

David Pearson
B-65: English Bookbindings, 1450–1850: Identification & Interpretation
21–26 July, 2024, Charlottesville, Virginia

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*

1. Useful readings.
2. N/A
3. Reading through Davis's book on bookbinding was helpful before the class started. Some recommendations for readings outside the scope of the class on the history of ornamentation could be helpful.
4. The reading list was very useful. I appreciate the mix of short/excerpted pieces and complete books. I was also personally gratified that I was able to borrow most of them from the UVA libraries, saving me time and expense!
5. I looked at some of the readings but not all. They were helpful.
6. I only flipped through the pre-course reading and didn't feel unprepared.
7. I was able to browse some resources, but did not have time to read a lot beforehand; it will be useful to look at later.
8. I did not do any pre-course reading (as none were required), and that was fine. The bibliography provided will be a useful reference tool.
9. {no response}
10. They overlapped with previous class readings, but the bibliography provided by the course instructor is a great way to add more resources to keep reading and referring to.
11. N/A. There were no pre-course reading for this course.

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. Great workbook—lecture closely followed which made annotating easy. Great color handouts—I will use as a reference for a long time to come.
2. The course workbook was very helpful for following along with the lectures and physical book examples we saw.
3. The handouts were quite useful, and I will use them in combination with DP's book as an ongoing reference source. It might be helpful to add more feature-specific visual summaries like the marbled paper handout. In other words, create a handout showing just spines through the centuries, &c.
4. The workbook was a well organized overview of the lecture topics and made it easier to jump back in if a distraction happened. The supplemental worksheets and informational handouts were very useful, as they provided access to color images presented on slides during the lectures.
5. I really liked the workbook. It was helpful to add in my notes and sketches beside the margins and illustrations. I realize it's probably not feasible but it would be nice to have the illustrations in order. Yes, I plan to look back at the workbook and my notes.

6. The coursebook and handouts were excellent and will be useful for identifying binding features.
7. I really appreciate the handouts and workbook. I liked that they were given at the start so I could take notes. Good reference for when I go back to work.
8. The course workbook was very good. Even though illustrations in it are in black and white, I appreciated that the supplemental handouts were in color. All materials will have enduring usefulness. I might suggest 1.5 spacing in the workbook to leave more room for interlinear notes (though I understand that that might use too much paper).
9. DP is incredibly thorough. The workbook contains any possible binding scenario, and I will absolutely consult it when I need to identify bindings.
10. The course workbook is organized well and will serve as a great resource for me moving forward.
11. Yes. Course workbook is very well designed and lays out an outline of course content and will be useful to me in the future. Only suggestion may be to add a few blank pages for notes. Handouts very useful as well.

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. Lot of practical information (types of leather, progression of styles).
2. Being able to identify key markers for eras and styles of bindings was something I wanted to gain from this course, and I feel that was achieved! I am excited to walk away knowing I have notes, images, and knowledge added to my descriptive toolkit.
3. I came away with detailed knowledge I can apply to a particular set of Seventeenth-century books. I have a new appreciation for the variety of the binding styles used in the period.
4. I came into the course with little existing knowledge of the topic apart from a general vocabulary of book parts/production. The course was accessible—and DP expert enough—to quickly and intimately familiarize me to a level of great comfort with the subject matter.
5. Being able to identify the leather and different aspects of the binding will be beneficial. I'm hoping to go back to work and look at some items in our collection for additional description in the bibliographical record.
6. I liked thinking about different repairs and interventions over the course of a book's life and using physical evidence to understand how people might have used, engaged with, or thought about their books.
7. The course reminded me on how to best investigate bindings. The instructor provided a lot of good anchor points to place bindings as well as showed exceptions.
8. I was most interested in the earlier (pre-1600 bindings), but it's all good to know—mainly I wanted to develop my personal “toolkit” for identifying bindings and dating. Many new insights—no immediate project plans.
9. I really appreciate that we went through all of the possible bindings in chronological order. I feel like I now have a mental framework for identifying.
10. The opportunity to interact with the items at the Folger was most relevant, my previous class overlapped with the materials we viewed, seeing other examples in addition to the RBS collection really provided a whole range of examples of a large period of time.

11. Most intriguing to me was seeing examples and elements that distinguish English bindings through time. I will definitely now be better informed and equipped to identify, date, and explain exemplars in my institution's collections.
- 4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*
1. Definitely.
 2. DP is one of the true experts in this field, and I feel he imparted all the knowledge we expected from the course description and then some.
 3. Yes. I hoped to build on my knowledge and identification skills. I wanted to come away with a knowledge base and hands-on experience—and I did.
 4. Yes. I've come away with the knowledge base I hoped to gain for recognizing and describing English bindings of the hand press era.
 5. Yes, and yes.
 6. Yes
 7. Yes. I'm very pleased to have taken this course!
 8. Yes. Yes. I only wish I'd had more time to practice and internalize the skills learned.
 9. Yes! DP is very engaging lecturer who is excellent at communicating clearly and with great organization.
 10. Yes. I learned everything I hoped to learn this week. My brain is heavy with all of the new information.
 11. Yes, I believe I learned all that it is possible to learn in a one-week course. Only thing missing was perhaps learning about identifying individual binders, but this would be a big lift and perhaps is not possible without years of study so probably not a germane suggestion.
- 5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. Identifying materials in our collection more accurately.
 2. I hope that I will be able to write better binding descriptions for catalog records, so that scholars have access to that information!
 3. Primarily, to better understand and develop my main collection.
 4. I intend to use the skills to assist me in acquiring and browsing books for my personal collection/use.
 5. Hopefully identify binding already in our collection and also newly acquired books to add description in cataloging.
 6. Continuing to build on the knowledge I've gained about rare books from my work experience and RBS courses to better appreciate and understand the books in our care.
 7. To help me identify bindings that I am repairing to understand the history of the object, which must be considered especially when doing highly intrusive work.
 8. They will be regularly useful in my work.
 9. In my own research, it will enable me to question a book's provenance, and not assume that the binding matches the date of imprint—an important addition to my intellectual toolkit!

10. I plan to use this knowledge during assessments and acquisitions. This course expanded my knowledge base and added to my reference resources.
11. I plan to use the knowledge and skills I learned here for direct applications in my day-to-day job, since we have a collection of English bindings. I now have the vocabulary and points I can make about many items I may encounter.

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Anyone working with early materials from any country—information for binding from other areas was often discussed.
2. Catalogers, rare book librarians, rare book sellers, and anyone interested in historical bookbindings.
3. Anyone working with books from this era—librarians, curators, conservators, collectors, archivists, and book dealers.
4. Anyone with a general interest in rare books is likely to find this course to be very enjoyable.
5. Catalogers, conservators, book collectors, researchers, &c.
6. Rare book catalogers or scholars interested in the history of the book as an object.
7. Conservators, binders, catalogers, &c.
8. Anyone wishing to have their ability to interpret—analyze, localize, date—early books. The course is about bindings but touches on provenance, paper, and repairs/conservation.
9. I think this is best for librarians or anyone doing cataloging.
10. Anyone interested personally/professionally in bookbindings and their progression and evolution over time.
11. Social and cultural historians, rare book curators, and conservators.

7) *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. Close examination of books to ascertain materials used.
2. The kind of sociology of the book trade—this idea that for a long time, bookbinders were very low on the ladder and made very little money for the skills they had. I would not have expected that.
3. {no response}
4. Nothing to note here.
5. {no response}
6. I really appreciated all the questions my classmates raised. DP was very open to exploring topics or ideas based on our questions and interests.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. Going to the Folger was a very unique and special experience that put all of our knowledge into context. It was also just exciting to see their new building.
10. N/A
11. Not entirely sure there were any huge “aha!” moments given having some pre-knowledge on general history of bindings, although it was revelatory to me that some designs were earlier than I would have thought. Did like the revelation of alterations observed in bindings through time and use of pastiches on previous binding styles in new items and outright imitations vs. comparison with originals.

8) *Are there any other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. There was sometimes an offer to share examples from our collections. If I had known that would have been possible, I would have brought some photos or JPGs. Perhaps let people know in advance that they can do that.
2. {no response}
3. Consider adding more hands-on observation and identification exercises like the one we did on the last day. So valuable!
4. It was an intensive seminar and was much more mentally commanding than I expected. An extra 15–30 minute break each day would have helped.
5. More color illustrations within the workbook. Maybe if it can be available digitally?
6. Not that I can think of.
7. Perhaps have some of the Folger materials be imaged and put into the booklet (indecipherable features) so less time is spent taking pictures and more is spent listening and watching. Or the images could be in a digital file.
8. The course is (necessarily) lecture heavy. I think it would be helpful—and engaging—to build in more “active learning” activities to help cement lecture content. The ones we did were fabulous. The binding demonstration was fantastic, but (schedule permitting) would work best on the first day.
9. I found myself wanting more historical context. I know that it is a poorly documented trade, so this is not really DP's fault. I think it was more documented in the Nineteenthth century, so more of that. Also, any way we could talk about economic impact?
10. Putting the bindings into the context of history more would have been great. Include a short introduction about what was happening in the world that impacted how bindings were produced.
11. Can't think of anything to improve.

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? On a 1–10 scale, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10
2. 10
3. 10
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 5
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhanced the course experience?*

1. Trip to the Folger was very instructive.
2. All of the experiences we had with guests and on our field trip to the Folger were excellent and really provided more depth of understanding to the materials we studied.
3. The day trip to Folger was 16 hours, start to finish, which made for a long day. I'm not sure that the time and energy cost was worth it—when compared with more time that could be spent on hands-on observation and identification exercises.
4. YES! The trip to Folger, while making for a long day, was a great addition to the course and a real highlight of the week. The quantity and kinds of books we were able to see there, as well as the space we had to engage with them, was wonderful.
5. The demonstration from Amanda Nelson for binding a book was really interesting, as was visiting the conservation lab. The trip to the Folger was really great! Even though it's a really long day, it's worth it. Being able to see the huge variety, especially with the earlier centuries that RBS didn't have examples of was very helpful.
6. Yes—Amanda Nelson's demonstration was useful for understanding how books were constructed. Yes—the field trip to the Folger gave me more chances to interact with the books but I wish we'd had less class time on Friday to recover (maybe a later start or retaining the longer lunch).
7. Yes. The field trip day presented a lot of bindings. However, I will have to review all the photos and information in order to help the experience sink in. It makes for some good homework.
8. It was a long day, but yes. Again, I'd just suggest making the Folger visit a bit more hands-on. Perhaps, using one of the four sessions to challenge us to chronologically arrange a selection of bindings, or date a selection in small groups, or similar.
9. Going to the Folger was a superb experience which I only would have been able to do in this course.
10. Yes! The Folger + Ice Cream = A good time :)
11. Not entirely sure that the 2.5 hour trip to DC was necessary given we could see the same books as images and did have the opportunity to see RBS examples. Perhaps RBS can acquire additional examples to support this course?

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

1. {no response}
2. Be ready to soak up a LOT of information over five days (but that can be said of most RBS courses).
3. If you work with British books from the hand press period, this course is worth taking.
4. Be prepared for sitting for hour-plus stretches of time as well as stretches of standing around tables/book displays. The legs can get restless, so be sure to move around during the breaks.
5. It's not necessary to bring your laptop to class unless that's the only way you take notes.
6. Eat breakfast and stay hydrated. Each day is packed!
7. DP is super helpful. Bring all your questions and a curious mind.
8. {no response}

9. I took notes in a notebook, but I don't think that was necessary. DP's workbook is just as good as any notes I took, and, if anything, writing notes distracted me from looking at pictures.
10. Pace yourself. Reading a little ahead in the workbook the night before will help you keep up with the lecture and will help you think of relevant questions.
11. No, other than it is recommended!

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

1. I'll be back!
2. {private response}
3. Collegial atmosphere, strong support staff, excellent instructors.
4. "English Bookbindings, 1450 to 1850"/This was so fun!
5. It's exhausting but fun!
6. {no response}
7. An essential experience for book conservators who want to explore book history and production.
8. {no response}
9. Can't wait to come back for a third class next year!
10. Happiness is old books and ice cream, who knew!
11. Fabulous.