class is best suited to someone with some prior experience either working with medieval books *or* working with digital resources.
11. Advanced and delightful tone. Anyone would learn, because there is so much to take away, electronically and otherwise.
12. I am a student just beginning graduate school and primary research. While the course level was clear enough for me, I'd say it was just as engaging for folks from the undergraduate level to tenure-track professors.

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. Working closely with one manuscript was amazing—lots of moments of discovery!
2. {no response}
3. I found just getting introduced to all the available resources/tools the most valuable take away (plus getting to practice using them while having access to the instructors' help).
4. Nothing in particular, but I learned a lot this week.
5. I loved seeing how imaginative people are with re-using and hacking tools that already exist. This was encouraging that even lacking experience in digital humanities, there are lots of ways I can do new things with collaborators.
6. "A manuscript is but a mere shadow of the copy that came before it."—WN
7. 1) Collation discoveries; 2) learning to trust my own embedded knowledge.
8. {no response}
9. Using the UV light to read parts of a previously unreadable document was amazing, and gave me new insights into the ways that digital technology and medieval manuscripts can be used in concert, not just as a source for images and data to be distributed online (though that is awesome, too).
10. wget.
11. The concept of diagramming queries for medieval manuscripts instead of collation

formulae that don't really work clearly or logically. Many "ahas!" regarding my basic medieval knowledge and the ways in which I realized interactions between different electronic tools.

12. 1) Reading historical "layers" of the 3D object; 2) that the digital copy is authentic in its own way, just like other copies of translations.

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

1. Structure. Another consideration: UPenn is doing great work in DH, and we learned about those projects, but what about other institutions, nationally and internationally?
2. By explaining what each tool is used for, and for whom it would be useful. Also, having us follow along on our laptops to accomplish simple tasks. You did this with the collator modeler and book reader.
3. Presentations were rushed, didn't adequately/fully present what we spent our time discovering. Perhaps narrower guidelines, or a few more minutes to present, or extra prep.
4. Maybe handing out a list of all the digital resources, projects, &c., with URLs? I think I kept track of them all, but we did have a lot of stuff!
5. Compiling a list of all the resources we used; possibly some kind of "next steps" suggestions?
6. Having a workbook (electronic or hardcopy) would be nice. Having a rough schedule of topics to be covered daily would be nice.
7. Perhaps more time.
8. Scalar was not a total success; it's over complicated and clunky, for what it does (contrast with, e.g., Prezi, which isn't perfect, but is easier to use). Scalar's also not a good presentation tool, it turns out, because you have to be so focused on the screen to navigate your page you can't look at the audience much. Also, more discussion time (whether of readings or the tools we're using—e.g., could have looked at individual cataloging systems in small groups and regrouped to discuss their merits, rather than just hearing a lecture).
9. N/A
10. More information on "next steps" for getting involved with existing projects or developing our own. I want to be more than an end user!
11. Begin work on Scalar earlier; field trip to SC.
12. {private response}

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

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. Yes!
4. Yes, absolutely!
5. Yes! Yes!
6. Yes.
7. Yes! Already have via online.
8. You bet!
9. I didn't pay myself, but definitely. Knowing what the course is, I would have been

devastated if I hadn't gotten the research grant from my school.

10. I would absolutely recommend the course (and indeed, already have) to people who match my answer to Q7, above.

11. Yes! Most certainly!

12. Yes!

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

1. It was great seeing the photo lab...but what if students had the chance to photograph their own manuscripts with those machines? This could be helpful to librarians in the course.

2. {no response}

3. N/A

4. N/A

5. Yes—the digitization lab was great.

6. Yes. The Digital Lab was wonderful, and they are *very* lucky to have it.

7. For this course, would need to be longer....

8. The trip to the basement was great!

9. N/A

10. The tour of the SCETT imaging lab was neat, but there were no real field trips.

11. Yes.

12. Yes!

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. Great talk!

2. Yes. Mitch's lecture was very interesting.

3. All relevant, fun, bolstered community.

4. The opening dinner was a nice chance to get to know people. That was the only one I was able to attend.

5. Yes! I would have even enjoyed more.

6. The lecture was a nice addition to the week.

7. Maybe schedule a tour (optional) for evening, instead of a dinner à la RBMS.

8. I attended them all (except the opening reception), and all were great.

9. Yes; no, but the lecture was on a topic unrelated to my immediate interests, though the ideas regarding digital humanities were cool; no.

10. The Sunday dinner and Tuesday-night lecture were both excellent chances to socialize.

11. Yes.

12. The optional events were both compelling and worth my time.

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

1. People should come expecting to see a wide range of tools—not a wide range of manuscripts, as in other RBS classes (but this is an aspect of the course that I

- really enjoyed).
2. {no response}
 3. Enjoy the time you have really getting to know your manuscript; think about how you can use these tools for your specific goals/purposes.
 4. There is a lot of technology introduced in this class, which is great. Just make sure to follow DP's instructions and set everything up on your laptop before you start (create necessary accounts, download software, &c.), so you're ready to go.
 5. Start exploring online resources in advance. Ask DP and WN lots of questions—they're brilliant.
 6. Just spend the money and do it. Trust me, there will be no regrets.
 7. 1) Organize a part two! (First week: methodology; second week: practicum); 2) perhaps this could develop as a tract for a digital medievalist certificate.
 8. {no response}
 9. Scalar is great, but not so much for presentations if you try to make more than one or two pathways for your project.
 10. Bring a cable so you can easily put your photos on your computer, or make friends with a classmate who remembers to bring these sorts of things.
 11. Please plan to take the course. It is very special, dense, interesting, intense, and fun.
 12. Make sure you do the readings! And make sure your laptop works well.

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

1. I can't believe I just did that on my computer!
2. {no response}
3. Closed data are for stuffy chumps.
4. Lots of fun, and super educational, too!
5. See you next year.
6. Am I the only one who is feeling the need to do collation formulas on everything?
7. "You'll have to pry the book from my cold, dead hands...."
8. Practical skillset/merges smoothly with research/Wget rocks.
9. Fantastic/best class of grad school/more coffee.
10. Computers are great/manuscripts are good to read/better use both, right?
11. This was the best RBS experience ever. Thank you!
12. All these objects once bound but separate, can now be woven wholly together.

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: 5 (41.67%)

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: 5 (41.67%)

I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (33.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 4 (33.33%)

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

I exchanged goods or services in lieu of tuition: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (33.33%)

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

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 3 (25%)

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%: 4 (33.33%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 3 (25%)

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

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

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

Ph.D./D.Phil: 2 (16.67%)

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 2 (16.67%)

Assistant professor: 2 (16.67%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (8.33%)

Retired: 1 (8.33%)