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L-10: Special Collections Librarianship  
18-23 October 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. Optional readings came out late—too close to the time of the course for me to read them. Otherwise, required readings were well selected.
  2. I especially enjoyed reading Carter's *ABC for Book Collectors* and expect to refer to it frequently in my career. The suggested readings and course workbook readings were useful and I will keep them as references to the course discussions.
  3. Pre-course reading was appropriate.
  4. I read a few of the pre-course readings but found they weren't as helpful to read before the course. I'll definitely read them again after.
  5. I wish the supplemental list had been available earlier.
  6. Yes, helpful. Maybe a bit heavy on the ALA/ACRL/RBMS websites.
  7. Materials were extremely useful and provided a good frame for what was taught during the course.
  8. Yes, but they were posted too late for us to read. Up until 1-2 weeks prior to the course, only six readings were listed AND THEN a dozen required and two dozen suggested readings were added. Given more advance warning, we could have been able to do the readings in a meaningful manner.
  9. They were useful although in order to take advantage of all the suggested readings, they could have been made available at an earlier date.
  10. The pre-course reading assignments were broadly relevant, and it felt beneficial to read them. {private response}
  11. Yes, but I think it may help more to read them again after this week. For me they were not essential to understanding what went on this week.
  
- 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. Good for illustrating points during the week, and will be incredibly useful to refer to afterward for policy recommendations.
  2. See Q. 4.1
  3. The workbook is loaded with useful information. It will be a great resource for me in the future. I plan to share resources with my colleagues when I return to work.
  4. I was very happy to receive a workbook that I can use in the future. It contains a lot of relevant and useful information.
  5. Content was appropriate.
  6. Workbook was helpful, but a bit of a pain to bring back and forth to class.
  7. I think the workbook is a very useful tool for future consultation. It is very well

- organized and directly relates to the topics presented during the course.
8. Excellent.
  9. Course workbook is great, will be a useful tool for future reference.
  10. I do not think the course workbook will be particularly useful. It overlapped with some of the pre-course reading and mostly consisted of items which are freely available online.
  11. Yes, I think it will be quite useful. (If a little heavy to travel with.)

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

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. N/A
10. N/A
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. Course pulled together the various, separate aspects of special collections librarianship into a single, coherent professional model—very helpful.
2. The sections on bibliography and preservation were very enlightening and inspire me to learn more. The discussions on security and access are directly relevant to issues I am facing in my position and were immensely useful.
3. I was most interested in learning about the book as object since I don't have training in that area. I found the collection assessment and collection development sections very useful.
4. I was really interested in learning about exhibitions. It's an area I'd never considered before, but I'm a lot more interested now.
5. I came away knowing better what areas of the profession I need to get more education in, and which I feel I have a grasp on.
6. Whole thing was helpful. Nice general overview.
7. Development/donor relations/fundraiser, digital humanities, security/theft recovery.
8. All aspects were useful and gave me ideas for projects.
9. It was very interesting to hear about how a large, broad library manages its special collections since I come from an institution with a relatively small and narrowly focused collection; however, that made some of the course content less relevant for me. My biggest takeaways will (I think) be in the areas of collection development and promotion.
10. Digital archiving, imaging, and digital humanities were the most interesting/relevant to me. I walked away with a lot of inspiration (and aspiration).

11. Exhibit preparation work with Miriam {?} was fantastic! Also info on collection development and determining “rare-ness” of books. I learned so much that I look forward to applying in my work. {private response}

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. MI covered everything, and brought excellent guest speakers to go in-depth in certain areas when he couldn't.
2. Yes, the course delivered on what was promised, and then some. I was truly amazed at what was covered in just one week.
3. The class covered a broad range of topics, but we worked through them well.
4. This course was very informative and MI was great at addressing our questions and helping us get the most out of the course material.
5. The instructor covered all material. The class as designed is an overview—I need to go out and build on what was discussed.
6. Maybe a bit more “Day in the life of...” Would have liked to get a better idea of physical facilities.
7. I did learn what I hoped for.
8. Yes!
9. The course content was as described. The emphasis was rare books but that was to be expected. My learning expectations were pretty open but I am very happy with the information I acquired.
10. Yes, the instructor and guest speakers were all very informative and willing and able to answer questions. The class subject was very broad, so we necessarily could only get brief introductions to some topics, but I think the course was well balanced.
11. Yes, and then some. MI was a fabulous, thoughtful instructor. One aspect that was lacking, at times, was an awareness of realities, experiences at smaller institutions. For example, if you don't have a preservation/conservation department (or even any staff) what can you do for your collections in general and in moments of crisis? A broadening of the view beyond the large institution at times would have been very helpful.

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

1. I am going to totally revamp our special collections.
2. I will return to my current job with new ideas for further development, examination of policies and procedures, and a renewed sense of purpose (really—not an exaggeration!).
3. I plan to share insights with colleagues. I plan to audit the policies and procedures we currently have in place.
4. The information will help me in library school so I can think of ways to apply what I've learned to a future career.
5. To be better at my job, and hopefully to be a stronger candidate for future employers.
6. Career prep and ideas.
7. I hope to share whatever knowledge I acquired in my daily interaction with other

- library members and private clients.
8. Review materials, investigate how many policies, procedures are already in place in our institution. Then work on shelf list.
  9. I'll use it to aid me in determining whether special collections librarianship is an area that I want to move toward professionally, and in deciding how to proceed and where to focus my efforts. I'll also use it as a measuring stick in looking at how my current institution approaches its special collections management.
  10. I plan to recommend improvements to existing projects, services, procedures, and documentation of my institution. I will also use what I learned to better mentor my library science student employees.
  11. I will apply the knowledge and skills directly to my work. I see many applications across various areas of my job.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Best for a new professional on the cusp of special collections work.
  2. The student body was diverse and reflected just the sorts of individuals who would benefit most: prospective MLIS students, early and mid-career librarians.
  3. The course is appropriate for people at all levels. The professional association readings are appropriate to newcomers. There were also readings that dug into deeper matters. Everyone in class seemed to learn a great deal.
  4. This course would be appropriate for anyone with a basic level of how a library functions. While the material was intellectual, it would be good for all levels.
  5. Librarians either early in their careers or switching focus within librarianship.
  6. Not too difficult—good for inexperienced people entering the field. May be too basic for some.
  7. I think given the variety of topics related to the course and the clarity of the delivered content, professionals in different levels of the library profession can benefit from this course.
  8. Course was pitched well to this group with varying levels of experience and expertise.
  9. The intellectual level seemed appropriate to all those in the class, most (all?) of whom have advanced degrees and some professional experience.
  10. Library school students and special collections librarians who are in the first 2–3 years of their careers would benefit the most from this course, as well as special collections librarians of institutions without firmly established special collections departments.
  11. {no response}
- 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. The “dog and pony show” ticked off some boxes on my bucket list. Gutenberg Bible caused my heart to flutter.
  2. Ask for what you want—be an advocate for your collections, your institution, and yourself.
  3. The presentation about theft and recovery was surprising and educational. Also,

- meeting the many guest lecturers was very valuable. I feel like I have a greater understanding of so many aspects of special collections librarianship.
4. I really enjoyed visiting the conservation lab. It gave me a new appreciation for the delicacy of the material and the work that goes into upholding them.
  5. {no response}
  6. Loved seeing NYPL service/operations building—would liked to have seen more of it. Where do other special collections staff work?
  7. Yes, the security aspect as related to rare materials in a reading room.
  8. Loved seeing NYPL's treasures, hand-on session with Miriam the conservator, great explanations of various parts of the VOS.
  9. {no response}
  10. Seeing the digitization center at the Library Service Center. Wow! The Head of Conservation's session was informative and thought-provoking in terms of librarians' contributions to scholarship.
  11. I think the visit to the class by Miriam from conservation was very special. I so enjoyed her dedication to her career, and I learned very tangible things from her.

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

1. Not at all—it was fantastic!
2. Better timing of transitions between sessions, more refreshments. (8+ hours per day is a long week.)
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. More hands-on exercises may have been nice, but aren't necessarily needed. MI is an engaging instructor, very open to class questions and discussion.
6. A bit more depth on things like reference sources. Maybe a bit less time on the dog and pony show. Fun to see the stuff, but it ate a lot of time.
7. N/A
8. Distribute reading list earlier.
9. {no response}
10. {private response}
11. {redacted for the web—RBS staff}

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

1. Yes, and yes.
2. Yes, and yes.
3. Yes. This course gives a level of professional training that isn't available elsewhere.
4. I would have appreciated more hands-on work (experiences you can't get through Google searches).
5. Yes, but with the caveat that it takes more than this class to become a special collections librarian.
6. Yes.
7. Yes, I would recommend the course.
8. Yes, yes.
9. Yes, and yes.
10. Yes.

11. Yes (although to be fair, it was my institution's money). And, yes.

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

1. Yes, the trip to the library services center was excellent.
2. The field trip to the NYPL Library Service Center was excellent—informative and interesting.
3. Yes, we were able to see a wide range of NYPL's operations at the Library Service Center. The field trip enhanced our knowledge of special library duties and projects.
4. Yes!
5. Yes.
6. Yes.
7. Yes, very much so.
8. Absolutely.
9. It was time well spent. We didn't learn that much at the NYPL Service Center but it was great to see the facilities and get a first-hand sense of the scale of operations.
10. Yes, our trip to the Library Service Center was excellent.
11. I enjoyed the trip to the conservation center. The digitization lab, less so. The journey was a bit much, however, and I think it fatigued everyone. Maybe timed differently? End of the day?

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. The second Grolier Club lecture was so squarely aimed at Grolier members that I didn't feel it was worth my time.
2. I attended H. George Fletcher's talk at the Grolier Club on Thursday—I felt a bit out of my depth on the subject area (but that was not the fault of the speaker). I expected a bit more from the reception.
3. The two lectures at the Grolier Club seemed to be more appropriate for Grolier Club members. The receptions were nice opportunities to meet others in the program; I enjoyed them.
4. {no response}
5. They were fine, but not mind-blowing. The second lecture was a bit off topic for me. If you want students to go right from class to a lecture, there should be more than munchies at the lecture.
6. Grolier lectures were OK. Would have been nice to see more classmates at them, or at some other event. Didn't see other class members at all except at lectures.
7. N/A
8. It was fascinating to be exposed to donors and well-heeled collectors at the Grolier Club.
9. I attended the Leab lecture at the Grolier Club, and it was worthwhile. The speaker was entertaining, and it was a good opportunity to see the space.
10. The evening events were obviously aimed at Grolier Club members and felt like a waste of time. They served very small snacks at the reception, which was difficult when we hadn't had time to eat between class and the event.

11. I went once to a lecture at Grolier Club. It was a bit “clubby,” and in many ways I did not feel like they were speaking to me, so I didn’t go back for the second talk.

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

1. It will be worth it. Do the readings, go to the extra events, invest yourself.
2. I would absolutely encourage special collections staff (in any area) to consider taking this course.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. If you have experience in this world at all, some things might be too basic for you. If you’re starting out, I think it’s probably helpful.
7. N/A
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. Talk to your fellow students during the course—they bring different experience, training, and perspective, which enriches your learning.
11. It gets tiring, so get some sleep!

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

1. I am so inspired; I cannot wait to head home and get to work!
2. I’m inspired to become a better librarian!
3. MI is very knowledgeable about the field. Great teacher and useful course.
4. Yay!
5. I am so tired/Seven syllables go here/This week was intense.
6. I want to come back for more.
7. Exposure to and exchange of ideas.
8. MI did a fantastic job blending lectures, guests, activities (hand-on, PowerPoint), and kept a manageable pace throughout. A great teacher.
9. Pleasant, well-organized, and had value. Also an excellent opportunity to network and meet colleagues and others with shared interests.
10. Case-by-case basis.
11. GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN HERE.

## **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: 8 (73%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 1 (9%)

I am self employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (9%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (9%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (27%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (55%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 2 (18%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (27%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (27%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (9%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (9%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 3 (27%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (27%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (36%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (9%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (9%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (18%)

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

**Library disciplines:**

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (9%)

Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 1 (9%)

Library administrator: 1 (9%)

Library assistant/clerk: 3 (27%)

Public services librarian: 4 (36%)

No response: 1 (9%)