

Jan Storm van Leeuwen  
B-50: Advanced Seminar in the History of Bookbinding  
22-27 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. Applicable, easy to locate via ILL, useful, and good references for the future.
2. Useful, but didn't have time for most. Remembered sufficient background from "B-10: Introduction to the History of Bookbinding."
3. The readings provided a great grounding for the course. My home institution didn't hold many of the items, so ILL was a must. It was very helpful to get the course workbook in advance to prep and, in particular, help familiarize oneself with the terms.
4. Yes, very much so. I was not able to get through many of them or else was only able to do a quick browse, but I would definitely wish to return to them as reference sources after this course. The sources were all helpful and relevant.
5. There is quite a lot of pre-course reading, some more important (I learned retrospectively), so adding levels of importance would be helpful.
6. It was helpful to look at the workbook ahead of time.
7. Yes! Finding time to read them all was impossible, but a good skimming was an excellent introduction, and allowed me to hone in more specifically on my interests. But really, Mirjam Foot's *The Henry Davis Gift: a Collection of Bookbindings* was key!
8. Preliminary readings were a repeat of materials from the previous class, so they weren't overwhelming.
9. Yes, very useful. I had already read many of them, so I used the list as a refresher.
10. This advanced seminar is greatly enhanced by reading or re-reading the course assignments. It makes for a much livelier and more informed discussion among class participants.
11. The readings I had time to read were very useful. I hope to continue working my way through them.
12. Helpful but too extensive and overwhelming. Overkill.
13. Pre-course reading was useful. Very complete booklist. I concentrate on study literature.

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. Appropriate, useful, good reference, and well-produced.
2. Useful, but should have been read in advance (as requested). Not usefully aligned with order of lectures in class.
3. The workbook will continue to be a helpful resource for me in the future. The sample descriptions and blank description forms JSvL gave us will serve as key

- templates for my future binding descriptions.
4. The workbook, especially the color version that JSvL shared ahead of time, was invaluable. I found the inclusion of a table of contents and an index very helpful. I will definitely be going back to it as a reference source on this topic.
  5. Workbook was/is useful—however, in this course color is an important element, so a color publication would have been better.
  6. Very appropriate and useful—I foresee it being useful after the course in my place of work.
  7. Absolutely. It is a thorough overview of the subject and is a document I know I will continue to refer to in my professional work.
  8. The notebook was a great reference during class lectures and assignments (documentation of bindings).
  9. Yes, absolutely. I see myself referring back to the workbook often.
  10. I will continue to refer to the workbook for this and the intro-level course as reference material. The multiple images of bindings as examples of concepts are particularly useful.
  11. The workbook is excellent. I'm glad JSvL so generously sent a color digital copy in addition to the printed copy. I have referenced his introductory course workbook several times, and expect to do the same with this one.
  12. I like that a full color PDF was supplied along with the black-and-white version in print on the first day.
  13. Very useful. In color would be better, but we received a digital version.
- 3) *If you've taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*
1. I would take any and all of JSvL's courses. This one quickly followed his "Introduction to the History of Bookbinding" class.
  2. Wonderful. One of my top three.
  3. This was a great follow-up to the introductory course. Even more rapid and in-depth, so pre-readings and review of notes from the introductory class are a must.
  4. This was an excellent course, probably one of my best ones.
  5. This course was quite similar to the first course that I took, though I valued the hands-on and descriptive portions of this course much more.
  6. Just as fun—if not more!
  7. The introductory course was amazing, and this one was even better. Great group of peers in one room, with JSvL at the helm. A dream!
  8. Just as good!! With the added bonus of doing binding descriptions.
  9. This, and Sue Allen's course {respondent may be referring to "B-90: Publishers' Bookbindings, 1830-1910"—RBS Staff} may have been the best.
  10. Every class is different, but the variety of class participants made this particular class stand out.
  11. They have both been excellent!
  12. The previous course and two like this one were good with some low points. Usually, faculty want to teach certain bits, but always run out of time.
  13. I didn't take previous RBS courses.
- 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. Seeing and describing the rare books.
  2. I study the Renaissance, so seeing as many of these as possible and learning the styles, dates, and history of collections was useful. Would have liked more! Also, I'm always amazed to learn and love unrelated topics, e.g., almanacs.
  3. Practicing writing binding descriptions and comparing them with JSvL's helped reinforce the terms and identification techniques we learned.
  4. The wide range of examples that JSvL put together in his PowerPoint slides, and the ones he had for us to examine, were the best part of the whole course.
  5. The descriptive, hands-on elements of this course were very important and enjoyable.
  6. Teaching my eyes to notice more details about the bindings when we created descriptions was helpful. I think it has enlightened how I can approach materials and their conservation at my job.
  7. The time spent describing bindings was most relevant, as this is my current project at work. I feel more confident in my terminology and identification abilities, and also now have a lot to suss out in regard to the next phase of my project.
  8. Binding descriptions—I had altered my condition reports at work to include more in-depth/detailed descriptions, and the experience of doing this activity in class has given insight into how to make my descriptions at work even more detailed.
  9. I've gained a renewed sense of motivation to continue on some research topics, thanks to JSvL's encouragement.
  10. I found the interaction of various parts of a binding—not just {illegible}— to be most interesting. I will use this information to help me better understand and research my own collection.
  11. I really appreciated the chance to describe books and compare my descriptions with JSvL's. I hope to begin describing specific areas of my institution's collection using the same method.
  12. The PowerPoints were interesting but reiterated the readings. JSvL's extemporaneous lectures were the best. Viewing and handling books, and practicing the written descriptions were the most useful.
  13. Nice mixture of just telling/PowerPoints/at table with the materials. "Petit histories," how it was acquired, and discussions about conserving.
- 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. Nothing was omitted, and I learned more than I imagined.
  2. What I hoped and more, but sorry we had to skip the second half of the collectors PowerPoint.
  3. The course clearly met all of the course objectives—I only wish JSvL's course could have lasted two weeks!
  4. Yes, definitely. JSvL's sample descriptions were most helpful in helping me to learn how to create good, comprehensive binding descriptions.
  5. While I enjoy JSvL's interest in Mame publications, I found a half day to be a bit much. I'd much rather have heard more of his talk on binders by period and region.
  6. Yes, absolutely! Part of what makes JSvL a remarkable teacher/person is his

- openness and willingness to go on small informative diversions with the class. He broadens curiosity! I certainly learned what I had hoped to, perhaps more.
7. Yes. No. Yes. It's hard to cover so much in so little time, but I would call this week a success.
  8. JSvL balances very well his own passions with those of his students, and will spend extra time on subject matter if requested.
  9. {no response}
  10. Yes. I particularly appreciated the focus on early bindings, which are my particular interest.
  11. I learned everything I thought I would and more!
  12. My learning expectations were met—learning to describe bindings. I wish we had covered how to research these bindings, i.e., the reference books most often used, &c.
  13. And more so!
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. I will use the knowledge in my work, and I hope to continue toward the RBS certificate.
  2. Provenance research, dating, reception, teaching, appreciation, and connoisseurship.
  3. I'll use the course for describing my own private collection, in teaching my grad and undergrad book history courses, and in my own research.
  4. In my research on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French and English bindings.
  5. I will examine my own collection much more carefully, and with a special eye on tooling and tools.
  6. In my work I need to look carefully to analyze the history of an item, and this has helped hone that practice.
  7. I plan to continue my project of describing my institution's binding collection as well as developing my own skills as a bookbinder. This class (and the introductory course) has totally inspired me to keep improving academically and creatively.
  8. I will apply directly to tasks back at work—more thorough, detailed, and advanced descriptions of book bindings, as well as research on binders, styles, and provenance, &c.
  9. {no response}
  10. To better understand, describe, and catalog my own collection.
  11. I plan to start describing more books, and hope that through repetition my skills will grow.
  12. This will help me when viewing and studying similar books with dealers and at libraries. I am now more confident in the basics of binding description.
  13. I'm now more aware of the different types of bindings from different periods/countries. I knew the sixteenth-century bindings, the prize bindings, and publication bindings of *Mame*.
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Advanced professionals in the field.

2. Lively; moderate expertise. Knowledge of binding as craft, history of major individuals, and periods helpful. Librarians and collectors perhaps benefit most, but also conservators and academics.
  3. Taking the intro course is a must. The majority of class worked in library and/or conservation, so those in literature and history fields were not as represented, but people in those fields will still find great materials and skills for research and teaching.
  4. Fairly intellectual level.
  5. This course benefits those with a solid understanding of how books are “built” and designed. Good knowledge of this is important.
  6. Very high standard—JSvL explains a lot obviously, but bookbinding and art history background knowledge is important to keep up.
  7. Anyone with an interest in bookbinding from a historical perspective, and is not focused on technical skills.
  8. Those that found the intro level class fascinating/insightful and directly applicable to their job/passion.
  9. This course is best for those who have already acquired a good knowledge of bookbindings and want to delve very deeply into the topic.
  10. This course would be most useful to someone who wants to place the history of binding into an art-historical context.
  11. Conservators, librarians, collectors...everyone can benefit.
  12. Someone who took the introductory course or with advanced bookbinding experience in conservation.
  13. It was high level; much higher than given in the Netherlands (summer school of University of Amsterdam).
- 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. My “take-aways” were in the description of the books.
  2. JSvL is continually a joy to work with. SC visits and the stories of {illegible}, {illegible}, and Pompadour were a real highlight. And my “a-ha!” appreciation of almanacs.
  3. JSvL showing us so many examples of the same or similar technique and binding style helped solidify key concepts like batch binding, and specific national styles common in a particular period.
  4. The connection between the evolution of bookbinding and what was occurring in societies at the time.
  5. No real “aha” moments, but it is important to engage with others.
  6. There were just so many—one of which was reciting our binding descriptions and JSvL’s warm approval.
  7. JSvL is a legend. When he would commend me on noticing some small detail it was an incredible compliment. Better than a gold star.
  8. Noticing small details that would otherwise have been overlooked.
  9. It was an honor to spend a week with JSvL, and I’m just grateful I could before his retirement. He’s a legend.
  10. {no response}
  11. I loved doing the descriptions. It gave me a chance to apply what I had learned

and compare with JSvL's work.

12. Writing a description. Then, the next day when the instructor asked us to read them aloud "for fun" it was most instructive. He could have done this once more.
13. The intermezzo's were fun, telling about JSvL's own experiences' with other collections/institutions/private collectors.

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

1. Nothing to improve.
2. More time!
3. It was excellent—no improvement needed.
4. Well-balanced, and comprehensive. Can't think of anything to add.
5. More time?
6. N/A
7. As exhausted as I am, another week would be nice.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. This course could only be improved by the creation of more hours in the day!
11. It's perfect!
12. See Q8.
13. Not necessary.

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

1. Definitely, yes to both!
2. Absolutely.
3. Yes.
4. Absolutely. Definitely recommended.
5. Yes. The course was valuable, and I feel very lucky to have taken it with JSvL.
6. Yes, and yes.
7. 100% yes.
8. Absolutely! I most certainly would recommend the class to others, and I would be interested to take JSvL's successor's class to see how they present it.
9. Yes, and yes, absolutely. I hope someone will be able to take it up after JSvL.
10. Absolutely on both counts.
11. Yes, one week of intense study is fantastic. I would highly recommend RBS to others.
12. Yes. Yes.
13. Yes, certainly.

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

1. Yes, looking at SC items was great.
2. SC time was wonderful. More would be nice, but also need more time for the PowerPoint.
3. N/A
4. Yes, time in SC was very useful in applying what we learned in class.

5. We went to SC. I found some stuff there officious given that most of us are also professionals in this area.
6. Our visit to SC was great.
7. We went to SC and were allowed to handle/describe bindings from the UVA collection. Such a special and valuable experience.
8. Visit to SC is always a worthwhile treat.
9. SC was extremely accommodating, and I'm grateful for the chance to handle books for binding descriptions.
10. The visit to UVA SC to handle many of the bindings seen on the screen was a nice way to end the week.
11. N/A
12. Yes.
13. I followed the two evening lectures. Especially the Japanese illustrations; very good/profound humanistic lecture.

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 liked these events last fall and this summer; always well-planned and fun.
2. Lectures were great; loved the printing activity {private response}.
3. The two lectures were exciting.
4. I enjoyed the talks.
5. I enjoyed the evening lectures; I found them valuable as "bonding" experiences.
6. The lectures were interesting, though not directly applicable to my field.
7. They were good. It's hard to rally at the end of the day for an event or lecture. Hands-on session was my personal fave.
8. Attended one lecture. It did not directly apply to my particular class, but was relevant in that I have encountered the material before and found it engaging and insightful.
9. Yes, I always attend the lectures, even if they're outside my area of expertise, or even my interests, because they are exceptional in their quality and I always learn something.
10. The two evening lectures (and the lecture series in general) were superb.
11. Yes, I enjoyed both lectures. They are a good opportunity to learn about other topics.
12. The lectures are always good.
13. Yes, good use of time.

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

1. JUST DO IT.
2. Time turner or TARDIS. JSvL will be greatly missed.
3. {no response}
4. Sign up!
5. It is important to engage with peers—as you will make important professional connections and benefit from the insights they share.
6. {no response}

7. Just do it.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. Take it! You'll handle in one week a wider historical variety of bindings than many professionals do in a year!
11. The advanced seminar allows for more in-depth study of specific topics. It's a great course.
12. It's a great class.
13. I think it would be very hard to replace JSvL because he is amazing, and an international authority on this subject.

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

1. Really missing Jan,  
Maybe he will return soon.  
His student I am.
2. "We are the spiritual family of Jan." —at Michael's for lunch.
3. Great people, and even better books and training.
4. Summer camp for book nerds!
5. Dutch accent—"Good."
6. I just love books so much.
7. Love.
8. One of the most engaging weeks of summer! WE LOVE YOU JAN!
9. I've always remarked on how curious it is that one can come away from such an intense week of learning feeling so refreshed and inspired. Thank you, RBS!
10. Hundreds of bindings  
With our own inspired Virgil  
Jan Storm van Leeuwen
11. I came.  
I loved it.  
I will return.
12. Storm of lions devours chocolate boxes....
13. Excellent, well-spent time!

### **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 a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule:  
 2 (15.39%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 4 (30.76%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 8 (61.53%)  
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (7.69%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 4 (30.76%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 7 (53.84%)  
I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (15.39%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 6 (46.15%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 6 (46.15%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (7.69%)

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

**Library disciplines:**

Archivist: 1 (7.69%)  
Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (7.69%)  
Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 4 (30.76%)  
Curator: 1 (7.69%)  
Library administrator: 1 (7.69%)  
Special collections librarian: 2 (15.39%)

**Professional educator:**

Assistant professor: 2 (15.39%)

**Other occupations/vocations:**

Book collector: 1 (7.69%)