

Karen Limper-Herz
B-10: Introduction to the History of Bookbinding
9–14 June 2019

Narrative Course Evaluations

- 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. All of our pre-course readings were optional, which was good because I had a hard time accessing many of them. What I was able to obtain was indeed useful, though better understood through class lectures and discussions.
 2. Yes—add the British Library Guide to Bookbinding that was referenced heavily the first day of class. {private response}
 3. Yes. The pre-course readings were very helpful, especially if you don't know much about bookbinding. Having an understanding of how books are bound and decorated and bringing questions helps solidify things when you get to class.
 4. We had a long reading list, but it was basically optional in that no particular book was required. I think the class might benefit if we all came in having read the same two or three books.
 5. The pre-course readings were very useful. Now that I've taken the course, they feel almost more useful to look back at, especially the books with many examples of bindings, as I feel like I can really recognize what I see now and contextualize it better.
 6. The readings were helpful definitely. I knew I couldn't get through all of them, so started with the more general texts first.
 7. I found the readings that provided general overviews, as opposed to being focused on one specific country, to be the most useful.
 8. The readings helped me to hit the ground running so to speak because I had absorbed the basic vocabulary, timeline, and ethos for bookbinding history before the first day. The most useful readings for me were Needham's Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings, Foot's The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society, Pickwood's "Onward and Downward," and Pearson's item.
 9. I didn't do many of the readings beforehand due to illness. Looking forward to reading them when I get home!
 10. Yes.
 11. They were! I wasn't able to read them all, but I am looking forward to finishing the list once I return home.
 12. They were useful, giving me a good bit of background information.

- 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. It did a good job of expanding on the lectures. The illustrations—black and white photo copies—were not that useful, though.
 2. Good workbook, good handouts, especially the binding description checklist. I will definitely use/reference in the future.

3. We didn't use the workbook during class, and I have not read it, but I think it will be helpful later on after the course. The binding description checklist was especially helpful to get you in the habit of looking for certain things.
 4. I think the course workbook will be useful, although we did not look at it much during the class. I hope that the instructor will share her slides with us, as these will be equally valuable for solidifying what we have learned.
 5. The coursebook, while we didn't follow it in the class, seems like it will be a great reference source to have at work. The binding descriptions of the books we saw at SC will be very useful as well.
 6. I think the workbook will evolve with the new instructor so that it is something we use during the week and is more tied to the lectures. It was hard to take notes and look at slides; most of us ended up taking photos of most of the slides and will have to sort out which notes go with which slides when we get home.
 7. Haven't finished reading the course workbook. Might have been useful to have it ahead of time to get started on reading it.
 8. I anticipate that the course workbook and the "cheat sheet" from our SC visit will be useful references. The material examples of leather and tooling we made will be fun to show off and would make great teaching samples.
 9. Haven't read it, though hope to be able to use it as a reference later.
 10. Excellent course and the teaching materials will be useful.
 11. We didn't use the workbook during the course a whole lot, but I think it will be a great resource later on, and that the extensive bibliography is a wonderful tool to have.
 12. Yes, the workbook/handouts will be so useful once I return home.
- 3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any "aha!" moments, new ideas, or project plans?*
1. I have a much better understanding of the history of the craft and trade and new ideas of how to focus my own collecting.
 2. Overall, I feel much more informed and educated about bookbindings from 1200 to present Aha: didn't know recessed cords were used so early! Aha: didn't know sheep leather was so widespread!
 3. I am not attached to an institution yet, so I don't have concrete plans, but I will be closely examining all bookbindings I come across.
 4. Now I will be able to describe the bespoke bindings that Kierkegaard's readers chose for his books, and the publishers' bindings of his competitors. That was my goal in taking this course.
 5. I generally feel much more educated about how books have been made historically and aware of trends and changes throughout the centuries in various regions of Europe. I feel better able to describe bindings and recognize the probable binding location and century. This will all be helpful in my work with special collections at my own institution.
 6. I have a much stronger framework now for the small exhibit on bookbindings I'm working on. I had several "aha!" moments in which I gained a larger context for items I know in our collections at my institution.
 7. The information from the course is directly applicable to my work. I will use what I learned to write better binding descriptions for catalog records.
 8. I plan to study bookbinding structure more, especially how it was done in other

- cultures even though this wasn't part of the course (Europe was plenty). The hands-on activities have inspired me to try binding my own book, maybe historical models. Generally everything I learned will serve me well in my role at a special collections library with a range of historical bindings.
9. I am so excited to use my tooling sample to help explain tooling to my department.
 10. I will be able to look at the bindings differently.
 11. I have so many ideas for future projects and a much better understanding of the evolution of structures and decorations.
 12. To help me better identify a binding's time period/place of creation and to help me make more appropriate decisions when doing conservation treatments, regarding materials, colors, &c. Knowledge from this course will help me better describe bindings in my treatment reports.
- 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. Yes.
 2. Yes, though I wish I had gotten more practice evaluating the RBS books using KLH's checklist. We only did that Thursday at UVA SC. Would have been useful to do that Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday as well.
 3. Yes!
 4. Yes, but in my case, I would have liked to have learned more about how cultural and intellectual developments influenced binding.
 5. I did learn what I hoped to and more, about hand-binding. The course has really made me want to delve deeper into learning about binding techniques. I really enjoyed the binding and tooling demonstrations by Amanda!
 6. I did, yes.
 7. Yes, and answered all my questions. Yes.
 8. I have more work to do before I can tell the place and date of any binding by sight, but this course has set me on my way. I can discern different leathers, historical styles, and basic binding structures.
 9. Mostly. I wish we had spent a little more time practicing identification and testing ourselves.
 10. Yes.
 11. Yes.
 12. Yes, I learned much more than I expected. There was so much great information. Also, the bookbinding demo and hands-on tooling activity were great and a lot of fun.
- 5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*
1. Given the amount of time we had, I think we covered a good amount of territory in a good amount of depth. I would have liked to learn more about trade/publisher's bindings, but that's almost nitpicking.
 2. See 4.4: more practice examining.
 3. There are many PowerPoint slides, which are great for seeing trends and for discussion/lecture before we look at the RBS materials, and it would have been helpful to have the slides sent before class. It would be easier to take notes on the PowerPoint slides with a personal computer.

4. If vocabulary had been included on the slides, we would not have had to stop to spell out foreign words every time.
5. I would have liked it if the brief binding exercise we did had been a lesson in which we learned a real binding stitch or technique, and/or maybe bound together some printed information on bookbinding or terms for tool designs, to take with us. I would have liked to cover a bit more about changes brought about in the nineteenth century with mechanized techniques.
6. {private response}
7. I really enjoyed the course and learned a lot! My only suggestion would be to spend maybe a bit less unstructured time letting the class look at bindings. Maybe give mini-assignments during the museums or do a few more explanations of the bindings on display?
8. All of the parts KLH added to the course this year were my favorites: the bookbindings in paintings, describing bindings in SC, and the workshops sewing and tooling. It would be nice to add doing basic descriptions of bindings as a class once on Tuesday and Wednesday each for practice.
9. Label viewing books with the date and country of binding!
10. Binding description exercises would be helpful.
11. The only things I would recommend is giving us the PowerPoints (if at all possible) and maybe breaking them up a bit more with handling so we aren't sitting for too long/can more easily stay engaged.
12. Not that I can think of.

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

1. Both generalists interested in book history and special collections librarians.
2. Conservators, conservation students, curators, people working with books/collections of books.
3. Anyone interested in the changes and developments in bookbindings. Anyone who wants to start describing and identifying binding styles.
4. I think the course was mostly geared towards book historians specializing in binding and not practitioners of binding or scholars of literature hoping to connect the study of book history to their field.
5. Librarians, rare book catalogers, book artists, anyone starting out learning about the history and materiality of the book, newer conservators...
6. Anyone who would benefit from or is interested in the physical structure and design of books and the history of the craft.
7. Rare book librarians, catalogers, booksellers, anyone with a strong interest in bindings or who works with rare books.
8. Anyone who has had to conserve a historical binding, answer a research question about one, sell one, buy one, or catalogue one should take this course because it gives you the skills to make full use of existing literature and resources.
9. Catalogers, curators, and (especially) collectors or people in acquisitions.
10. Catalogers.
11. Anyone who has an interest! It's approachable from almost any level of previous knowledge, and I think everyone found something to take with them.
12. Conservators, rare book librarians/catalogers.

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

others?

1. Yes.
 2. Yes, and yes.
 3. Yes, and yes! Not only did I get a great overview of the history, but we did many hands-on activities. All the leather work activities and exploration really made this course great as did the binding demonstration.
 4. Yes, however much I might have wished for an occasional not do literary or historical developments in relation to binding, the course was quite expertly designed and curated for what it was: an introduction to the history of bookbinding.
 5. Yes, most definitely!
 6. Yes, and yes!
 7. Yes. Yes.
 8. Yes, I did get my money's worth, and I would recommend it without hesitation.
 9. Yes! Absolutely.
 10. Yes.
 11. Yes—absolutely.
 12. Yes to both. I would highly recommend. The instructor was great, knowledgeable, and engaging. The information was presented well and easy to understand.
- 8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*
1. Yes, though “outside of the classroom” means UVA SC.
 2. To UVA SC—yes.
 3. The trip to SC was good. I think it would have been better to spend more time examining bindings with the checklist and a little less time on the “museum” portion since we do so much looking in class.
 4. The trip to SC was a good summing up of what we had learned.
 5. Our visit to SC at UVA was very helpful. I learned a lot and enjoyed it when we sat with partners and practiced writing binding descriptions. The examples on display there were incredible.
 6. We saw some great examples of the various periods and styles we had been learning about in SC.
 7. To SC at UVA. Yes.
 8. The sessions in UVA SC were the best bindings we saw, and I loved getting to describe a few.
 9. Yes! SC was our time to put skills into practice.
 10. {no response}
 11. {no response}
 12. Yes, we visited UVA SC to look at the various historic bindings and work on describing them. This was very useful; getting hands on practice really helped.
- 9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*
1. The instructor does a good job at keeping the class structured yet flexible, and mixing instructional methods to keep things lively.

2. The more you understand the basic book structure, basic binding techniques, basic materials, the better. There is a lot to absorb as KLH moves through the centuries and from country to country.
 3. {no response}
 4. I would still recommend this course for scholars of literature or philosophy with an interest in book history because they could apply the technical knowledge gleaned from the course to their study of the book as a material object in relation to the book as a literary or philosophical text.
 5. You will want to know even more about bookbinding! KLH is a wonderful teacher. She's incredibly knowledgeable and informative, but also kept the class time fun and funny. I highly recommend the course and KLH!
 6. Bring with you to RBS photos of bindings in your institution's collection that you want to learn more about or understand better. I wished I had done that to compare what I was already familiar with what we saw in class.
 7. N/A
 8. Do the readings so that you can use the course to train your eye and fill in the gaps from what you could not absorb on your own.
 9. {no response}
 10. {no response}
 11. Do it! KLH is so incredible and knowledgeable and you're sure to get so much from this course.
 12. Be prepared to learn a ton of information about bindings!
- 10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*
1. Interesting and intellectually challenging, yet fun—we learned a lot while laughing a lot.
 2. I'm grateful for this chance to escape for a week to be immersed in learning!
 3. The courses and content are always great, but the people you meet and the community you become a part of is really what makes RBS shine.
 4. I don't know! I enjoyed it!
 5. RBS is always a wonderful experience!
 6. I'm tired but am taking home a whole new understanding of bookbindings!
 7. Got to spend a week learning about my favorite topic!
 8. Better than an exhibition, better than a book fair, Rare Book School is a pilgrimage for bibliophiles of its own kind.
 9. It's a vacation where you stare at books for eight hours a day, aka "The Women Who Stare at Books."
 10. It's nice to come back to see the nice and knowledgeable people.
 11. It's been a wonderful and rigorous week with some of the most warm, knowledgeable, and talented people I've met.
 12. I learned a ton. It was fantastic.

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: 8 (66.67%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days:
1 (8.33%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 3 (25%)

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: 2 (16.67%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 8 (66.67%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

I paid 100% myself: 2 (16.67%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 7 (58.33%)

My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)

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

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

Library disciplines:

Archivist:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 3 (25%)

Conservator/binder/preservation librarian: 2 (16.67%)

Library assistant/clerk: 1 (8.33%)

Special collections librarian: 3 (35%)

Student working toward a/n:

M.A./M.S.: 1 (8.33%)

M.L.I.S./M.L.S.: 1 (8.33%)

Ph.D./D.Phil: 1 (8.33%)