

Mike Widener
C-85: Law Books: History & Connoisseurship
10–15 June 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. I didn't get a chance to read all of them, but the ones I read were useful. No. Yes, but I will send a citation later to MW. When I finish the readings!
2. The pre-course readings were helpful and stimulated my interest in the material.
3. We didn't really have any pre-work.
4. All of the course readings were informative and appropriate.
5. Yes. I bought a lot of the recommended books because they are so relevant to my area of work. Very helpful titles.
6. I read most of the suggested reading in addition to the essential content. I found it incredibly instructive. As a law librarian with an M.L.I.S. but no J.D., the legal history content in particular will help me beyond just the duration of this course.
7. The reading assignments were useful, and it was great to have short refresher pieces to read if one already knew some legal history and bibliography. For others, McKerrow and Gaskell excerpts might help since law can be more removed than humanities from bibliography.
8. Yes. Students should definitely read "ABC for Book Collectors" before attending.
9. Yes. The readings were helpful.
10. Yes! {private response}
11. The readings were comprehensive and very helpful for a foundation in the material.
12. Yes.

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. Yes. Yes.
2. Course workbook was well done and a great resource for after the course.
3. The course workbook was useful. I plan on putting my lecture notes in there, and using those along with the workbook as future reference material.
4. Yes, that material was both useful and appropriate. I suspect I will find it useful beyond the course.
5. I appreciated the workbook, and all of the bibliographies and additional resources mentioned!
6. I plan to hold on to my workbook as a reference tool, wishlist (re: the bibliographies/items cited), and record of the course. The content is very useful.
7. Yes, the workbook will be retained and used as a reference source for my subsequent work. Very nicely done!
8. The notebook was particularly useful for the outlines.

9. {no response}
10. Yes! I will be referring back to our readings, workbook, and my notes for years to come. This course has planted many seeds of future collecting projects, research topics, and teaching exercises in my mind. This week has been incredibly rich and inspiring for me. I highly recommend taking notes directly in the workbook.
{private response}
11. The workbook was extremely helpful. I will continue to refer to it as a resource in the future.
12. Nine.

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

1. N/A
2. N/A
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. Both RBS courses I've taken have been excellent!
6. N/A—this is my first course.
7. This is hard to compare. The first was newly offered and so the instructors were feeling their way. This was offered by a seasoned professional and knowledgeable partner. So...better.
8. N/A
9. N/A
10. N/A
11. {no response}
12. About the same; this one a little bit more lively.

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. Everyone's stories and input. The class members added a lot of interesting information. And I loved the ideas they shared—will use!
2. The history was the most interesting part.
3. I took this class because of the focus on collection development, and it was very useful. I just hope I get the chance to use this knowledge someday soon.
4. I liked the PowerPoint slides and lecture materials. I also liked the two assignments and presentations. I learned quite a bit from my classmates.
5. The overviews of major legal titles in common and civil law were very helpful. I also really appreciated the preservation talk.
6. I had hoped to gain insight into legal history, publishing, and literature, and into strategies for building a functional rare books collection, and facilitating its use, and this course delivered. I have so many ideas to implement at my library, and a much deeper understanding and appreciation of our collection.
7. I really got the enthusiasm of the instructors into my spirit and it lifted me up out of my "administrative doldrums" to innovate and publish. I loved the displays and exercises on details of books.
8. The collection development policy exercise was insightful.
9. Using the collection. Exercise on bibliographical description.
10. As a scholar of legal history, it was most valuable for me to learn more about the

- world from a rare book librarian's perspective. This will enrich my research greatly.
11. I am returning to my institution with a notebook full of plans and ideas—I was so encouraged and inspired by this course.
 12. Teachers were energetic. I gained some general knowledge.
- 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. Some Friday items we didn't get to, but in readings. Yes.
 2. I learned what I had hoped to learn. I just wish there was more.
 3. Yes. Naturally, instructors always plan out more than they actually have time to cover. Yes.
 4. Yes. I learned all that I hoped to learn and more.
 5. Yes, I learned what I hoped to learn. I feel more equipped to work with my library's rare books now.
 6. We covered everything I expected to cover and more. I appreciated that MW encouraged a dialog with students, which resulted in fascinating discussions and glimpses into the practical application of these skills at various libraries.
 7. I did learn what I hoped, and taught myself a bit more about physical description but the latter need not be the focus of the course. I can develop a collection with new insights and a new checklist!
 8. Yes.
 9. Yes. Would be nice to include more discussion of binding techniques.
 10. Yes to all! I appreciated the discussion of archives, although just an overview.
 11. I feel the course delivered on its promise, and I am prepared to be a better steward of my collection because of it.
 12. Excellent teaching.
- 6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*
1. I will build on the collection development plan we workshopped/discussed here.
 2. I plan to work in legal history and possibly pursue rare book librarianship.
 3. My career goal is to head a special collection department, so that's when what I learned here will really come into play.
 4. I plan to use them in future endeavors in collecting, and maintaining rare books and special collections in the libraries that I work in.
 5. I already have some ideas, but preservation is at the top, along with organizing exhibits.
 6. This course will completely change my approach to stewardship of my collection. I plan to meet with my director to discuss long-term strategic implementation of all of the skills I've acquired this week regarding planning, acquisitions, displays, marketing, &c.
 7. I am generally the collection development librarian, but not for rare books. I will use the plan to trim our British materials, and really share insights with my boss about collecting values.
 8. I plan to go back to my home institution and apply some of the concepts to better develop our rare book collection.

9. Skills and knowledge will be put to use teaching, planning exhibitions, and working on collection development.
 10. To further my research in legal history.
 11. I'm hoping to make more connections with faculty and with other programs on campus, to highlight our collection and get it into new hands.
 12. {no response}
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. Intellectually curious.
 2. Anyone curious.
 3. For me, it was pitched just right. So, someone with an advanced degree and a solid grounding in librarianship.
 4. The intellectual level is moderately advanced. I think law librarians and those with an interest in legal history will benefit most.
 5. Intellectually fascinating. Great for all levels of skill, I think.
 6. I think folks with an intermediate level of experience would benefit most. It would be helpful to have a base-level familiarity with the topics, but MW and RG did a great job of making the course accessible to all.
 7. The level is very high, and good for librarians in the subject area or in special collections. Without those experiences it would be lacking context, but should keep the level the same.
 8. The instructors and other students are intelligent and thoughtful. The discussions were often stimulating.
 9. The course requires dedication and attention to detail.
 10. Although the course was aimed at law librarians, I, as a legal historian, got a huge amount out of it, and, in fact, a special strength was the window into law librarianship that the course offered (a new opportunity for me).
 11. I think it would be suitable for any sufficiently curious and enthusiastic book lover.
 12. Highly intellectual; very knowledgeable.
- 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 exercises were all "aha!" because I learned so much from everyone else's submissions.
 2. MW is an excellent and energetic storyteller.
 3. {no response}
 4. Having MW share his depth of knowledge in this area is incredibly noteworthy.
 5. Preservation! I now have so many helpful resources at my disposal. Also, I learned a lot about canon/civil law that I did not know.
 6. Opportunities to develop policies/plans for my institution and receive feedback from MW, RG, and my classmates were so beneficial. I honestly sense that my career got brighter as a result of completing this course.
 7. There were so many. Rare materials are to be used for teaching and shared as teaching tools.

8. {no response}
9. Interviewing Joe Fay {of the William Reese Company –RBS Staff} was very illuminating. Learning about how rare books are used in teaching and alumni relations.
10. Watching a live online rare book auction was mesmerizing! I could not rip myself away. The Q&A with Joe Fay was also very special, especially only one week after the passing of Bill Reese.
11. The encouragement to make interdisciplinary connections.
12. Program (class) was very well-organized.

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

1. It was perfect.
2. {no response}
3. {no response}
4. I think it was great. However, the opening reception was unnecessary given the multiple other receptions we attended.
5. More time on preservation? It's a huge area of need for my collection.
6. N/A
7. Really great. Maybe only a little bit of a reduction in sub-topics to help with the crowded schedule.
8. A group assignment/project, perhaps on the second day.
9. Include lunch with all the students so that discussions can continue. OK to increase the cost to cover catered lunches. Include only one trip to a book dealer.
10. None—it was an absolute delight to take this course! I especially enjoyed the days involving our two in-class assignments. These alternative activities and formats broke up the day's program nicely.
11. There was not enough time—in the absence of a wormhole, I don't know how you'd fix this.
12. {no response}

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

1. Yes. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. I didn't pay, but I feel it was a good use of institutional funds. Absolutely.
4. Yes! Yes!
5. Yes to both!
6. Absolutely!
7. Yes. Yes.
8. Yes, and yes.
9. Yes. The class is worth every penny.
10. Yes. The tuition is hefty, but in my opinion, it was worth it for me as a legal historian, for research and teaching purposes.
11. My institution paid, but it was definitely worthwhile.
12. Yes.

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

time well spent?

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. The trip to the bookseller was pretty “meh” for me, but that has more to do with me (I don’t collect professionally or personally) than the trip. That it was after hours didn’t help, though it makes sense not to take class time for that.
4. Yes, the trips to the book dealers were both educational and enjoyable (though they did make for long nights).
5. Yes. The bookseller trip was interesting. It put a face to the dealer trade for me! Also, I loved bibliomania and seeing the collections!
6. 100%—time spent in the rare book room was a wonderful supplement to ground theory in reality, and our trips to local dealers’ shops were delightful.
7. I was not as well able to use the dealer trips, but they are still useful.
8. Yes.
9. The course offered two visits to book dealer offices. I think one visit is enough. Ability to interview dealers is more valuable.
10. Yes, the two trips to rare book dealers were both fascinating.
11. Trips to the rare books room were time well-spent.
12. Yes. We met very interesting booksellers.

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. N/A (I didn’t make it to many.)
2. I attended all the optional events and quite enjoyed them.
3. {no response}
4. I liked the trips to the book dealers. I also enjoyed having a book dealer come to the class and talk about his experience. The opening reception on Sunday was pointless.
5. Yes. I loved the social aspects to the course. I met so many interesting folks in my work area from all over the country!
6. All were crucial. I appreciated the opportunities to browse dealers’ stores (and make purchases for my institution) and the receptions and dine arounds were great ways to connect with other students.
7. See Q11.
8. Yes, although it made the day long.
9. {no response}
10. I attended the opening and closing receptions. Both were great.
11. It was great to meet people in the rare books trade, and to see that side of the business.
12. The evening events were a good part of this course.

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

1. Do it!
2. {no response}

3. {no response}
4. I think it's a great course. I'm glad I enrolled.
5. Bring your camera. Read as much as you can from the suggested book list! It really is helpful to have that foundation.
6. Read everything, attend everything, enjoy every moment, and soak up all the knowledge you can! This is such an incredible opportunity!
7. Take it. Even if you are not in charge of rare law materials, but do reference work in law.
8. {no response}
9. Be prepared to focus on the course for the entire week.
10. If you can afford it, I recommend staying at a hotel. I also recommend taking notes by hand directly in the workbook. There is quite a bit of moving around and locking rooms, so best to travel light and bring just a light bag to class.
11. I'm glad I did the readings—it was difficult to find the time, but I think I got more out of the course because of the context.
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. Wonderful!
2. There once was a man named Mike
Who talked about law and the like
But the real object of his love
Was the old and the rare
What a wonderful teacher was Mike.
3. Exhausting but totally worth it.
4. I have a much greater sense of the history and development of law books and a greater appreciation for selecting and purchasing them.
5. "I'll be back!"
6. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to immerse yourself in a fascinating topic with world-class instructors, incredible colleagues, and unforgettable experiences!
7. MW said "listen to the book." When you get a themed collection together, it speaks to you. Great insight. Thanks!
8. Great experience that gives you tangible actions that you can implement at your institution.
9. What a wonderful experience. MW and RG are excellent teachers. I wish the course could last another week.
10. Spectacular! MW and RG are incredibly knowledgeable and generous, and it was the highlight of my summer to get to spend a week learning from them. I plan to stay in touch with them both, as my interest in rare law books is only growing.
11. Way too much socializing for the average librarian, but definitely worth it.
12. Excellent.

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: 11 (91.67%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 9 (75%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)

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

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (41.67%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 3 (25%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 2 (16.67%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

My institution/employer paid 100%: 9 (75%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 3 (25%)

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

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Library administrator: 3 (25%)

Special collections librarian: 3 (25%)

Subject specialist/bibliographer: 1 (8.33%)

Other: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

Professional degree (M.D., J.D., &c.): 1 (8.33%)

Professional educator:

Assistant professor: 1 (8.33%)

Full professor: 1 (8.33%)