

Michael Winship  
H-95: Reading Publishers' Archives for the Study of the American Book  
26–31 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. The pre-course reading assignments were very helpful. Some additional readings were added just a few days before the course started, and I wish I had had all the readings earlier.
  2. They were all useful, some more than others. We actually had a lot of leeway, since we were able to read appropriate or relevant chapters in the History of the Book in America. Might be useful to suggest a publisher's archive {illegible} and to see the kind of things we'll be working with.
  3. Yes, and I appreciated the relatively light load. Bracketed selections from the History of the Book in America series would be helpful, especially since there were many general book history questions among the students.
  4. The pre-course reading was useful for the course, and very interesting, as well. It was nicely managed so that supplementary readings were recommended and discussed, but not required.
  5. Yes.
  6. Yes. Making some suggested reading available through Dropbox was very helpful.
  7. All of the readings were very helpful to understanding the context of the course, so we could really hit the ground running. I was investigating publishers' archives before coming to RBS in preparation for the course.
  8. Very helpful. As someone who is just beginning to learn about publishing history, the readings made me feel prepared for course discussions.
  9. Pre-course readings were useful, although I would have preferred a more specific reading on accounting history and terminology.
  10. The pre-course reading was useful. I did no other preparation for the course.
  11. The pre-course readings were useful. Some more technical selections I didn't comprehend fully until our discussions in class, but they ensured that I didn't feel overwhelmed when we got to those topics.
  
- 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. One section I would change is the double-entry accounting instruction. I do not think we needed to construct our own account book. Learning to read ledgers, daybooks, and journals would have been enough. I will use above info as I catalog daybooks and ledgers at the Historical Society of Kent County, Maryland.
  2. Materials were divided between handouts and Dropbox (which I hope is maintained for a while). Content was good, and I will be referring to it again. A lot of the material was presented as "slides" online, but much of it would not mean

much out of context.

3. The Dropbox folder is a fantastic resource. Having these digital images of archival selections will be helpful for my teaching. Much better than a physical workbook, although the special handouts (ledger, facsimile) were a nice inclusion.
4. Handouts for the course pointed to valuable resources for continued study. They actually made our accounting exercises quite fun, so that we could learn to read publishers' archives by doing our own bookkeeping.
5. Handouts were helpful. I will be referring to them again.
6. The combination of printed material and Dropbox PDFs and images worked well.
7. I especially liked the handouts related to ledgers and costbooks, and the activities associated with these materials.
8. The handouts were very useful. We also received an RBS-made ledger for practicing double-entry bookkeeping, which is a fun and useful keepsake.
9. The handouts were very useful, and will serve as a useful tool for future reference.
10. The course will be very useful to my work.
11. They were extremely useful—I expect nearly all will come in handy as guides if I come upon a daybook or business letter in the archive that I'm having trouble deciphering. I also love the ledger!

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

1. {no response}
2. Three of the four have been "first time presented" courses. This one compared very favorably.
3. This course was more practice driven than the other H-series course I've taken, but we spent far less time with actual physical books—understandable considering the subject matter. Also more specific and focused in scope.
4. {no response}
5. This course was not developed as thoroughly as other courses taken at RBS.
6. Very well. MW has a wealth of experience in this type of research, and was interested in sharing it and preparing us for similar research.
7. I like the specificity of the course in comparison with my previous course, which was more of a general survey.
8. {no response}
9. There was less hands-on interaction with books. However, the instructor showed many slides that provided examples for the discussion.
10. They are very different. It is a strength.
11. 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. Yes—I plan to write an article for our historical society journal describing our business records. I liked MW's stories, which broke up some of the digital viewing. Lots of new insights and knowledge, which I hope to process and continue to develop when I get home. It will not stop here.
2. Yes, to all three. Though I came in interested in a very specific aspect of book publishing, and had only hoped that my area might be addressed, I was delighted to find that materials discussed are relevant.

3. Most helpful: learning tools for trying to understand distribution, and discussing surviving archives and their strengths. Learning bookkeeping wasn't particularly fun, but will be so useful; I'm grateful for the crash course. (It opens up so many research possibilities.) I'm leaving this course with some concrete answers for some of my most pressing research questions.
  4. The course will be extremely useful to my ongoing research. On the one hand, it gave me a better sense of which publishers' archives survive, and where. On the other hand, it allowed me to better understand how useful these records can be, and how to use them in my research.
  5. Reference sources. How to begin looking at publishers' archives, and how materials found in them are connected, to find out the desired information.
  6. I entered the course with minimal experience in working with publishers' records. I leave with the feeling that I have enough knowledge to make use of a variety of publishers' business records.
  7. Discussions about alternative archives for publishers' materials were very useful, and have helped me locate a significant amount of hitherto-unknown resources that will be invaluable for my dissertation.
  8. I came away with a much broader knowledge of potential resources to use in my research, and with the skills to begin analyzing them. I wouldn't have thought of using several of these resources if I hadn't taken this course.
  9. I left with a new way to interpret accounting records for the study of American publishing and the book trades.
  10. Archival research is even more important than I previously considered.
  11. Learning a broader context for the operations of nineteenth-century publishers, as well as the most important repositories for nineteenth-century publishers' archives, will be most helpful to my own work. An understanding of double-entry bookkeeping and accounting and correspondence conventions during the period will serve me when I encounter related documents in the archive.
- 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. Can't remember exact course description—it would be good if you posted it in the room for each course. I know I liked the description since it was a new area for me.
  2. I don't clearly remember the description—it's been a long week! But I did learn a lot that was completely new to me. The instructor often sought feedback on how he could improve the course.
  3. This was a great survey of publishers' archives, just broad enough in scope. To fully understand how to read some of these records would take way longer than thirty hours—but I feel confident that I know where to start.
  4. I don't believe anything was left out. On the contrary, I learned more than I had expected or even hoped.
  5. {no response}
  6. I think the instructor gave us a framework for evaluating a complex and fragmentary set of business records.
  7. Yes! Every aspect included in the course description was covered in depth with great examples.
  8. I felt like I learned more than what was noted in the course description. We

covered a lot of ground this week.

9. I thought the course was well planned and comprehensive. The double-entry bookkeeping exercises will help me keep all future accounts in good order.
10. It would take years to accrue the skills to read the document that, with guidance, we entered within a week.
11. Everything promised was covered, and MW offered many opportunities for students to ask questions and bring their own interests and projects to class.

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

1. 1) Cataloging ledgers, &c., at the Historical Society. 2) Using publishers' catalogs to help with beginning a collection of old juvenile hardbacks with illustrated covers. 3) Will enjoy a sense of fulfillment in my career of lifelong learning.
2. I'm mentally planning a trip to the Houghton archive right now! Plan to use this in my work in the library, and in research.
3. Dissertation and future academic projects.
4. Exploring new archives; returning to those I've researched; more easily navigating finding aids; reading publishers' archives and account books for my own work in literary history.
5. This course has provided me with additional skills/tools on how to research further details related to a published work. Learning what can be found in publishers' archives will be of assistance.
6. I hope to explore records of the E. L. Cary and A. Hart firm in Philadelphia.
7. I hope to incorporate the skills and information I learned here into my dissertation, which deals with publishers, printers, and booksellers in twentieth-century Argentina.
8. I'm going to look to publishers' trade journals for information on copyright cases I'm working on that involve booksellers. I'm also going to look at a photographer's account book next week, and I feel much better prepared to understand and analyze the transactions there.
9. See Q4, above.
10. Research.
11. For research toward the second and third chapters of my dissertation.

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

1. I was glad there was a variety of ages in the class, because we had both experience and youthful exuberance mixed together. I hope you always think of age diversity when you fill a class, so long as the class will be useful to the students.
2. It would be relevant to anyone interested in book production, history of the book, important and little-used references in these. I would expect most students would not have much experience in this area, so I'd say it's challenging.
3. Academics and archivists will benefit most. I'm concerned that collectors or individuals not working on archival projects might feel left out of some of the discussions if they aren't directly involved in archival work.
4. Advanced. The course is best suited to students with some experience in archival research regarding U.S. book publishing.
5. Ph.D. students and/or persons who have initiated a project related to course

material.

6. An individual trying to use a publisher's business records to enhance other research would find this very useful.
  7. This course will most likely benefit those individuals who have a background in the history of the American book (i.e., MW's other RBS course...), since it builds off that.
  8. The course was well geared toward both students who had more experience in looking at publishers' archives and those who don't (like me!). I always felt comfortable asking basic questions, and learned a lot from my interactions with both the instructor and the other students.
  9. The intellectual level of the course resembles a graduate seminar, in that it presumes a basic knowledge of nineteenth-century American cultural history and history of the book.
  10. Book historians and people working in conservation.
  11. Students with some previous knowledge of nineteenth-century book production and distribution will be on firmer ground in this course.
- 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. MW is so informed on the business of publishing, and he had a great overview—very broad. However, I believe most students will use only a part of this info in any real way.
  2. Oh yes. The biggest was when I saw, on a slide that was brought by a classmate, the exact type of information I was hoping to find in these resources. Many "aha" moments thanks to the unbelievable depth of the instructor's knowledge.
  3. Reading letters from publishers and other figures like illustrators, translators, agents (day four) was especially illuminating—really helped me see how the publisher was a coalescence of activity, ideas, and creation.
  4. Overall, the course helped me realize how important and powerful publishers' archives can be as a resource. I felt as though I was learning a method to read business records for a period of more than two hundred years.
  5. I learned more about American nineteenth-century publishing and more of the publishing trade; daybooks, journals, and ledgers.
  6. {no response}
  7. Learning how to "keep the books" of a nineteenth-century firm (double-entry bookkeeping) was extremely illuminating! Discovering the indexing system and how these books work was very eye opening.
  8. Realizing that I am not a total dunce when it comes to numbers, and don't need to be intimidated by them when conducting research in the future. I feel like a whole new body of sources are more open to me now.
  9. No, I'd prefer to keep them to myself.
  10. Learning nineteenth-century bookkeeping is an important skill that opened up the course content.
  11. From our readings and class discussion, I have a much clearer sense of the difference between publishers and printers during the nineteenth century, as well as the range of activities a given publisher might or might not engage in.

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

1. I think more paper handouts of sources would have been useful.
2. One of the exercises was necessary and valuable (bookkeeping), but I think we should all have filled out our own ledgers, and not have to worry about a fair copy.
3. I'm not sure we needed the final presentation of our publisher's archive—maybe replace with more discussion of “supplementary records,” and maybe brainstorming helpful archives we've encountered in our own work.
4. {no response}
5. Instructor and students communicate directly on what project the student would like to work on while taking this course.
6. This was a first-time course as both students and instructor explored the pace and amount of materials suitable to each session.
7. Perhaps allow researchers to branch off and investigate firms that fit within their personal areas of interest. {private response} Have the class at an archive where the ledgers are available for study.
8. We went to SC on the last day, but it would have been interesting to look more at physical ledgers, correspondence, &c., throughout the week.
9. I think the course could be offered at the Library Company of Philadelphia, or another archive with publishers' records.
10. More time working with material artifacts.
11. A list of specific chapters to read in the History of the Book in America would help focus pre-course preparations.

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

1. I do feel I got my money's worth. I've been to other courses like this on other subjects, and the price was approximately the same. I would warn any student who has not been here about the intensity of the week, and tell them about the course content being useful only to a select few.
2. Yes, and yes.
3. Yes, and yes—if working on an American topic with some archival survivals (or plans to do so in the future).
4. I would strongly recommend the course to those interested in the history of the book in America.
5. Not as much as with previous courses. I would recommend for the reasons stated in Q7, above.
6. Yes, and yes.
7. Yes! I would absolutely recommend this course to others. It is so fascinating to learn about the business side of books, a side that isn't often discussed.
8. Absolutely.
9. Yes, absolutely! MW is one of a kind.
10. Yes, I will recommend the course to others.
11. Yes—I would it recommend to anyone interested in the business of publishing, the day-to-day dealings of nineteenth-century publishers, and the different types of documents typically found in archives of publishers from the period.

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

*well spent?*

1. To SC. Yes, well spent.
  2. Yes—a fascinating trip to see SC materials pertinent to the subject. It made the points made in class much more “immediate.”
  3. Yes, good to visit SC at the end.
  4. {no response}
  5. Yes. A trip to SC is always welcome.
  6. We made a trip to SC to see a representative sampling of material we had been studying.
  7. Yes—it would be wonderful if future classes could travel to actual publishers’ archives (although I understand this is very hard logistically).
  8. Yes, going to SC on the last day to look at actual account books and other business paperwork was useful.
  9. Yes. The visit to SC was wonderful, especially to see the author contracts and the Irving manuscript.
  10. The collections are used to the students’ advantage.
  11. It was great to look at some actual cost books and correspondence in SC on our last day of class.
- 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 lectures (Persian manuscript signatures and social media) were interesting, but the social media talk (not really a lecture) was a bit disappointing in tone (a bit too flip). It could have been presented more seriously.
  2. Always enjoy the lectures. Video Night was a lot of fun, with excellent choices made for the films.
  3. Booksellers’ Night was great! Especially the Virginia ham and biscuits! Also enjoyed the Monday and Wednesday evening talks.
  4. The lectures, paper museum, and Charlottesville book store trip all enriched my experience of RBS.
  5. Yes. I always enjoy attending the lectures. I did not attend this time, but offering a tour of SC is generous to offer.
  6. I enjoyed both lectures, and Movie Night.
  7. I always enjoy the Monday and Wednesday evening lectures—the talks are so informative and usually tie in a number of different aspects of book history/study.
  8. The lectures were really interesting, and opened up conversations about topics beyond our courses. The Booksellers’ Night was a blast!
  9. {no response}
  10. The evening events provided needed time to meet other RBS students in a friendly setting.
  11. I attended Mariana Shreve Simpson’s talk, as well as the paper museum—both were interesting and informative.
- 13) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. This course would be best for people already working on a project or actually working with some of the objects (like I am, with ledgers). It does give an entree into areas of the publishing world I knew nothing about.
2. The instructor is amazing. What might seem a terribly dry subject is made relevant and highly entertaining by the instructor's stories and "exhibits" online. Don't be intimidated by the subject—he will make you glad you attended.
3. If you are working with any American publisher's archives from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, this course will teach you new ways to see your material, and will undoubtedly spark a discovery or two.
4. I would just add that MW was a wonderful instructor; it was a pleasure taking his course.
5. It is not a generalist's course. It really is geared more for someone who is already focused on a project, or to enhance their current scholarly pursuits.
6. {no response}
7. Bring questions and your own personal materials (related to publishers' archives) to examine as a class!
8. No.
9. Take it!
10. Read publisher histories.
11. {no response}

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

1. There is nothing like lifelong learning to keep me happy as I age.
2. As with every time I come, I want to come again. There's so much more to learn....
3. Thank you, MW and the fantastic RBS staff, for a wonderful week!
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. See you next year.
7. RBS is such a gift to the world, and all who are fortunate enough to study under its roof are truly blessed.
8. Learned a lot, met a lot of great people, and can't wait for next year.
9. {no response}
10. Worth it.
11. Productive!

## **Student Data**

*Number of respondents:* 11 (of 12)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 2 (18.18%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 1 (9.09%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (9.09%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 5

(45.45%)

I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (18.18%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 5 (45.45%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (9.09%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 4 (36.36%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; my institution/employer paid the rest:  
1 (9.09%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 6 (54.55%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (9.09%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (18.18%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (9.09%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (9.09%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 6 (54.55%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (9.09%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (18.18%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (9.09%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (9.09%)

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

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 2 (18.18%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 5 (45.45%)

Professional educator:

Lecturer/adjunct: 1 (9.09%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 2 (18.18%)

Independent scholar: 1 (9.09%)