

David Seaman
L-70: XML in Action: Creating Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) Texts
5–10 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. No suggestions for additions or removals of reading material. I came to the course with very little XML or even HTML experience, and I used Code Academy to get somewhat up to speed. If there are any other preparation methods for complete beginners, that would be helpful to know about.
2. Pre-course reading material is useful, but not required as the entire first day was spent giving a comprehensive overview of what was covered in the reading material.
3. Pre-course assignments were reasonable and appropriate introductions to material.
4. The pre-course readings were useful, but I think that some kind of elementary pre-course XML mark up exercise would have been helpful.
5. Pre-reading assignments were fine, because it was acceptable to skim them.
6. The pre-course reading assignments were very technical, but once in class, everything was very well explained and illustrated with examples. The more technical document was only to be heavily skimmed, so expertise wasn't expected on the first day.
7. The pre-course readings were helpful, but not essential for tackling the class.
8. Yes. For THIS XML course, I would add Birnbaum's "What is XML, and Why Should Humanists Care?" Less overwhelming than the official TEI intro.
9. Yes. Specific instructions on *what particular* areas of a huge document to read would be even more useful.
10. Pre-course readings were fine, and necessarily light. I took an online tutorial in XML beyond THE required readings. We might have been prompted to look at the TEI Guidelines ("light skimming," as the instructor would say).
11. I thought the pre-course readings were helpful for a soft introduction to the material.
12. Pre-course readings were nice preparatory materials.

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. Teaching materials were very helpful. It would have been good to have an electronic copy of the printed guide at the start of the course, rather than at the end.
2. Content was appropriate and useful. Plenty of good resources to take home or to work and to study/use.
3. Instructor generously shared several example files, PowerPoint presentations,

- images, and other resources.
4. I intend to put the course resources to use for quite a long time in the foreseeable future.
 5. No course workbook, thankfully, but online materials and handouts were helpful.
 6. The resource list will undoubtedly be very useful. Sharing all of the files (stylesheets, XML files, &c.) was also a bonus—more material to look at and learn from and use!
 7. Vital, I believe. Examples provided will become essential models for my project.
 8. Yes and yes, but I will always take more.
 9. Make materials handy at start of class. Create course common site for sharing information and documents easily.
 10. The distributed material was appropriate and will, I'm sure, prove to be useful after class.
 11. I think it might have been more helpful to have an electronic resource list at the beginning of the class, rather than print, but all of the resources were very helpful.
 12. The materials were useful, and will help in the future.

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

1. {no response}
2. Haven't taken a previous RBS course.
3. I've always learned more than I expected to from an RBS course, and this one was no exception. It's a terrifically encouraging learning environment.
4. N/A
5. No previous RBS courses.
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. Difficult to compare activity—L-70 is very hands on, whereas previous course was show and tell (often).
10. It was an excellent course, but the pacing could have been slightly improved (e.g., with the visit to SC on Tuesday, with more time for hands-on work on Thursday).
11. N/A
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. For me, the broad perspective of how XML fits into the history and practice of digital humanities computing was particularly useful. Also useful were the group and solo coding sessions, which gave us hands-on training in basic XML document production.
2. I enjoyed the thorough breakdown of the coding/tagging elements and the actual application of them within the XML editor. The visit to the digital curation services department was super interesting, as well.
3. I was introduced to new skills that I will apply directly to work in progress at my home institution.
4. The group encoding project left me with the tools I need to complete several existing projects.

5. Some of the historical background was interesting. The actual coding in XML was the most useful to me, along with the conceptual discussions.
6. The class was very practical on many levels—what we learned with TEI (being able to help in what little way we can on a project), but also about the examples of other projects and project planning. Having so many different students helped broaden the discussion as we all had different projects in mind or at work at our own institutions.
7. XML allows the user the flexibility to accommodate different projects over time.
8. It was useful to see XML from varying perspectives, e.g. the librarian's, archivist's, scholar's. Also, this course helps envision projects and workflows, which in some ways is even more valuable than the technology.
9. Exactly what I needed to pursue my project—*all* information was relevant and useful.
10. The combination of targeted skill development and broad introduction to digital humanities, quite successful. It meant a better understanding of aspects of projects ancillary to one's specific role.
11. I thought the hands-on practice was very important for me, and I really appreciated the class-wide conversation for different problems we encountered.
12. I intend on returning to my home institution to begin immediate work on projects.

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 wasn't sure exactly what the full set of skills really encompassed, but I learned quite a lot. The skill set seems potentially limitless, but I do feel I came away with the basics of how XML works and how to produce documents in it, and these were my primary goals for the course.
2. I would have preferred to work with a greater variety of documents, and felt that we might have benefitted from experiencing a more diverse interaction with the code.
3. All positive responses—I was actually surprised at how much I learned in such a short time.
4. I'm leaving having learned everything, if not more than I could have reasonably expected to.
5. I would have liked to do more with style sheets and schemas, perhaps in another course; this one covers a lot already.
6. Yes—although it is only a week-long course, we were able to do a significant amount of work with documents. I only wish we had more time to keep practicing on further manuscripts.
7. Yes, absolutely.
8. Yes. Perhaps more on schemas and style sheets and less on specific elements in Oxygen. Yes.
9. I would have liked more time practicing detailed tagging and discussion of style sheets.
10. Yes; no; yes.
11. I feel like I got a very solid introduction to XML and TEI. I also think that I have a better understanding of digital projects from beginning to end.

12. It would have been nice to learn a bit more about metadata (METS, MODS), and something about digital scholarly editions.

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

1. I hope to produce my own XML-based editions of early-modern/Renaissance manuscripts...but I do not yet have concrete plans for which ones, and in what institutional contexts.
2. I hope to be able to always have this skill set, and use it as necessary within my institution. I expect to be called upon to begin projects involving the transcription of materials displayed online.
3. I will bring new skill sets directly to projects in progress.
4. I plan to begin encoding textual research I've already done immediately.
5. I plan to use the skills and knowledge from class directly in XML projects at my institution.
6. {private response}
7. I expect to undertake a research project that involves transcription and mark up—in my case, a Latin manuscript with generous glossing.
8. As a research assistant for a current project, and for creating my own in the future.
9. I will apply these skills directly to my current project in using TEI project planning and mark up.
10. I am not yet certain, beyond a generally increased knowledge base and familiarity with new concepts.
11. New and ongoing projects at work.
12. See Q4, above.

7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*

1. The intellectual level of the course was very high, thanks both to the instructor and to the other students. The target audiences for this course are those already involved in a digital-humanities project who need to learn what's under the hood of the documents produced, *or* those who, like me, need a broader understanding of the basic path of electronic document production.
2. Someone who has an idea or appreciation for the complexity of XML. I believe, even though it is an intro course, that the overall set up of the course would benefit more people if they had some familiarity with XML or other programming languages.
3. I don't think this course would be of interest to anyone who doesn't have a good reason to use TEI. It's not a course for general erudition.
4. Anyone interested in opening access to archival materials, or interested in digital text production.
5. This is a course for people who want to understand XML and aren't afraid of some coding.
6. It is an introductory course, and brought together many different levels of XML and TEI experience. Anyone would benefit!
7. Anyone interested in digital humanities.
8. Good intro. Someone with no experience can keep up, but it's probably best to have some kind of basic coding experience.

9. *Great* introduction for inexperienced XML/TEI user.
 10. Probably those with some XML experience will benefit more (which is not to say those with none do not have much to gain).
 11. Librarians and researchers alike—these skills are useful for many.
 12. People who are relatively new to XML and TEI.
- 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. Revelatory moments abounded during DS’s introductory lectures on what XML is and how it came to be, since he has a true historical knowledge of all these languages, file formats, digital-humanities projects, as well as a working knowledge of how to make things go.
 2. Working with the core was the most enjoyable.
 3. The learning curve felt like a hockey stick. The first few days were challenging, but then all of a sudden, it started making sense.
 4. There weren’t “aha” moments, necessarily, but the class was expertly taught, culminating with a clear realization of a newly acquired literacy.
 5. Several “aha” moments: connections between SGML and XML, imaging, and also in the coding.
 6. {no response}
 7. {no response}
 8. There is a certain virtue with not over-tagging. You don’t need to do *everything*.
 9. Learning the flow and process decisions for mark up decisions; and that these can change, but should be determined at the outset as much as possible. Thinking through decisions as a team/group was very valuable.
 10. {no response}
 11. Consistency is key!
 12. When we went through a “header” for the first time.
- 9) *How could the course have been improved?*
1. We could have spent more time as a group in coding and checking our work. Perhaps we could have begun by all working on a very short text and comparing our results. More time spent on the errors we were getting, and what they mean, would have helped me (though perhaps others would not have needed this).
 2. By introducing more diverse course material to mark up.
 3. I think perhaps some elementary exercises at the very beginning could be useful.
 4. I really wouldn’t change a thing.
 5. {private response}
 6. If possible, more time to encode/mark up!
 7. The expansion of one week into two to accommodate specific project development.
 8. Allow people to bring their own work to collaborate and troubleshoot with classmates.
 9. Perhaps give transcriptions ahead of time, so we can bring prepared documents, or use our own, so we can spend more time on mark up and style-sheet discussions.
 10. Have the field trip to SC earlier in the week.

11. I think that I would have liked to talk about project management a bit more, but otherwise, it was great.
 12. It would be nice if the instructor worked with all the students one on one, instead of the people who talked all of the time. Also, it would be nice to have the talkative people reined in a bit.
- 10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. Definitely! I'd recommend it to others heartily and sincerely.
 2. Yes.
 3. Absolutely.
 4. Yes! (And I would feel that way even if it had been my own money.)
 5. Yes—definitely worth it.
 6. Yes. The experience was a valuable one, not only in terms of what was learned in the classroom, but also because of the community aspect of it, as well.
 7. Yes!
 8. Yes. Yes—more so for librarians and archivists and people interested in conceptual framework. For pure tech, there are other avenues.
 9. Yes. Yes.
 10. Yes. Yes.
 11. Yes.
 12. Yes, and yes.
- 11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. For me, the trip to see the digital production center was time well spent, though it wasn't strictly integral to the class. Tough call! It came at the expense of Q9, above.
 2. Yes.
 3. Yes—we got a tour of the UVA library digitization center.
 4. Our visit to the digital production lab was very useful.
 5. Yes, the tour of digital services was very good.
 6. They were. We went to SC for a look into their digitizing/imaging process.
 7. Yes! Digital services behind the scenes.
 8. Yes! Visiting the digital curation lab was great!
 9. To SC (digital services), yes. Great to see equipment and workflow in progress/action.
 10. Yes, but the timing could have been better.
 11. Yes. I really enjoyed visiting the digital production lab.
 12. The trip to SC was extremely valuable.
- 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. They were, on the whole, very rewarding.
 2. I particularly enjoyed Hortensia Calvo's lecture on the book in Latin America. It's

- great to see an effort on behalf of RBS to seek more culturally diverse programming.
3. Monday night lecture was illuminating, as always.
 4. I was generally pleased.
 5. I only went to half of them. {private response}
 6. Yes! They were both fun and intellectually stimulating. I liked that there were a couple of lectures to choose from (depending on one's interest), and a fun Movie Night event.
 7. N/A
 8. N/A
 9. Evening lectures were a let down—they seemed less organized/prepared than they should be. Second summer in a row.
 10. Yes, I enjoyed both lectures and Movie Night.
 11. N/A
 12. The two talks were slightly disappointing; the first should have prepared better in order to stay within the time limits, and the second did not seem very scholarly at all.

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

1. Get ready to code!
2. Be ready to talk about XML/TEI, and have ideas to bring regarding projects you might be interested in applying.
3. Love you guys!
4. Familiarize yourself as much as possible with the pre-course readings.
5. Have a project in which you can use what you learn!
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. DS is an *excellent* teacher—well versed in the subject, easy to work with, and handles questions and concerns with aplomb. It was a pleasure to learn from him.
10. {no response}
11. Definitely do the intro reading—it's very helpful!
12. Definitely worth it.

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

1. {no response}
2. XML/TEI is a very promising technology that has myriad applications; if done well, the possibilities are limitless.
3. See Q13, above.
4. I genuinely believe this class will be foundational to the rest of my career.
5. Time well spent!
6. {private response}
7. Non-trivial amounts of fun.
8. I still can't believe you fed us breakfast.
9. {no response}

10. RBS is a rich, intense, and memorable experience.
11. Fantastic.
12. The week was great, and over before I knew it.

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: 2 (16.67%)
I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 2 (16.67%)
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

- I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)
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%: 3 (25%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

- I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (16.67%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (16.67%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

- I paid 100% myself: 4 (33.33%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (41.67%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (16.67%)
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%)
- Digital collections librarian: 2 (16.67%)
- Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)
- Other: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

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

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

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

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 2 (16.67%)

College/university administrator: 1 (8.33%)