

Michael Inman
L-10: Special Collections Librarianship
16–21 October 2016

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. Reading assignments were useful. I could have done with a bit more reference in class to both the readings and the course workbook.
2. Yes. No. Great foundational list of readings.
3. Pre-reading was helpful although not referenced in course discussions. Good primer for terms and concepts.
4. Yes. It was a bit tedious to read all the standards docs, though important. Prefer reading the articles.
5. The pre-course reading assignments were very helpful.
6. They were useful, especially because I am new to library science and didn't know all of the vocabulary. The reading gave me a chance to look up terms ahead of time.
7. We did not directly discuss any of the articles in class (certainly no need to print any out). However, I found them useful preparation and helpful toward getting into the mindset for active learning. No suggestions for inclusion or removal.
8. Yes, pre-course readings were useful before and I suspect after as well. A bit heavy on readings for ethical standards.
9. The readings gave excellent background information for the course. I tried to read as much of the suggested readings as I could. It would be helpful to have a bit more information on acquisitions in the readings, although the topic was also covered thoroughly during the course itself.
10. Readings were interesting, gave a broad overview and a way to start thinking. Not sure it was really necessary to read them all before class.
11. The readings provided a framework for the class and will be a great reference source in the years ahead.
12. Yes. No.

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. See Q1.
2. It's nice to have the content in one place.
3. Workbook is very helpful. Perhaps it should have been included on course reading list page.
4. Probably most useful after the course. Nice to have as a reference during class.
5. The course packet was good but not needed much in class and could have stayed at home.
6. It was useful and seems like useful reference material, and I'll certainly look up

- some of the sites and books suggested.
7. I did not make much use of my workbook during class time but know that I will definitely be referring to it many times after this course.
 8. Did not bring workbook with me but looked online with others with iPads. Did not read through entire contents of workbook, as it was only received shortly before class began.
 9. The workbook and handouts look very useful, especially the exhibition timeline handout. We did not reference the workbook too often during the course, but those times we did were well-placed. I plan to look the workbook over once I get home.
 10. I appreciated having the workbook electronically to save paper. Will definitely refer back to it again and again. I liked the examples of other institutions' policies and concrete examples.
 11. We did not consult the workbook because of the extensive lecturing and discussion.
 12. Content is great for general professional reference post-course. I am certainly going to use these materials for staff training.

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

1. Equally good.
2. Different in content, but equally valuable.
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. This class was more relaxed. The evening events were more difficult for all students to attend due to transportation elements, i.e., taking the subway at night.
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. Much improved over last course taken. Lots to discuss, right on target, many examples, and participant experiences discussed. Liked having guest lecturers.
9. N/A
10. They were both excellent. This one was more applicable to my daily work.
11. N/A
12. Above expectations, as usual.

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. There was a small amount of review for me, but that offered a good perspective on my current work.
2. Great to hear from a range of voices about current practices.
3. Tours of conservation center were great! Great guest speakers.
4. Great ideas for digitization projects and thinking outside of the digitized page. Liked the emphasis on record keeping and written policies.
5. How to mount exhibits and light quality and damage.
6. I'm brand new to library science, so I learned a lot about a wide range of topics. I was especially interested in conservation, security, exhibitions, and archiving.
7. The most useful topics discussed for me were collection development, conservation and preservation, exhibition, and security. I have learned a great deal

- this week and have jotted down many notes and questions to take back to my institution.
8. Definitely useful ideas and project info. Hope I will be able to incorporate in daily work duties. Less enjoyable field trip to digital and conservation labs.
 9. All of it was fascinating, but I especially appreciated the information on acquisitions and exhibitions, since they are particular to special collections librarianship. I have a much better sense of the specifications of these aspects of librarianship. The chance to see some materials was also wonderful.
 10. Very much enjoyed the tour and the guest speakers working in the field. I found everything relevant and useful and I'm hoping to implement several things.
 11. MI's seemingly endless knowledge and expertise gave me a far fuller sense of how to run a special collection and the sort of questions and issues that may come up.
 12. Yes. Security policy needs to be written down in our institution.
- 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. I would have liked slightly more exposure to bibliography, but I understand that is not the focus of this course.
 2. More time for discussion is always helpful, but the brisk trot is understandable.
 3. Yes, MI helped me consider my own special collection and the steps and procedures I need to undertake to improve it. The course also helped me compare my collection, policies, &c. with other institutions.
 4. I think so. It was great to have MI's expertise as curator supplemented by guest speakers presenting their specialties and current projects.
 5. Yes. Some things are difficult to teach as there is a great variety of skilled people in the class.
 6. Yes, I learned what I hoped to learn. It gave me a broad overview of special collections and MI was great about answering specific questions thoroughly and helpfully.
 7. MI was a thorough instructor who made the time for questions and feedback from my classmates and me. I have gained the exact kind of knowledge I had hoped—that which is timely and relevant and which can be applied in all my future work.
 8. Very general course description left content wide open. I can't think of much left out. Reviewed lots of material. Would have liked to discuss reference sources for book research pertaining to special collections, but that is another course altogether.
 9. I learned everything I hoped to learn and more, including getting some helpful practical insight that's relevant for all kinds of librarianship, not just special collections.
 10. Yes, we covered a lot of ground.
 11. The course was superb.
 12. Yes. No. Yes.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. Improve my work as a special collections librarian, especially in relation to people not familiar with the field.

2. Leverage for convincing home institution to explore changes/best practices.
3. Take suggestions back to my administration—security protocols, policies, procedures, &c..
4. I will use this every day. Tremendously helpful thoughts, ideas, theory, history, and practices.
5. Enhance exhibits, work towards better marketing, strive for a new job.
6. It will certainly help me use the NYPL (my local library) and gave me insight and practical knowledge that I can use in order to pursue a career as a librarian.
7. I intend to take what I have learned and apply it directly to my daily work with special collections, especially security best practices and tips on exhibitions.
8. To sharpen my skill sets, encourage me to continue learning, become more active in professional organizations, review/draft required policies, meet with security and conservation staff.
9. I plan to take this knowledge back into my library courses to give context to the things I learn there.
10. Every day in my work to improve policies and practices.
11. I anticipate pursuing a career in special collections.
12. I am a new professional. I plan to use course materials to perform at or above expectations of my current job.

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

1. I think it is well aimed currently. Focus is on those interested in or in early career special collections positions.
2. Early/pre-career. Also great as a refresher.
3. Librarians, curators, new librarians, anyone involved with special collections.
4. Really good intro/survey. There's such a broad range of material to get through that we couldn't go too in depth, so people with a bit of special collections experience may not find it as useful.
5. Librarians during their first years of employment (first three years).
6. I can only say that I—someone very new to the field—benefitted a lot. There were some concepts and vocabulary I didn't understand because I'm so unfamiliar with the field, but I was able to catch up.
7. I think having a background in the library field would be helpful for this course, and some background in special collections even more so. I feel that people new to the profession/early in their careers would benefit most.
8. I believe the content of the course was geared towards practicing special collections librarians, but I was surprised to see two students not in MLS programs. We had a good mix overall.
9. As a library school student, I found this course to be extremely helpful, as it balanced theory with practicality. It is easily accessible for people at any stage of their library career (or even preceding it entirely).
10. Best for special collections librarians but suitable for anyone interested in the field.
11. Having little to no knowledge of the day-to-day administration of a special collection is perfect, but even those with current careers in the field will benefit from this course.
12. Anyone from MLIS student to a professional.

- 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 biggest thing for me was a deeper sense of respect and responsibility for the importance of this work. The example of the professional dedication of MI was impactful.
 2. The scale of the NYPL enterprise is eye-opening.
 3. Never considered a collection security policy or a library-security liaison.
 4. {no response}
 5. One of my classmates in a private conversation shared how their organization worked with difficult topics and the public.
 6. I liked the guest speakers, and especially the field trip to the conservation lab.
 7. The tour of the conservation lab was absolutely amazing. All of the guest speakers offered wonderful insight into their specialties as well. Also, viewing the highlights from the NYPL rare book collection! Mind-blowing!
 8. Most original moment: in conservation lab, meeting Merriam, showing us how to strap a book and make a mount.
 9. This course gives you a real sense of the value of special collections work, in that it impresses on you the importance of preserving the items in a special collection, in their materiality, for the betterment of all human culture.
 10. Loved the chance to explore NYPL’s building and collections.
 11. {no response}
 12. {no response}
- 9) *How could the course have been improved?*
1. Perhaps with slightly better class participation management. The sessions where we were asked to save questions and comments until the end were better for many subjects.
 2. {private response}
 3. More discussion of collections around the room.
 4. There’s so much ground to cover that it’s hard to have time for discussion. It might be better to structure in some more discussion time in addition to the lectures, especially since so many librarians love to talk and share.
 5. Perhaps a lot more hands-on time.
 6. {no response}
 7. I have no suggestions offhand.
 8. It was a bit top heavy on digitization between lab visit and lecture.
 9. It would be nice to have gone over some procedures on making comments or asking questions. In some cases, people interrupted or talked over each other and that could get a bit confusing.
 10. No answer.
 11. {private response}
 12. {no response}

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

1. Yes, and yes (though it was paid for by my employer).
2. Yes. Yes. Wish that all in my department could take this course.
3. Yes. Yes.
4. Yes!
5. Yes. I would recommend.
6. Yes, although I couldn't have afforded it without a scholarship (for which I am very grateful).
7. Yes, and a definite yes!
8. Yes indeed. Yes indeed.
9. I was lucky enough to get a scholarship, but the course would have been worth every penny if I had had to pay for it. I can't recommend it highly enough!
10. Definitely, and definitely.
11. Money well spent. I would recommend this course to others, yes.
12. Yes.

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

1. Yes. It was good to have a break. The transit wasn't arduous and the labs we saw were very interesting.
2. Yes, brief but interesting.
3. Very much so. I hope my library's conservation people can tour NYPL's labs and digitization center.
4. Yes, seeing the conservation and digital labs was AMAZING.
5. The class time off-site was well spent.
6. Yes, one of my favorite parts.
7. 100%. The tour of the Long Island City facility was a fantastic and enlightening experience.
8. Somewhat. Enjoyed conservation lab visit, but not digital lab.
9. The trip to the facility in Queens was fascinating, especially getting to see conservation and digitization work in action.
10. Yes. Great to see how NYPL handles their lab work.
11. Absolutely. The trip to Long Island City was a real eye-opener about conservation and digitization.
12. Yes. Field trip to conservation lab was eye-opening.

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. I went to both evening events. A bit outside my area of expertise, but I enjoyed them. Nice to see Grolier Club and Columbia University library.
2. Only went to Grolier Club. Great space and worthwhile topic. {private response}
3. N/A
4. I went to both. At the Grolier Club I enjoyed spending time with classmates and at the other I really enjoyed the talk/speaker.

5. Almost—the evening events were a touch odd as the speakers were more informative during the Q&A.
6. I enjoyed the talk at the Grolier Club.
7. I attended one, and enjoyed it, but did not feel it was a critical part of the educational experience.
8. Odd topics of lectures were not at all attractive.
9. The lectures gave a great sense of what researchers can actually do with special collections because they engaged with the materiality and organization of books, and also touched on a nice variety of humanities topics.
10. Monday's lecture was interesting, but targeted to a very specific audience (of which I am not a member). Wednesday's looked interesting, but after the field trip to Long Island City, I simply didn't have the energy to go to Columbia University.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}

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

1. Make sure to spend time with your classmates outside of class.
2. Save ahead for unprecedented New York City costs. Make a list of top ten issues at your home organization to ask the best questions.
3. {no response}
4. MI is really kind and gives thoughtful answers. His experience is wide-ranging, and he can offer advice for many different types of institutions and situations.
5. It costs more to be in New York City so take the time to see the Morgan and other museums.
6. {no response}
7. Contribute and participate in discussion. I learned as much from my peers as I did from MI.
8. There's a long reading list, but do not worry about getting through it all.
9. If you love rare books and want to know about their care and keeping, do not hesitate to take this course. On the practical side, don't feel the need to go too far from the library for lunch. There are so many great places in very close proximity.
10. If you have any interest in the field, this is a great overview of working in special collections. MI is engaging and knowledgeable. You won't regret it.
11. {no response}
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. Graceful and respectful and brilliant people.
2. Waking early to
Listen, think, talk all day long
Another page turns
3. New York winds blew warm
We danced amongst the knowledge
Of conservation
4. Extremely enjoyable, exhausting, eye-opening.

5. Time and money well spent. Classmates make all the difference between really good and outstanding.
6. {no response}
7. I didn't think it could get better than a week of Rare Book School in New York City, and I was right!
8. Thus far, it has been a pleasure to attend. Don't want it to end. Enjoyed so much being in school again!
9. If you are a rare book and library nerd, this course is a dream come true.
10. Wonderful!
11. If you love books and learning, you can easily love libraries and librarians.
12. Invaluable.

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: 6 (50%)

My institution/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: 1 (8.33%)

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

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 3 (25%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

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 used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 1 (8.33%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

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

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: 5 (41.67%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 5 (41.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (50%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (8.33%)

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

Library disciplines:

Curator: 1 (8.33%)

Library assistant/clerk: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 5 (41.67%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (8.33%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 1 (8.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Independent scholar: 1 (8.33%)

No response: 1 (8.33%)