

John Buchtel & Mark Dimunation
H-10: The History of the Book, 200–2000
14–19 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. Re *ABC for Book Collectors*: If there's any alternative that is less of a "period piece," it might be welcome, especially as your audience continues to be more chronologically distant. As the first book of the required reading, I wrestled with its patriarchal, privileged tone as I waded through the definitions, felt frustrated, and quit reading after "C" to continue with the rest of the excellent books. (I was *very pleased* with the rest of the list.)
2. The readings were very helpful, and I made every effort to read them before the course.
3. The reading list was very helpful, though a bit long.
4. Yes—de Hamel and Twyman were useful intros, and I liked Chappell very much. Eisenstein was a slog, but it was nice to have a reading that took a broader look. *ABC* was fun to browse, and also useful throughout the week.
5. They were all useful, and I fully intend to read those I was unable to completely finish before the course.
6. The readings helped to give me a solid, basic foundation for material covered in the course. I was able to think back on the readings and recall terms encountered, and this enabled the concepts to be more firmly imprinted in my memory. It also helped me to understand them, as they were introduced more than once.
7. Reading assignments were very useful.
8. Pre-course reading list is very helpful, but I was a bit overwhelmed and didn't finish on time in the end. Sorry!
9. Excellent readings. I might have appreciated some guidance on what was *really* essential. There was a bit of duplication.
10. Very useful, if extremely (and necessarily, I suppose) dense.
11. The readings were very helpful. Some were quick and light, giving a nice overview, but Eisenstein really provided a great foundation for the course.
12. Reading list was excellent, made easy because of access to out-of-print books via Amazon and Abebooks.

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. Yes—handouts and workbooks were good; all films very good. I loved the efficiency of the print-sample packets! (The fact that you had all that material!)
2. Yes. I will use the materials, and they were very helpful.
3. {no response}
4. I found them to be useful, especially the "watermarked" page.
5. Appropriate and useful, with just enough info; therefore will keep to use and refer to in the future.

6. The content of the workbook helped guide my note-taking.
7. Workbook content was very useful.
8. Content of this course is very appropriate and useful. Will definitely use these after the course. Hope it could be more comprehensive.
9. Excellent—very useful.
10. Great, yes, yes.
11. The workbook is great. I particularly appreciated the list of titles provided for each session, as well as the list of reference books.
12. A PDF copy might have been useful, especially for future reference.

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

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. This was my first class.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. N/A
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. 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. I especially appreciated the big-picture connections with social, political, and economic history. Many new ideas and research topics to explore.
2. The field trip to LC was phenomenal. I came away with a greater sense of the impact of the book in the history of western civilization.
3. Dog-and-pony shows! Visit to LC.
4. The bits that focused on the social history of the book were the most interesting to me, but I was also here to learn about the technical processes, and I'm glad the course was a mix of both.
5. Sixteenth- through nineteenth-century materials were the most relevant for me, but it was great to learn about the other aspects of book history. Yes—I will now approach my job in a different way as a result of this course! Too many plans to name.
6. The course in its entirety laid a great foundation for a future career in librarianship.
7. Being able to see, in person, many of the things I had read about in the reading assignments was great.
8. Hands-on experience, trip to LC, are highlights of the course. I developed a much better understanding of the subject, and feel more comfortable talking intelligently about special collections.
9. I most enjoyed discussion of the cultural impact of printing and the book, e.g., the Eisenstein thesis.
10. Wildly relevant—terms, aided by actual examples and thorough explanations and

discussions are immediately applicable.

11. To be honest, the entire course was interesting. The materials we looked at were wonderful visual aids to demonstrate what we were learning about in the classroom. I am excited to apply this knowledge with my first-year class in the fall.
 12. Besides the opportunity to “commune” with extraordinary books, the historical and philosophical issues in each century gave me new insight (especially the digital era).
- 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. I would have preferred more time for big-picture discussion and more time for comments from other students in that area.
 2. Yes. JB and MD are excellent instructors, and kept the pace of the class going throughout the entire week. I learned *more* than I anticipated, and it was very rewarding to me.
 3. {no response}
 4. The course description is spot on.
 5. It was a great course, covering all major aspects of book history. I learned what I had hoped, although I wish there had been a way to go into more detail for the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries.
 6. I learned what I hoped to learn (to fill in the gaps left by my overview media studies course) and *so much more* (social and historical contexts and impacts, in addition to the book/bookmaking as it has changed physically).
 7. I learned a lot that provided a foundation for identifying and teaching about books at my institution.
 8. They are excellent instructors and role models for me to look to. I have achieved original goals and much more.
 9. Very satisfied.
 10. Absolutely cannot stress enough how amazing MD and JB are. Accessible, patient, excited, encyclopedic, joyful. I want more, but this is a start.
 11. Yes! JB and MD team-teach this course wonderfully. The experience is very well rounded, and you are left with a good understanding of the book’s passage through time.
 12. Yes, the course *exceeded* my expectations.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. 1) I feel much more prepared to teach the brief “history of the book” material I incorporate into my studio-art teaching (artists’ books), both intellectually and in what I observed about how my teachers physically organized the materials. (Love those packets and fishing-tackle boxes!) Noted the significance/impact of holding up the *actual book*, even though there’s only thirty seconds of commentary with it, versus simply *mentioning* the publication. 2) I plan to mine the nooks and crannies of what we learned as inspiration for future book publications. Should be done in a few decades.
 2. I will be using my skills/knowledge to manage a fairly robust rare book collection and to work with faculty to incorporate the materials into classroom instruction.
 3. To impart my knowledge to visitors.

4. {no response}
 5. I will be using it for my daily work including being more informed during conversations with donors, and in putting together talks for class visits. And most importantly, I now understand my collection at a different level.
 6. As the starting point for my library studies.
 7. The knowledge I've acquired should be useful, as my institution continues to receive rare items for the collection.
 8. I plan to apply the knowledge and skills learned here to a research project this summer.
 9. This will take a while to figure out! But I will definitely draw on it.
 10. Taking it back to my own collection and going forward in my career.
 11. I plan to apply this knowledge every day at the reference desk, working with researchers and with classes using our collections.
 12. To continue to study, read, and apply for another course next year.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Perfect for generalists who need/desire an intro to the field. Intellectual level: medium.
 2. The course requires intellectual rigor in terms of keeping up with the pace and understanding the fundamentals on history around the book in the west. College graduates, curators, practitioners (librarians, instructors) would benefit.
 3. {no response}
 4. This is a perfect introduction.
 5. This would be a wonderful course for someone with almost no knowledge about the history of the book. I had some, which I've taught myself, but the course was still a great learning experience.
 6. Those newer to the profession of librarianship, book collecting, &c., and those working toward that profession.
 7. This is mostly an entry-level course that anyone in the book professions could and should take.
 8. Just right for beginning professionals.
 9. It is introductory, but that's what I wanted. The overall intellectual level of the class was high.
 10. Perfect for someone wanting to get their foot in the door or enrich current knowledge with broad context—young professionals, curators, especially.
 11. Anyone. It is perfect for those who, like myself, are new to rare books and printing history, but I can see it being a good refresher course for anyone in the profession.
 12. While it was a general survey aimed at a beginner, it was not “dumbed down” for the students—although it was simplified by necessity of time.
- 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. *Best:* the ersatz monastery-scribe experience.
 2. Really understanding the impact of printing and the transition to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.
 3. {no response}

4. The printing demo was helpful, and the videos were a great way to visualize some of the more complex processes that go into bookmaking. I also appreciated the engraving and type kits.
5. Seeing actual examples was almost always an “aha” moment—illustrations in books aren’t enough, and these made a world of difference in remembering and understanding what I’ve been puzzled about.
6. The demonstrations of monastic scribal culture and salesmen’s dummies was engaging and brought the past to life, enabling me to really experience what it was like. Also, when I could put words to processes and types of illustration, I felt clarity.
7. Many of the details about various books were “aha” moments. But a statement made about the impact of printing on society was the biggest moment.
8. Reading in dim light in the library basement is impressive!
9. Seeing the physical objects that formed the core of the course provided many powerful moments, in which I got a much better sense of the beauty and cultural impact of books.
10. Seeing Galileo’s fingerprints; MD and B42; JB with the *Jane Eyre*; moments of wonder, history, and context.
11. 1) The clarification of Gutenberg’s role in printing, especially the invention of movable type. 2) The trip to LC. Let’s face it, that entire day was an “aha” moment.
12. Understanding the digital dilemma of our culture, and our responsibility to know more about presentation, and our place in the continuous technological evolution (manuscript to print to digital).

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

1. 1) I would have preferred, for days four and five, a little less time on the plethora of technical developments (late eighteenth- through nineteenth-century), and a little more time for discussion on a more intellectual and conceptual level. 2) Afternoon of Day 5: 1/3 less time on *Jane Eyre* publication examples, and more time on intellectually grappling with the future of the book in the context of rare book librarianship. 3) Bullet train in-bound to LC.
2. Consider serving iced tea at the breaks.
3. {no response}
4. {no response}
5. Although fascinating and very important for the course, maybe a little less time on manuscript books and more on the turning points in printed book history.
6. N/A
7. A physical timeline provided to students briefly detailing major events in book history would make things easier to follow.
8. More course materials in the binder, or else in an online version.
9. {private response}
10. {no response}
11. More time (impossible, I know, with all there is to cover).
12. Take a helicopter to LC!

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

1. Yes (in 120 pt. Fortuna Extra Bold).

2. Yes. I'll take another course someday.
3. {no response}
4. Definitely.
5. Yes, and yes.
6. Yes, and yes.
7. Yes, I did, and would recommend to others.
8. Yes, to both questions.
9. Yes, and yes.
10. Would unreservedly recommend to anyone.
11. Yes, and yes!
12. It was a *bargain*, and I will recommend it wholeheartedly!

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

1. LC trip exceeded my very high expectations. I will treasure that experience for the rest of my life.
2. Yes.
3. Absolutely.
4. Many times over. LC was a real delight.
5. Yes—in addition to seeing some great books, it was a wonderful way to see and hear about the history of the book in one day, helping to give more context to the entire course.
6. Well worth the long trip. A once-in-a-lifetime experience.
7. Our trip to LC was great.
8. Yes. Thanks!
9. Yes!
10. Holy {expletive}, yes. LC is a wonderland.
11. Absolutely!
12. Indeed. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with LC's chief of rare books.

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. I enjoyed Nancy Tomasko's lecture, and I was very disappointed with the timing of Russell Maret's lecture because of the conflict with our class trip.
2. There wasn't enough time to really take in all of the offerings.
3. I'm glad that they were optional. After a day of RBS, I was wiped out.
4. The text decoration was fun, and I was able to spot them throughout the rest of the week. I was sorry to miss the Linotype film. The lecture that I was able to attend (on Chinese paper) was fine—outside my area of interest, but I was glad to sit in.
5. They were all a good use of my time, some more than others just because of my areas of interest.
6. They helped me to get to know others with the same respect and love for books and book studies.
7. {no response}
8. So-so.
9. Excellent!

10. {no response}
11. Very much so. They were fun, and a wonderful way to learn more and meet others in the field.
12. Enjoyed the movie. Would have appreciated a “host” welcoming guests at Tastings, Thursday evening. A little awkward when the table was filled.

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

1. {no response}
2. Pace yourself and relax. Be sure to consider the length of time it will take to travel to/from accommodations if not staying in dorm or on the Lawn. Be on time.
3. {no response}
4. Do it!
5. {no response}
6. Just take the course!
7. {no response}
8. Thank you to both MD and JB. They are wonderful instructors with great senses of humor. I had a lot of fun!
9. It is a great introduction and time very well spent; also fun to make connections with teachers and students.
10. Be patient with yourself. It is a lot of info to absorb, but ask questions and keep your eyes wide open.
11. Start with this course! It gets you going strong, and highlights an infinite number of other avenues of study at RBS.
12. {no response}

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 wait to return.
2. This course really is like icing on the cake. I've worked around rare books, but never with them—this experience has given me insights to linking all aspects of the special collections together to enhance the program at my college.
3. Fantastic, engaging, passionate, knowledgeable instructors.
4. Woohoo!
5. Intense, but fun and *well worth it*.
6. I want to come back, and *often*.
7. Well worth it!
8. Great learning experience for special collections librarians!
9. *Wonderful* immersion in the world of books.
10. Chief Comma and Middlin' John. Thanks for reaffirming my decision to do what I do. Let's be brave and curious forever.
11. I had a magnificent experience, which was well worth every minute!
12. To *Eyre* is human, to attend RBS divine! (apologies to AP)

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%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 3 (25.00%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50.00%)

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

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25.00%)

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

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

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: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (25.00%)

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

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

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (16.67%)

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

Library disciplines:

Archivist: 5 (41.67%)

Public services librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)

Book trades:

Book artist, artisan or printer: 1 (8.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (8.33%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)