

David Pearson
C-90: Provenance: Tracing Owners & Collections
9–14 July 2017

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. The two books by DP were excellent and informative. *Provenance Research* gave me insights into the areas we would study. Some of the other book history books I didn't read since I had taken several book history courses. Additional preparation was in the form of looking at books in my collection with ownership evidence and photographing them.
2. Of all of them, those written by DP are an absolute must. *What is a Book?* Is also excellent. I could have done without Finkelstein and McCleery, though, for the purposes of this particular course.
3. I took this course partially because I understood there would be no advance preparation. I read one-and-a-half books on the suggested reading list before class.
4. N/A; I was only able to do a small portion of the pre-course reading.
5. The book list was helpful and familiar. All the classics.
6. I only got through two of the books in advance, but look forward to working through the rest. All seemed quite appropriate.
7. Many were quite useful, though some seemed a bit general. Perhaps pointing to the specific provenance sections of some of the books would make sense.
8. Yes. No. No, although Stoddard can be difficult to find.
9. Yes, they were—copious, and some unavailable for purchase, but all informative texts.
10. I would suggest dividing the reading list into “basics” and “advanced,” with *What is a Book?*-type texts in the former category, and more complex, specialized readings in the latter. I do appreciate that the course was not overly reliant on everyone doing a lot of pre-class reading.
11. DP's and Danes books are both excellent. I might remove Taylor's *Book Catalogues*.
12. Informative and well-chosen. We did have some unstructured time toward the end of the course—it might have been fun if each class member had brought one image of provenance evidence he/she was currently puzzling over to share and discuss. It also might have been nice to do this as an icebreaker of sorts.
13. Very useful and informative. {private response}
14. All of the pre-course reading assignments were useful. The Joseph Dane book was a particularly good read. DP's *Provenance Research* is the best direct preparation for the 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. The workbook was outstanding! It enabled me to add notes right next to what was being talked about. It was a comprehensive outline, but DP had much more to say at each point. The illustrations (paleography, heraldry, bookplates, and labels) were great and will be an excellent reference.
2. A very useful guide for every day, with the added value that it supplements and updates DP's *Provenance Research in Book History: A Handbook* in many relevant aspects.
3. Very helpful. What I wanted. Yes, I am writing a book and will use the information.
4. Great! Very helpful to have the notes printed out, and I found the handouts and homework exercises helpful as well. Great reference for future use.
5. The handbook and handouts were great. I will keep them and use them to refer to while writing my dissertation.
6. Most useful, particularly the superior sections on bookplates and heraldry.
7. Quite excellent! I look forward to using it as a reference for a long time to come. I really liked the fact that the lecture outlines were included.
8. Very much so. Yes.
9. Workbook was well organized. Course materials were well illustrated and will be handy to own/use.
10. Very appropriate, and very useful. I know that I will turn to this document many times in the coming years! The illustrations (e.g., bookplates) are very helpful. I also appreciate the written outline of course lectures. This will help me remember what I've learned and pass it on to others.
11. Workbook and other materials useful.
12. Very helpful, and the additional sheets of exercises and homework were useful. Two small changes I would suggest for the workbook: 1) slightly larger margins to allow for additional notes; and 2) a sample form sheet, either bound into the workbook or available loose-leaf (around ten sheets per person), for recording provenance info (i.e., like the answer sheets but with the copy-specific info removed).
13. The workbook was very useful and I will continue to use it in my work.
14. The course workbook and exercises were all appropriate and useful, and I will definitely continue in my cataloging work.

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

1. Same high quality and interest.
2. Equally as excellent.
3. I thought this was excellent.
4. More thorough course materials. Same (excellent) caliber of instruction. Same great approachable atmosphere.
5. N/A
6. This is one of my faves!
7. This one was right up there with the others. I thought the handout assignments were really great, and it was logically structured.
8. All, including this one, have been excellent.
9. Of the four courses I've taken, this is the best instructor—by far. I look forward to studying further with him.

10. N/A
 11. Comparable.
 12. This course was a bit heavier on lecture (vs. hands-on) time toward the start of the week than other courses I've taken.
 13. One of the best.
 14. Same very high standard.
- 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. Interpreting inscriptions was very valuable and understanding heraldry was fascinating. Realizing how revealing all the marks in books can be about the previous centuries' readers was very interesting.
 2. Bookplates and heraldry, because I knew nothing about them before, and the assorted works of reference and databases that we were shown how to use.
 3. The subject. Yes, I will incorporate (I hope) my new knowledge into this book I'm doing.
 4. All of the information was extremely interesting and relevant to my interests.
 5. Marginalia was most helpful, but heraldry was really fun and new to me.
 6. DP's breakdown of armorial bookplates by stylistic time periods will revolutionize my cataloging. Wish I could go back and redo fifteen years of "unidentified..."
 7. I really appreciated bookplate, heraldry, and paleography, the most hands-on portions of the class. I always walk away with too many plans!
 8. Found the introduction to heraldry very helpful. I will need to do more work on paleography.
 9. I feel well equipped to handle object research for special collections and to discuss issues with catalogers. The review of heraldry was most helpful, something I have long wanted to do but never found a venue for.
 10. It's hard to say what was most interesting because everything was fascinating. This course has basically given me a new set of eyes, and this is a great gift indeed. I will pass on the knowledge I learned in the library science classes, and instructional sessions I teach. I will try to share these new eyes with others! I also want to plan an exhibition on marks in books at my institution.
 11. I learned techniques that I will be able to apply immediately to my research.
 12. The course was an excellent general overview of the area.
 13. Paleography: I am much better at reading old handwriting. Heraldry: I previously knew nothing, but now I have learned the basics, and where to look things up. Invaluable for my job.
 14. I walked away with all kinds of new insights, and with a determination to do more with the provenance evidence I encounter in books.
- 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, absolutely to all questions.
 2. Completely. Nothing was left undeveloped because so many questions were asked and answered. DP is extremely patient and generous with his wealth of knowledge. Thank you so much.

3. Yes. No. Yes.
4. Yes, it was very thorough and helpful. I would like to learn more about how bindings, &c., speak to provenance, but I think that is somewhat outside the scope of a course of this duration.
5. I learned more about provenance than I ever thought possible.
6. Yes!
7. Yes, definitely. As always, a week is not enough time to really get all the skills needed, but the framework was created quite nicely.
8. Yes. Not that I noticed. Yes.
9. The course lived up to its description well. The slides used could have been updated in parts, and more discussion of web-based research tools would have been helpful.
10. The outcomes of the course match and exceed my expectations. We covered the perfect amount of material—not too rushed or slow.
11. Yes.
12. I was most interested in the introduction to analyzing ex-libris/heraldic provenance info, and was not disappointed. I would have liked to have seen some use of the newer electronic tools integrated into the course as a class exercise instead of only displayed as static screenshots, though I guess that would require students to bring laptops.
13. The course was extremely useful, as advertised.
14. I definitely learned what I had hoped to learn.

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

1. I plan to go through my collection and copy specific indications of provenance in my database and try researching many of them.
2. In my description of a collection of early printed English books at my university library which have not been described, and all their copy-specific marks.
3. See Q4 and Q5.
4. To conduct my own independent research.
5. I will use them for dissertation research on the use/reuse of seventeenth century alchemical texts.
6. All of the units will help my cataloging.
7. I plan to explore my collections, and also create guides for researchers in our collections, for understanding provenance information and what they might find written/pasted in books.
8. Dating and cataloging my books.
9. Researching provenance on rare book room items to enhance cataloging records, and to create a database thoroughly describing each item in a recent large donation.
10. I hope to be able to better interpret the provenance evidence in my own library, especially on behalf of students and researchers.
11. I have some armorial bookplates and bindings that I now feel able to research.
12. I intend to do some work on my own personal collections, and be generally better informed when encountering provenance info in other settings.
13. As a cataloger, I am often puzzled by early inscriptions, armorial bookplates, and bindings. This course had helped me improve my skills greatly, and given me a foundation to continue developing them.

14. I will use the skills and knowledge acquired to enhance the bibliographic records at my home institution.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. The intellectual level was high with great respect shown to all members of the class. Anyone with an interest in the interaction of books and owners and readers would love it.
 2. High. Those already familiar with library and archival research and introduced to the basics of book studies.
 3. Someone cataloging early books.
 4. I found this course accessible to anyone with a basic grasp of physical book vocabulary.
 5. High intellectual level. Graduate student (I was the only one surprisingly), librarian, or book collector. {private response}
 6. While none of the material requires rocket science level brains, some prior experience or reading will be helpful to give a stronger context. There's just too much for intro-level work.
 7. Anyone who has some familiarity with rare books would benefit.
 8. Not sure what you are looking for here. Anyone interested in books could gainfully attend. Catalogers and collectors.
 9. This course offers a good introduction to all aspects of provenance research. It is not taught at an advanced level, and does not assume or require Latin skills, or previous experience.
 10. This class worked well for a diverse group of individuals—librarians, collectors, and grad students. I would also recommend it to booksellers! It is helpful if you have worked with and handled a fair number of books, but you don't need to be an expert.
 11. High. Librarians, collectors, and dealers would all benefit.
 12. It was helpful to have seen many examples of annotation and ownership marks before coming to the class. Otherwise there wasn't really any prerequisite, though a familiarity with paleography and binding history would have been useful.
 13. Average level of difficulty. Good for librarians, collectors, and academics.
 14. {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. Being able to read previously unknown letters in inscriptions was an "aha" event. Learning a bit about the language used to describe coats of arms was fascinating.
 2. More than any "aha" moment, the most noteworthy educational moment is the Friday morning study of books from SC. On looking back, you find you had learned so much without scarcely noticing.
 3. The opportunity to see examples of what we were studying was priceless to me. Obviously, DP spent time searching out the material.
 4. All very useful.
 5. Learning about all the ways to identify owners, and that at the end of the day, you

- will still likely be left with questions. This realization made it less daunting.
6. The bookplate session will change your life!
 7. Understanding the development of bookplate designs to roughly date them. Getting started in understanding heraldic blazons.
 8. There were many such moments but just too tired now to single one out!
 9. When the daunting task of tracking ownership actually worked out well using the research materials we discussed.
 10. I can't pinpoint any specific moment, but overall this course strengthened my powerful belief that books are living things with countless stories to tell.
 11. Heraldry is weird, but kinda fun.
 12. It was very satisfying to be able to finally make sense of heraldic bookplates.
 13. Realizing early modern handwriting is in fact decipherable!
 14. The paleography and heraldry sections of the course were the clearest yield for me overall. I also learned to distinguish better between dealer's price codes and actual prices, and shelf marks.

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

1. I thought it was just right.
2. I don't know, perhaps a five minute intro to the rudiments of the Latin grammar of early modern inscriptions? It helps contextualize and perhaps figure out words.
3. No thoughts.
4. N/A
5. Adopt a book that doesn't already have provenance info recorded and write its provenance for RBS. We did this, but just for fun.
6. My only tiny quibble would be to prefer a bit more paleography breakdown by century.
7. Perhaps a bit less of the introductory "why provenance." I got the sense most people already agreed, and I was eager to get to the meat of things. Otherwise, nothing!
8. Instead of introduction, have participants describe a provenance problem they have recently faced, and on the last day show if the course has helped.
9. Have more copies available for, and allow after-hours use of, reference books not held in Alderman, but in SC reference and RBS collections unavailable to students.
10. It was pretty darn near perfect!
11. I would have liked additional exercises with some of the reference works (Franks, Burke, and Fairbairn). It would be useful to see examples of marked up auction catalogs.
12. The first day might have been improved with some rearrangement of the schedule to look at more material and/or look at materials earlier. It was a lot of lecture for a single day. More use of electronic databases (live) would have been welcome.
13. {no response}
14. {no response}

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

1. Yes. Yes.

2. Absolutely.
3. Yes. Yes.
4. Yes, and yes!
5. Yes! Yes!
6. You bet!
7. Yes, definitely.
8. Yes. Yes.
9. I certainly spent my money well, and I will recommend this course to future students.
10. Absolutely.
11. Yes. Yes.
12. Yes, I would recommend this course to others.
13. Very worth the money. Highly recommended!
14. I would definitely recommend this course highly.

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

1. No actual trips.
2. Thanks for the session at SC.
3. No trips outside the classroom.
4. N/A
5. Just to lunch and SC. It was definitely time well spent.
6. SC is an extraordinary resource to have so nearby. I only wish they weren't quite so protective of the material so we might handle a bit more.
7. SC sessions on Friday were a good ending exercise.
8. N/A
9. {no response}
10. Yes, it was good to go to SC. {private response}
11. Yes.
12. N/A
13. {no response}
14. N/A

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. Enjoyed the Monday night lecture. Couldn't go to the other events although I would have liked to. They were appealing.
2. I attended Movie Night and particularly enjoyed the film on traditional Japanese and European papermaking.
3. Yes. In prior years, there seemed to be more which would have been nice. N/A.
4. I attended the two evening lectures and Booksellers' Night, and enjoyed all of it.
5. N/A
6. Philip Maddock's binding lecture was DA BOMB! Fantastic!
7. Lectures this week were both quite good, and worth the time. I didn't attend Movie Night. I always love Booksellers' Night, and exploring downtown with fellow students.

8. Monday evening was excellent.
9. I enjoyed the Malkin lecture very much even though its description led me to believe I could skip it. He was, however, a valued class member, so I'm glad I attended.
10. I attended both lectures, and they were enjoyable. Booksellers' Night is a delight.
11. Both evening lectures were highly worthwhile.
12. Both lectures were enjoyable.
13. {private response}
14. All good.

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

1. DP is so knowledgeable but so humble. Although he's the expert, his interest in the class members' opinions was genuine.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. N/A
5. Must do for book historians!
6. If you don't get in the first time, keep trying. I did, and it was worth it!
7. {no response}
8. {no response}
9. It's a no brainer. Just take this course and you are bound to learn and be glad you did. Content connects to many real life uses. You will find much of what you learn very relevant. Instructor is quite knowledgeable.
10. Take it!!!
11. {no response}
12. I wish I had taken this course years ago!
13. A fantastic course. Well worth it.
14. Do it. As DP would say, "get your eye in."

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

1. The week was mind expanding, and I enjoyed being in the community of those interested in book history.
2. {no response}
3. If books are your interest, this is the place for you.
4. Loved it; very sorry to leave. It went by too fast!
5. Fun, professional, and learning-filled!
6. Bring on the pen tests! One week is never enough! My soul is renewed.
7. {no response}
8. If you wish to be cool
Attend Rare Book School.
9. I came, I listened, I learned.
10. Enlightening.
11. A pleasure to spend a week with such a knowledgeable and generous bookman, and with my classmates.
12. I'll think twice before erasing readers' marks in modern books now.

13. {no response}

14. {no response}

Student Data

Number of respondents: 14 (of 14)

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 8 (57.14%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:
1 (7.14%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule:
1 (7.14%)

I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 4 (28.57%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (42.86%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (28.57%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (14.29%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 1 (7.14%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.14%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 9 (64.29%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (7.14%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (14.29%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (14.29%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 11 (78.57%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (14.29%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (7.14%)

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

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 3 (21.43%)

Public services librarian: 2 (14.29%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (7.14%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 1 (7.14%)

Professional educator:

Associate professor: 1 (7.14%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 3 (21.43%)

Retired: 2 (14.29%)

No Response: 1 (7.14%)