

Karen Limper-Herz
B-10: Introduction to the History of Bookbinding
8–13 July 2018

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 list is extensive. I spent a lot of time reading about publishers' bindings and we spent a half-day on it. A list of priority readings would help.
2. The pre-course reading was very useful (the list is long and I didn't get through all of it).
3. Yes, the reading was useful, but I only had access to one title at home. Luckily, it was a survey book, so it provided a great overview of the topic.
4. There were so many books suggested, I just didn't have time to read all of them. I think the list may be more appropriately titled "suggested reading," as I think it will now be more useful to me after the course. Having the course book in advance, however, was extremely useful, and I'm glad I read that through in advance. I would suggest to future students that they consider printing a copy in color to bring with them.
5. Specify the relative importance of the many books suggested so we know what to focus on. Otherwise, the pre-reading is too broad.
6. The readings are numerous—well worth browsing them, but I couldn't have read everything on the list due to time constraints.
7. The reading assignments were useful but overwhelming. Some prioritization or ranking would be helpful. For additional prep, I spent four hours looking at bindings in our special collections.
8. I did find the readings helpful but I was not able to get through all of them before arrival. While I'd recommend looking at as much as possible, I did not feel that I was in the dark once class started. The course did not seem to rely on a student having extensive background knowledge going in.
9. Information that may be useful would be the resources instructors use for their own research.
10. To be honest, I did very little of the pre-reading. It's very hard to find the time. I would rather have the course be a true introduction and go away with a list of optional "further reading." The value of RBS is not only the course content, but the concentrated, dedicated time spent away from regular work.
11. The course pre-reading was really daunting. Although they were divided into two sections, it would have been helpful to know if there were two or three that were essential. Several in the suggested readings were just as helpful, and those in the first section.
12. This is a huge subject, and the workbook is terrific! Reading list was good. I can't cite potential additions off of the top of my head. I might add websites that feature bookbindings like the nineteenth-century decorated cloth bindings one.
13. Yes, the readings were useful. I was able to get most through ILL. I was able to read about half the items, skim through the rest. I think you get more out of the

class if you do the readings.

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. Workbook was good. Distributing it in color would have been best.
2. Excellent. I will continue to refer to the workbook, and appreciate the thorough reading list.
3. Very useful, will use it after class. Would also make it better if there was a glossary of the terminology.
4. Yes, the course book will continue to be useful to me (as all other course books have been). This was a fairly handout-light course, which I appreciated. I would have loved it if the course book had included a glossary of terms and an index, but really appreciated the annotated timeline at the back. Since the book doesn't have empty space for notes, I strongly encourage future students to bring a notebook.
5. Excellent. I was happy to get it in advance via WeTransfer so I knew what to expect.
6. The workbook didn't match with the lecture. This might be a result of the last minute substitution of instructor. Perhaps in the future the workbook will serve more as a guide with the PowerPoints and lectures.
7. The workbook was outstanding when printed in color. Thank you for sending the file so I could do that before coming to Charlottesville. I expect to refer to it often. I especially loved the timeline.
8. I feel like the workbook will be more useful after the course. The lectures did not closely follow the order of the workbook, so I did not refer to it much during class. It is full of useful info though, and I'll certainly return to it in the future.
9. The workbook is great. It would be wonderful if more information/note-taking room were present.
10. Yes, I will keep the workbook for reference. I would really like it if RBS workbooks routinely came with a few extra blank pages in the back so we can take notes in the workbook, and keep the notes and workbook material together. I take notes in my workbook (and so do others), but have to scavenge blank spaces here and there!
11. Absolutely, but I did not print out the handbook in advance in color because we were told it would be provided in black-and-white. Continuing to provide it early would be good for those who prefer color illustrations, something I personally find more helpful. It was also really nice that we could take photos of bindings to create our own personal guidebooks with notes.
12. The workbook is excellent, and I will continue to use it for research and teaching. While I am sorry not to have taken a course from JSvL (I have a strong interest in his chocolate box bindings), I appreciate the work he put into the workbook.
13. The workbook seems great, but wish I had it a week or two earlier. I was too busy preparing to leave work for a week at RBS to read it. It will be a good reference.

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

1. {no response}
2. Also excellent!
3. N/A

4. It was of similarly high quality.
 5. Both excellent.
 6. This course was structured in a way that kept the class on schedule. We covered a large array of topics, and time periods. It was very instructive.
 7. This was on par with the best.
 8. This course was a bit more lecture-based than my previous courses. I think that is fine given its nature as a historical survey. Just as interesting and helpful as my previous experiences at RBS.
 9. "Intro to Bookbinding" was great. I've learned new terms, new small details to look for when looking at a book, and have better understanding of what I work with every day.
 10. This course was equally rich in information, and useful as an overview intro to the topic. However, it did not involve as much hands-on activity as some other courses (e.g., papermaking or typography) and I missed that aspect. {private response}
 11. I knew on day one that this was going to be my favorite class, and that is not to say the classes I've taken before were not excellent, just that this one was so incredible.
 12. Almost all of the courses I have taken have been very good—it is clear that RBS gets the best faculty. KLH was asked to step in without much planning time, and she did an excellent job—with the topic, and with her presentation of the topic. For her ability to jump in and pick up the class she gets an "A"!
 13. This was my favorite. KLH was an amazing teacher!
- 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 enjoyed the alternating approach of lecture and hands-on.
 2. Seeing such a range of examples across countries and centuries to draw out broader patterns. Seeing a wider range of styles, attributes, and techniques than I would come across in my day-to-day work.
 3. Examples of different bindings, hands-on activities, like rubbings.
 4. I think what surprised me most is how relevant the entirety of the course was for me—my collection is mostly one certain type of material, but since this material has been affected by other historical periods, knowing about the bindings from those other periods is immensely helpful. I'm excited to go back and look at things I didn't really consider important until now.
 5. The latter half of the course was more relevant because much time was spent on very early bindings which are inaccessible to many.
 6. New insights into identifying various aspects of book designs, time periods, and covering materials. The course opened my eyes to how I can see the books in our collection for multiple ways of teaching and learning. This was highly useful for what I do.
 7. It's hard to pick one thing from a survey course, but certainly the delineation of features by period and country, with many examples, was what I came for. I already had a project plan, but came away planning to construct a visual timeline for my own use and for teaching.
 8. As a cataloger, I really appreciated that this course gave me a more developed descriptive vocabulary. It really helped connect and contextualize my prior knowledge of bookbinding. I feel better equipped to accurately describe bindings now.

9. Everything was interesting and relevant because all of what we touched on comes up every day at work.
 10. The bookbinding demonstration by Amanda Nelsen, own its own, increased my understanding of bookbinding by about 300%. The rest was just details!
 11. So very many insights, ideas, and new knowledge, not to mention more confidence when looking at bindings to have a better sense of what I'm looking at. The combination of PowerPoint and show-and-tell with actual books was wonderful. My only complaint would be it was confusing to see later bindings when we were still in the early centuries.
 12. Bookbinding history is a topic I am continually asked to teach on in a variety of courses. I came with my volunteer researcher who needed a beginning intro for binding. I felt she should get other people besides me to instruct her, but also wanted to hear what she heard so confusion would be minimized. That appears to have succeeded. When we get back to campus, we will start on a major project to better describe our early bindings.
 13. Book finishing is a topic I didn't know much about, so it was all interesting. I also enjoyed seeing so many wonderful examples. Although not part of my job, I was given ideas for personal bookbinding projects using different materials and methods.
- 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. KLH was great, and extremely competent and charming. There is tremendous ground to cover and she did so.
 2. Yes. No. Definitely.
 3. Yes, KLH was great!
 4. Yes. KLH was enormously kind, patient, and helpful. She was always willing to clarify and elaborate on anything, and never made me feel stupid or incompetent for asking a question. She was extremely knowledgeable, and I felt like I was safely in the hands of an expert. I always realize at the end of RBS how much I have left to learn, but as with other courses, feel like I've been given the tools to do it.
 5. I hope in the future that less time is spent on the very early centuries, and more time is added to the eighteenth century and onward.
 6. Overall, the class covered all aspects. The middle nineteenth-to-early-twentieth-century was not covered as thoroughly; the mechanism or industrial impact on binding wasn't really covered in detail. Given the tremendous impact, it would be nice to have covered more about that aspect.
 7. Absolutely—KLH is so knowledgeable, and made sure we understood as we went along.
 8. KLH was a fantastic instructor, and her passion and expertise were readily apparent from start to finish. I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to take this course with her. She presented the material clearly, and was always receptive to questions and requests for additional clarification.
 9. The only problem I ran into was answers being explained. I don't know if any of my questions were clear enough or if we were on different pages while talking. Otherwise, everything I gained was new and interesting.
 10. Yes. No. Yes.

11. Yes. Halfway through the week, I felt I would never “get it” and in the field trip to SC, I thought it was too daunting a topic to feel comfortable with, but upon reflection, trends started to appear, and so my notes and the pictures I took will help to sort out the different styles, binding materials, and countries of origin in coming weeks/months. I’m very excited to return to my collection and improve descriptions of bindings, and identify all the mysteries in said collection.
 12. Given that this course covers early bindings to the nineteenth century, there is a lot to cover. I think that the emphasis will always be on the historical period the teacher is most familiar with. I personally needed more input on early bindings, so this class was great for me. I have already taken “The Decorated Cloth” class twice—seventeen years apart—so didn’t need that emphasis. KLH’s areas of strength are what I needed!
 13. Yes, a good selection overall. Would have been interested to know a little more about the different processes that related to bookbindings in these different periods.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. Return home and go through my rare book collection with a “new” eye.
 2. I will use it to create more thorough and detailed binding descriptions.
 3. In future library career, fingers crossed!
 4. In acquisitions for my collection, in consideration of moving general reference items to rare collection spaces, in assistance with research, and in my own personal research and writing.
 5. Research, and personal knowledge.
 6. To help identify the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century books that I curate. To work with faculty to incorporate visual arts into teaching and learning. To help understand the hand binding techniques that developed through time, in concert with teaching about the history of the book.
 7. I’ll be starting on a project this fall to describe the most important bindings in our collection. Couldn’t have begun to do it without the course.
 8. This experience will greatly benefit my catalog descriptions.
 9. All of the skills, and yes I mean all will be used daily, both at work and while I hunt for book treasures.
 10. In a general way, my improved understanding of the construction of a book as a physical object will help support my work with library collections.
 11. Improve existing descriptions, and work on my planned bindings exhibit in the fall. Now that this class has provided the background, the task of preparing for that exhibit is no longer as overwhelming an undertaking. Thank you, thank you!
 12. Working with volunteer researchers on our collections, teaching a variety of undergraduate and graduate classes, working with our senior conservator to select bindings to treat, and perhaps acquiring new items based on information in class. Also, just enjoying more detailed knowledge about the books I handle each day!
 13. Condition reports, conservation treatments, and a general, better understanding (and appreciation) of the collections with which I work.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*

1. This was an introductory course. It will help those with some knowledge of binding (technically) and experience with book history.
 2. This course would suit a variety of levels—we had a range of backgrounds and experience levels in the group, and it was great to share experiences too.
 3. Accessible level. From enthusiast, to library professional.
 4. Anyone who works with rare books and bound materials. Probably not someone who is a complete novice to any kind of rare book work, but anyone who has collected, sold, cataloged, studied, or otherwise worked with bound materials.
 5. Graduate level, or anyone with a love of books as historical and artistic objects. A background in history and art history is helpful.
 6. Upper level, but not expertise. Students need to have a solid grasp of social and political history, and trends in design. Either upper level undergrad, or first level graduate school in humanities or social sciences.
 7. Appropriate. Anyone with an interest would be able to follow and benefit from the class.
 8. I feel that it is a broad enough survey that those simply interested in bookbinding would benefit from taking it, as well as those who are already familiar with the field.
 9. Someone taking this course should have a very minimal idea of books and that not all are the same. Prepare to be challenged.
 10. It was definitely an intro to the topic, not a deep study. It helps to have some background in bibliography/book history, especially printing methods, but just about anyone with an interest in historical (western) books could benefit.
 11. I would not recommend this class to anyone who does not like book covers or has no interest in them as more than their function. Beyond that though, this class will help anyone who deals with books in their job or personal interests. Some knowledge of art would be helpful.
 12. The class members came from many backgrounds. I felt everyone was brought up to about the same understanding of the material. I would say the level was graduate school level.
 13. I think it's fine for any level. But because there is so much information, it helps to know more either from experience, or the reading list.
- 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. I have taken binding courses; the hands-on models of early bindings with exposed structures was quite satisfying.
 2. Getting a sense of how styles and techniques moved across Europe.
 3. Lots of samples, both real and on PowerPoint.
 4. I appreciated our conversations about identifying bindery tools, and all the complications of that, as well as our discussion on distinguishing trade vs. publishers' bindings.
 5. Thank you to KLH for stepping in to teach this class. She did an excellent job and has extensive experience.
 6. Learning about early binders. Learning about the Gothic binding helped me with identifying early bibles that are in my institution's collection. I'm looking forward to following up on this.

7. Starting to understand the movement of ideas from one country to another, as well as designs/approaches that were nearly unique to one country. For example, the fact that Germany used a lot of alum-tawed pigskin, and England favored textiles during the Renaissance.
8. Overall, just a very enlightening course. The binding demonstration was very useful.
9. {no response}
10. The bookbinding demonstration was the highlight of the course for me. I also enjoyed learning about some of the heraldic symbolism incorporated into the tooling on seventeenth-to-eighteenth-century book covers, even when they were not armorial designs as such.
11. Smelling and feeling different leathers, and looking at them under the camera that also had microscope abilities was really helpful.
12. Great to have insight about pre-1600 bindings from an expert. Loved the chocolate box bindings!
13. Nothing specific, but there was a lot of information that came together near the end of the class.

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

1. I felt it was a good balance of lecture and hands-on examples.
2. N/A
3. More hands-on activities (e.g., tooling).
4. I was extremely disappointed that we were not allowed to touch many items. I'm used to classes being able to at least pass RBS teaching collection items around, but this time even those in good condition were off-limits. I do understand to a point, but it is a teaching collection after all.
5. Allow students to handle more of the books, since all RBS students seem well-vetted. KLH's anecdotes add much interest to the course, and I encourage her to share more of them. She shines in this area and has a lot of personal experience to bring knowledge to the material.
6. Of course, more physical space to look at materials. It felt cramped as the group tried to view the books. More book handling, if possible.
7. I have two suggestions, not criticisms, just things that would have helped me: a) For each time period or country, show plenty of examples that illustrate the norm, and only then show the exceptions. Make the difference clear (KLH sometimes did and it helped!); b) At the end of each section/time period, summarize the trends discussed in that section. On Friday afternoon, do the same thing for the whole class.
8. I would have liked more time spent on utilitarian bindings in addition to the high-end luxury bindings. Perhaps more coverage of binding structure as well.
9. There is so much information it's hard to keep up with note-taking. But there really isn't much that can be done in that regard because we all do it differently.
10. There was a lot of dead time while we waited our turns to look at books, either lining up at the table or waiting for a book to be shown around the room. A table we could all fit around (i.e. not pushed up against the wall) might help, and/or a second person other than the instructor who could show books around.
11. A project looking more in-depth at one binding style that is of interest to the class members would be good. Everyone had different periods or types they found

- interesting, and seemed sad to have to leave as the course moved along.
12. In both versions of the publishers' bindings course, books were passed between class members on trays. A LOT of time would have been saved doing this rather than KLH having to walk the books around, or having all of us wait our turn to look at things on a table. If that isn't possible, then having a table where all sides can be viewed instead of just one.
 13. The table to show books was awkwardly placed. Maybe best if students could walk around it.
- 10) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*
1. Yes. Yes.
 2. Yes! Yes!
 3. Yes!
 4. Yes, and yes!
 5. Yes. Yes.
 6. Yes. I would recommend the course.
 7. Yes, and yes.
 8. Yes, and yes.
 9. Yes, and yes.
 10. Yes, and yes.
 11. On a scale of 1 to 10, this is a 10. This course was so amazing not only to identify styles and types of leather, but how the books are made, who influenced who and why, and on and on.
 12. ABSOLUTELY! LOVED IT!
 13. Yes.
- 11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. Yes, we went to see relevant examples at UVA SC.
 2. We made a visit to SC—great to see some styles not held at RBS, e.g., fanfare.
 3. Yes, SC was great!
 4. Yes—we went to the UVA SC library, and that was excellent.
 5. Yes, enjoyed visiting SC.
 6. We went to SC to view books. We didn't really have a dedicated seating area, so perhaps do a bit more introduction to the space next time with chairs?
 7. The outing to SC was great, but truly, the RBS collection is so rich it wasn't really needed.
 8. We visited UVA's SC. It was a useful trip and we got to see further binding examples.
 9. Yes.
 10. Yes, the trip to UVA SC was worthwhile.
 11. Yes and no. The trip to SC was nice, as we got to see other bindings in person, but I think it was not essential to the course.
 12. We went to SC. Good visit. It would be nice to have some "less rare" materials to handle. As someone who does these sessions several times a week, I always try to have some handleable materials.

13. Yes.

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 attended the evening lecture, but it was a bit esoteric and not very related to my interests.
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. Yes, I really enjoyed, as always, networking with colleagues—meeting new folks and reconnecting with those I already know.
5. Did not enjoy the evening lecture, would have preferred one more relevant to books or manuscripts rather than esoteric philosophy.
6. The lecture was terrific. I enjoyed learning about social constructs and the manuscript connections, especially in reflecting on current thinking.
7. I enjoyed the lecture, and Monday's ice cream.
8. I always enjoy the lectures.
9. Evening events are great. It's learning more from a fresh perspective.
10. N/A
11. I attended all three. The ice cream social was a little chaotic, but the lecture was good, and Booksellers' Night was fun.
12. I think these events are good—I miss museum night from long ago. Again, handling materials not available in less "historic" collections are peak experiences for many who come to RBS. Wish there were more.
13. N/A

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

1. {no response}
2. Do.
3. Enjoy! Take in all the knowledge and information.
4. Definitely don't hesitate to take this course if it is taught by KLH—she's wonderful, and absolutely knows her stuff!
5. An idea of how books are bound is useful to understand many bindings. If you want a solid, big picture overview of bookbinding, this is an excellent course.
6. The class will provide excellent context for looking at books. This is a visual class with lots of slides—very intensive and enjoyable.
7. Do the advance reading in logical, small bites. It's too much to try to read at the last minute.
8. Certainly worth it if you are financially able to.
9. Go in knowing it's intensive learning, but know that there's no need to panic if you miss something. Always ask questions, enjoy your time, and soak up as much as possible.
10. Not especially....
11. Definitely do as much of the pre-reading as possible. If staying in the Brown College dorms, be prepared for a cold night of it. Also, look over your collection(s) before you come so you can see and match examples in class with what you have.

12. Read all the materials and look for books in your own collection, book stores, libraries, &c.; look at every history of bookbinding book you can.
13. N/A

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

1. Exhausting, enlightening, and engaging.
2. Thorough, informative, and fun.
3. I came, I saw, I feel empowered with bookbinding knowledge!
4. {no response}
5. Bookbinding blast from the past.
6. Highly useful for shaping how I see the rare books in the collections. This course definitely provided me with a new lens into identifying and curating our unique rare books.
7. As always at RBS, drinking from the fire hose tasted great!
8. {no response}
9. Oh book school! My book school!
Our fearful class is done;
My brain weathered every fact
The completion page I sought was won;
My car is near, the engine I hear, the
People all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady wheel,
The trip back home grim and daring.
(Apologies to Whitman for altering “O Captain My Captain”)
10. Old books cram-a-thon with good snack breaks.
11. If you like books, old books, rare or unusual books, RBS is the best place to come to learn about what you love, and meet people who share your interests!
12. Nothing like seeing real books, guided by an expert, in a group of passionate scholars—come to RBS!
13. It’s nice to spend a week away and learn something new.

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: 10 (76.92%)
 My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:
 1 (7.69%)
 I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 4 (30.76%)
 My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (46.15%)

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%: 4 (30.76%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (15.38%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 6 (46.15%)
My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (30.76%)
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)
I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 2 (15.38%)

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

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 2 (15.38%)
Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 2 (15.38%)
Curator: 1 (7.69%)
Library administrator: 1 (7.69%)
Library assistant/clerk: 1 (7.69%)
Special collections librarian: 2 (15.38%)

Student working toward a/n:

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (7.69%)

Professional educator:

Full professor: 1 (7.69%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 1 (7.69%)
Independent scholar: 1 (7.69%)