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L-25: Reference Sources for Researching Rare Books  
7–12 June 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. The reference sources course assignments were useful and “reasonable.” Nothing to add.
2. The pre-course articles were helpful, but perhaps an additional general work, such as Carter’s *Trade and Technique*, would be a useful supplement.
3. I did no additional prep. Pre-course readings are useful, but not imperative to the success of the course. I have no suggestions for any changes.
4. Useful, but could do more to give better understanding of the scope of the subject.
5. Pre-course readings were helpful. I did some additional reading (extra chapters in one assigned book).
6. JS’s articles were welcomed as they were friendly and warmly written; having little experience in this field, that was nice to see, and it set the tone for the class.
7. Yes, but a tad overwhelming. I would rather have received the workbook in advance, and been told to look over that.
8. Quite useful indeed—not too long, but very informational, especially the Belanger essay on bibliography.
9. Yes, all helpful.
10. {private response}
11. Readings were useful; no suggestions.

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. Great workbook that I can return back to. The content was just what was needed. I’m sure I’ll be looking at it soon!
2. The workbooks were easily used to complement each other, and I appreciated the format and spacing, which allowed for notes. And since JS added such useful context for each source, revisiting my workbook will be valuable.
3. The course workbook was *incredibly* useful. Saved much note-taking time, so more attention could be put toward the actual lecture. Also, it will be a valuable resource in further research.
4. Workbook should be better outlined and indexed. Need to check references to URLs to ensure correct/current. The booklet will be very useful.
5. The workbook and accompanying photocopies worked well together. Photocopies were sometimes not good quality—perhaps they can be redone. The PDF versions of these materials will be very useful back at work.
6. Yes. L-25’s workbook will always be useful, and it has plenty of room for additions

- if I need it. The PDF version was a nice touch for searchability.
7. Excellent, excellent workbook. I will be improving my notes through additional study, and plan to keep it around for life.
  8. Worth the price of admission by themselves. The workbook is an amazing and thoughtful index of key reference works in many areas. I will use mine for many years to come.
  9. The course workbook was well designed, especially for note taking. I also appreciate that an electronic version was supplied.
  10. Very useful.
  11. Excellent. Will be useful to me every day from here on out.

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

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. Better immediate takeaways. Less rigorous academics and projects/assignments (as in none).
5. This is my fourth RBS course, and it was an excellent experience. All the courses have been first rate.
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. This course is very different from the others I have taken. No handling of rare books, no field trips, no activities, no discussions. *But* it was an excellent course, packed with information.
10. Very useful and informative.
11. Equally excellent and relevant.

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. Very interesting insight into various figures and aspects of the book trade. One main idea is to read more bibliographies/catalogs!
2. The most interesting aspects were the contextual histories of printing, publishing, and book collecting, within which JS placed the sources and topics covered. It was a remarkable oral history.
3. The reference sources dealing with children's literature, bookbinding, and early European writings were most interesting. And yes, plenty of new insights.
4. Yes. This has given me information to research.
5. I have lots of new ideas now on how to incorporate bibliographical resources into course assignments at my institution—there is a great potential there for increasing student interest in our rare books.
6. The section on bibliographies and reference guides for the book arts was extremely helpful, and JS inspired me to research the authors and compilers of these sources, and some already familiar sources, as well.
7. So many ideas, so little time! Never thought I'd feel so inspired to do as much research I'd like to do right now.
8. The American section was great.

9. All was relevant to me. I will be a better reference librarian as a result.
  10. I especially liked the time spent on general sources, sources for early printed books, and sources for book arts.
  11. Countless! Now I know how to approach rare book research. Every aspect was interesting and relevant.
- 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, this was pretty much what I'd hoped for. If the course was done near the right place, it might be fun to do a practical exercise to answer some given questions. That said, I'd happily do the course again without any changes!
  2. I learned what I had hoped, and much more—in terms of history and entertaining anecdotes—than I could have rightly expected.
  3. I don't remember the course description exactly, but I was thoroughly impressed with the course.
  4. Yes.
  5. JS was very patient and expansive, as needed, in explaining very complicated reference sources. He answered questions very well, and used real-life examples of how these sources can be used.
  6. Yes, the course fulfilled the expectations.
  7. It was everything I had hoped for.
  8. Absolutely.
  9. Yes, anything more would have overwhelmed me completely.
  10. {private response}
  11. Absolutely. Nothing was left out.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. To improve the holdings of my institution, and to further my own knowledge—maybe even start collecting myself someday.
  2. I certainly plan to make more frequent and informed use of reference sources.
  3. I plan to use the knowledge and workbook gained to find good primary sources and works to glean information from my capstone project. After that, whatever I wish to follow and collect.
  4. Likely working in researching books.
  5. I would like to reorganize the standard printed bibliographical resources in my library, when I return, to start learning how to use them and to increase access to them for my colleagues and students.
  6. With many sources, I will be able to use them for my own research in developing my knowledge of book structures and materials. In conservation treatment, it is also important to have knowledge of comparable bindings, &c., so locations of holdings, and finding which sources had thorough bibliographical descriptions, will be useful.
  7. It will help me tremendously with my job and collection assignment. I might even start my own personal collection.
  8. In cataloging, exhibit labels, and acquisitions.
  9. Daily in reference and instruction at my job.

10. I will begin using this daily on my job, immediately when I return!
11. In my day-to-day job to research the books in the collection, and to make more informed collections development decisions.

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

1. Rigorous, but easy to understand at almost any level. The materials are made very accessible by the instructor.
2. It was accessible, but I think the breadth of topics discussed would be useful for a long-time professional, as well as a student.
3. Book collectors, librarians, students who need to do research. The intellectual level—not sure. I followed along nicely.
4. This is an entry-level course. Librarians and booksellers/collectors.
5. This course is well suited for individuals with some practical working experience in rare books, as well as an interest in developing their scholarly capabilities.
6. The course seemed aimed at booksellers/collectors, along with research librarians and catalogers. However, the range of material covered was expansive, and anyone could benefit!
7. Everybody. Seriously.
8. Someone who is somewhat of a (but not an absolute) novice.
9. This course was very intellectually engaging for someone who wants to research rare books in a serious way.
10. Good introductory level. Appropriate for collectors, dealers, and librarians.
11. Librarians most of all, I think, but also dealers and collectors.

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. {no response}
2. Too many to identify without reflection.
3. I liked handling all the reference sources: six to eight carts of them!
4. Too many to detail. Surprised at depth of sources that we discussed and didn’t discuss.
5. I was most impressed with the interconnectedness of individuals, books, and reference sources. It is quite fascinating to see these relationships over time.
6. As JS said, the best way to use the reference sources is to read the introductions first. I had never taken the time to read much of that before.
7. It’s really thrilling to see JS’s enthusiasm for what I had thought of as a dull topic. Turns out that when you know where to look, it’s a whole new world.
8. JS’s stories were fantastic.
9. {no response}
10. Discovering sources that may help resolve problems I’m currently working on.
11. Too many to share.

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

1. {no response}

2. {no response}
3. N/A
4. Improve the workbook layout.
5. Not sure. JS is a superb teacher.
6. A little more time with some specific sources, trying our hands at some questions like on the handouts he gave us.
7. I would have liked to do one of the exercises on my own, with full access to all the books we studied at once, just for practice.
8. Perhaps interactive assignments might be helpful (would require access to the materials).
9. {no response}
10. {private response}
11. Can't think of a thing.

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

1. Yes, definitely to both.
2. Without reservation.
3. Yes. Yes.
4. Yes, and yes.
5. Yes, definitely.
6. Yes.
7. Absolutely.
8. Yes! Fantastic! Depending upon their knowledge of rare books (see Q4.7, above), I would absolutely recommend.
9. Yes. I'd recommend it to those who could use it, but not to people looking for the "summer camp for book nerds" experience.
10. Yes, and yes.
11. Yes!

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

1. N/A, but one would have been fun/interesting.
2. {no response}
3. N/A
4. No trips.
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. {no response}
10. N/A
11. N/A

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. Yes, the lecture I attended was interesting.
2. {no response}
3. I went to the slavery exhibit, which was good. Sadly, I didn't attend the lectures because I wasn't feeling well.
4. Yes, I looked forward to them.
5. Yes, the evening lectures were very good.
6. {no response}
7. I enjoyed both talks, and the mini-receptions afterward. I didn't know there was a movie night (oops).
8. Too many formal events scheduled—need more semi-structured social time.
9. {no response}
10. Evening events were very informative and interesting.
11. {no response}

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

1. If you're a reference librarian or a rare book librarian, you can benefit from this.
2. Don't be afraid to add comments or ask questions.
3. N/A
4. Be prepared to take notes for five full days—intense downloading of information.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. The first day or so will be rough, until you get in the swing of things, but it will be so worth it.
8. The course seems a bit dull and tedious the first day and a half. Stick with it. The content builds on itself.
9. Get ready to sit and take notes and listen everyday. If you can't handle that, don't take the course.
10. Be prepared to be dazzled and overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of the instructor's knowledge and experience!
11. Take it if you want to understand rare books or any aspect of book history.

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

1. Very enjoyable, and I learned lots!
2. {no response}
3. Listening, looking/reference sources galore!/Always learning more.
4. This was an excellent week, well spent.
5. RBS is inspirational.
6. Exhausting, but worth it!
7. Insert Thomas Jefferson quote.
8. Stimulatingly tiring.
9. I sat, I listened, I learned an extraordinary amount.
10. Much work/much gain.
11. It's immersive, intensive, informative, interesting, amazing, and exhausting.

## 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: 8 (66.67%)  
My employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 1 (8.33%)  
I am self employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (16.67%)  
I am a student/non-year-round employee, with a more flexible schedule: 1 (8.33%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 8 (66.67%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 3 (25%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 7 (58.33%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)  
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%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; my employer 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:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (8.33%)  
Curator: 1 (8.33%)  
Special collections librarian: 5 (41.67%)

Student working toward a/n:

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

Professional educator:

Associate professor: 1 (8.33%)

Book trades:

Antiquarian bookseller: 2 (16.67%)