

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. Yes, very, and I will treasure this list for future reference. Far, far too many things, in too many languages to actually READ all, so it's good to clarify in advance which are most important to focus on.
 2. The primary reading was the instructor's workbook, which was a good background for the class. There were just a few additional reading required, most readings on the list were recommended. No suggestions.
 3. The workbook that was sent out beforehand was very, very helpful. You must read it in order to get the most out of class. The suggested reading list is long, but JSvL helpfully indicates which readings are most important. You need to start reading early because several of the items were very hard to find and took a long time to get via interlibrary loan. Some I couldn't get, but felt prepared, especially with the help of the workbook.
 4. I thought the pre-course assignments for this course were particularly good.
 5. They were very helpful, although (as JSvL noted) several were difficult to find.
 6. Jan has taught the course so many times that he gave good recommendations for preparation. I learned a good deal from the pre-reading. I hope that he finishes his intro book soon and can assign that, but for now, the preparations were good.
 7. Some were expensive, so I ended up getting them through ILL. The class handbook was a great read-ahead. Actually, I think that would be sufficient.
 8. There were many books on the reading list that were unattainable or prohibitively expensive, and since I am not connected to an institution, I cannot borrow through ILL.
 9. Like many RBS courses, the readings are rather opaque before the course and will be very useful after the course.
 10. The readings were helpful in setting groundwork for the lectures in class.
 11. The beauty of this course is that students see and interact with so many bindings. This makes it essential to do as much of the preparatory reading as possible, just to have a framework starting Monday morning.
 12. I came by most of them by ILL. To me, Pearson, Bennett, and Lock were the most clear and comprehensive. Cockerell was also. After having taken the course, I'm sure I'll find Goldschmidt and Needham's descriptions more useful than what I did at first.
 13. The pre-course reading assignments were very useful. Nevertheless, I had no chance to find all references in my country. Then I decided to read other references, sometimes by the same author.
- 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, very, will refer to often—especially since JSvL’s book isn’t finished, and there is no other “History of Bookbinding” complete resource to read.
2. The workbook was a good reference for the class lectures. I expect to consult it over and over again. I liked the timeline on the back.
3. The course workbook was great. I wonder if RBS could organize a reading packet that we could buy that would gather together the reading/articles that are most important. This would help a lot, especially for people in the course without access to large libraries.
4. Great! Yes. Yes, the workbook and reading list will be helpful reference materials beyond the course.
5. The workbook was amazing. It was very helpful!
6. Same reaction (see Q1). Yes, I’m keeping what I collected and will use it in teaching.
7. As above (in Q1). It is a terrific reference and will be of considerable value in the future.
8. YES!
9. Sending the workbook to read before the class was very welcome.
10. The workbook was a great overview of the changes over time, terms, and materials of bookbinding.
11. The workbook provided a good guide to the week’s discussions, and I anticipate that it will remain in a prominent position on my reference shelf.
12. Yes! And thank you for sending it beforehand. Very well written and organized. Looking forward to JSvL’s book.
13. The workbook was totally useful. It’s content is very helpful to follow the information given during class.

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

1. N/A
2. This is my first course.
3. N/A
4. It’s among the best.
5. The course exceeded all expectations!
6. N/A
7. Every bit as good.
8. This was the most edifying RBS course I have taken.
9. Favorably. A lot of information.
10. This course covered so much material in a short time. We saw so many books, a feast for the eyes.
11. This was far more of a survey course than the earlier, more technical courses I’ve taken.
12. Equally amazing.
13. 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'm actually too overwhelmed right now to say. It's a LOT of information to be covered in a condensed time. And apparently I need to learn a few more languages to do my own research.
 2. There was very little in the course that I did not find interesting and relevant. As a conservator, I come away with several new ideas for outreach and educational programs for my lab. I also feel I am armed with new reasons to advocate for conservation treatment documentation.
 3. Every day included new, exciting content that importantly changed how I viewed and will work with bindings. The physical examples we saw really helped demonstrate the concepts.
 4. I developed a much better sense of how binding styles developed contemporaneously in different parts of Europe.
 5. I particularly enjoyed getting to handle the books and getting to create my own rubbing.
 6. I took away useful ideas about the desire of human beings to preserve knowledge, but ultimately the futility of preservation across time.
 7. English and American bindings.
 8. Bespoke bindings 1500–1800, localization and fashion.
 9. Quality of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century bindings is most applicable. Good insight on the position of binding in the book trade.
 10. The focus on the art and historical framework for the changes in decoration style was helpful in understanding choices and bookbindings.
 11. {no response}
 12. Understanding structure, techniques, and materials for description purposes. I've a feeling that will come when I go over the workbook and reference bibliography back home.
 13. I had an idea of this course, but it was better than I thought. Definitely, I will continue my plan of starting a masters program of history of the book.
- 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, it was as I expected. I only wish we had more time and could cover more, in a bit more depth.
 2. The course was an introduction to a very long and diverse tradition of binding. I was exposed to a lot of information in a short time.
 3. JSvL is a fantastic, engaged teacher who is excited to share his knowledge and answer individual questions. I thought I would learn a bit more about sewing structures, but there is a lot to cover anyway.
 4. Yes, I think so.
 5. I learned an incredible amount of information from the instructor. The extent of his knowledge is amazing.
 6. All very well done, smoothly presented.
 7. Yes on all counts.
 8. I learned more than I ever expected in one week.
 9. JSvL is a very engaging speaker. Looking at a lot of examples worked very well.
 10. Absolutely. I learned what I needed, and the course met my expectations.
 11. {no response}

12. YES. That's one of the strong points of this course. JSvL is such an honest and generous instructor that you learn enormously both from his vast experience and his ability to identify problematic, unsolved issues.
13. I had hoped to see the publishers' bindings with more detail, but I understand it is an introductory course.

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

1. Will share info with my library colleagues. I can use the design history context for graphic design instruction. Hopefully I will write an article comparing/contextualizing the modern book designer's papers that I curate currently.
2. I would like to do more reading and possibly to focus research on a topic or binding style from the class.
3. I'll use them when I teach my courses and in my own research. Also, JSvL and Vince Golden gave tips throughout about how to develop interesting teaching collections of interesting bindings on a budget.
4. {no response}
5. I hope to use these skills to supplement my previous knowledge of manuscripts so that in future studies I can be as comprehensive as possible.
6. In teaching a grad seminar in book history in fall 2017.
7. Preparing catalog descriptions.
8. I will be able to more accurately localize, describe, and assess the books I encounter.
9. I'll be able to provide more complete binding information in my catalog records, exhibitions, and courses I teach.
10. I hope to teach with a better understanding of the history of bookbinding. I also have found new areas of research in the future.
11. What I learned this week will help me to better understand my own collection and make me a more discerning collector in the future.
12. In my research and teaching in general.
13. I will observe with more attention all bindings I have in the conservation department in order to improve the conservation treatment.

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

1. Can it be high-level but broad at the same time? General knowledge of Western history and art history would be really helpful; book history follows.
2. Anyone with an interest in bindings and also material culture since the instructor is an excellent guide for learning to look at bindings and place them in their cultural and historical context.
3. Someone who already has some knowledge of the history of book production will make the most of the course. Without some background knowledge, this course may be too difficult. The level of the conversation and teaching was high, helpful, and insightful.
4. The intellectual level is high because of JSvL. Someone with a good grounding in the French tradition in particular.
5. The course would be well suited for anyone looking to learn about the history of

- bookbinding, but with little to no formal experience.
6. Not a course just for enthusiasts; one needs some background and scholarly chops.
 7. It is a solid introductory course. Anyone could benefit.
 8. As an antiquarian bookseller, I think other book dealers would get the most out of this course.
 9. Sellers, collectors, catalogers. Anyone working with decorated bindings.
 10. {no response}
 11. This is a survey course, suitable for someone looking to build a framework or context in which to understand the history and development of bookbinding.
 12. {no response}
 13. Art historians that have an interest in books, librarians, and conservators.
- 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. Too many.
 2. The idea that trade bindings occur at various points before the nineteenth century—it’s all a continuum and not perfectly linear.
 3. JSvL changed the way I thought about trade and publishers’ bindings, particularly their role pre-1830. The session on decorative papers will be the easiest to apply in my own work, especially to help roughly date bindings.
 4. {no response}
 5. When JSvL explained that RBS consists of a heap of rubbish, as it is only when something is falling apart that you can truly see how it’s made.
 6. {no response}
 7. When I realized just how much work was involved in decorating a book using individual tools and plates.
 8. Learning about relevant reference materials for binding identification.
 9. {no response}
 10. The cultural and artistic influences in the changing styles of bookbinding.
 11. The relationship of binding design to a broader context of art history was a new angle for me.
 12. I do not know. There were so many, but in general, JSvL’s comments on his professional experience are something you would not find in a book.
 13. I don’t remember a particular moment because there were too many “aha” moments. JSvL’s sense of humor is the best.
- 9) *How could the course have been improved?*
1. More time, more JSvL, JSvL forever.
 2. I would love to have copies of the PowerPoint presentations to refer to post-lecture.
 3. I would have liked a homework session at least once. It would give us a chance to practice some binding definition.
 4. Demonstrations of binding techniques at other points would have been helpful.
 5. More days.
 6. {no response}
 7. I think it is fine as is.

8. I would have liked a deeper look at famous collectors' bindings (i.e., de Thou and Grolier).
9. By necessity, a lot of the information and examples had to be presented very quickly.
10. I would love to have the PowerPoint slides or pictures of the RBS examples to take with me for future reference.
11. {no response}
12. Trimming down the number of specimens shown on slides perhaps. Otherwise, I couldn't say.
13. {no response}

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

1. Yes! (Especially since I got a fellowship.)
2. Yes! Yes!
3. Yes—without a doubt.
4. Yes. Yes!
5. Absolutely. 100%.
6. Yes to both.
7. Yes, and yes.
8. Absolutely!
9. Yes, and yes.
10. Yes, absolutely.
11. Yes, and yes. I think this is an essential body of knowledge for any collector who wants to understand his/her collection more thoroughly.
12. Certainly.
13. I will recommend it.

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

1. N/A
2. We visited SC to see examples in the collection that were relevant to our studies. This seemed very worthwhile and gave the class exposure to additional binding examples.
3. The visit to SC made the most of our time.
4. Our trip to SC was a wonderful extension of what we had been doing and seeing all week. Well worth it.
5. Yes, the trip to SC was very helpful in illustrating the styles of bookbinding discussed in class.
6. {no response}
7. Yes.
8. SC—yes, very helpful to encounter richer binding examples.
9. Visit to SC had very nice examples but unfortunately we could not handle the books. Still worthwhile.
10. Our trip to SC gave us a chance to see a wider variety of examples.
11. Our one short trip across the courtyard to UVA SC was certainly an enhancement to the classroom and museums.

12. SC visit was excellent.
13. {no response}

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...but maybe not the Harrison-Small Special Collections Library tour.
2. I attended two lectures.
3. The Paper Museum was fantastic.
4. The evening events are great!
5. {no response}
6. Those movies on papermaking and bookbinding were very good. Also the Shakespeare exhibit next door, though we were not required to attend, and the Paper Museum, which was excellent.
7. The Paper Museum was valuable. Movie Night was enjoyable. I bought some nice things on Booksellers' Night.
8. The evening events were a great way to meet students in other courses. Loved Movie Night!
9. I went to the first lecture. Very worthwhile.
10. The evening events were a fun addition to the work in class.
11. The RBS lecture series is great.
12. I saw the last two films on Movie Night. Loved the 1957 silent film in particular.
13. {no response}

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

1. If you are easily frustrated by digressions, anecdotes, meandering asides, and a lack of clear-cut definitions and answers to historical mysteries, then beware! Must be intellectually adventurous.
2. {no response}
3. Do the readings so you know the vocabulary before you come.
4. Take it!
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Nope.
8. Look at as many different kinds of bindings as possible ahead of time so that you can spend the session analyzing different styles instead of focusing strictly on identification.
9. It's a lot of lecture and PowerPoint. It's very useful, just be prepared.
10. {no response}
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. Bring a sweater!

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. Very worthwhile and a singular experience.
3. RBS, in just five days, changed how I think about my own work. It challenged what I thought I knew and energized my ideas for future work.
4. {no response}
5. RBS is a welcoming home for book lovers, but instead of cookies to delight the stomach, one finds the most incredible collection of books, prints, bindings, &c. to delight the eyes, mind, and soul.
6. Excellent experience, excellent value.
7. Another valuable and enjoyable course.
8. This is my favorite week of the year.
9. "Oh, it's so ugly. That's what you get with modern bindings."
10. {no response}
11. Jan Storm van Leeuwen
A sherpa of bookbinding
The summit achieved
12. A reward to your efforts to be enjoyed for the rest of the year.
13. It is good to know more people with the same interests.

Student Data

Number of respondents: 13 (of 13)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 7 (53.85%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 3 (23.08%)

I am self employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (15.38%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (7.69%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 5 (38.46%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (38.46%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 2 (15.38%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (46.15%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (38.46%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (7.69%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 8 (61.54%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (23.08%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (15.38%)

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

Library disciplines:

Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 3 (23.08%)

Public services librarian: 1 (7.69%)

Special collections librarian: 2 (15.38%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 1 (7.69%)

Associate professor: 1 (7.69%)

Full professor: 1 (7.69%)

Book trades:

Antiquarian bookseller: 2 (15.38%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (7.69%)

Other: 1 (7.69%)