

Joel Silver  
L-25: Reference Sources for Researching Rare Books  
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. Apart from an introduction to bibliographic description, there really wasn't any needful background. The chapter from Peters was marginally useful, but it is probably a good idea to bring Peters to the attention of those who don't know it.
2. The advance reading was helpful. We could easily have done a bit more, but I'm not aware of any other general essays on reference sources.
3. The pre-course reading provided a good grounding on the topics of bibliography and reference resources. They were very helpful to prepare me for understanding what was an entirely new field for me.
4. All pre-course readings were very helpful for providing a foundation for the course, and I don't believe any reading needs to be adjusted.
5. Yes. Very useful readings. Would include more examples from sources, essays, &c.
6. Yes. They were a nice basic introduction—especially the information on descriptive bibliography.
7. Pre-course assignments were easily accessible, and the one book was easily and inexpensively obtained.
8. The course had minimal advance readings. These were somewhat useful but not critical.
9. Absolutely!
10. Perhaps a few choice chapters from Gaskell's New Intro . . .

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 lists of reference sources and sample pages are at the heart of the course. It would be nice to have them in some sort of comb binding so that they'd be easier to keep straight.
2. Yes, the handouts comprise a very useful bibliography, now annotated with my class notes. I will return to this often in my work.
3. I think I will need to refer back to the course worksheets and my notes constantly to help with patron and staff reference inquiries on special collections books.
4. The way the professor taught the class was great as it provided students with the benefit of how knowledge of the content, and many printed guides combined with the actual reference book we were learning about.
5. Material was excellent and up to date. Very well organized.
6. I love the distributed materials, their detail and breadth, and the variety. I will definitely get them spiral bound at a copy shop and continue to refer to them after.

7. I plan to bind both the reference list and page images to serve as a future reference.
8. The content was excellent. Essentially a bibliography of bibliographies to which I will return repeatedly. The formatting could be improved—hard to distinguish at a glance the various sections, and some photocopies were illegible from being generationally derived.
9. The course workbook is a valuable resource. I anticipate it will sit proudly on my desk for years.
10. Absolutely.

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. Unfortunately, a medical emergency forced me to miss the last few sessions, and those were the ones that promised to be most relevant to my personal collection. I do feel that I have a much better purchase on rare books generally.
2. Not exactly “aha!” moments, but huge amounts of useful information. I will ask my institution to acquire some of these resources, and I will refer to them in order to make better, more knowledgeable recommendations for purchase, to do more accurate cataloging, and to offer better reference services.
3. I am walking away much better grounded in how to find authoritative resources on rare books. I want to compile my key takeaways and teach my colleagues some of this wisdom. I especially want to teach others about pre-Information Age resources and bibliographies.
4. I absolutely have gained lots of knowledge I didn’t have before attending this course, and I will definitely incorporate these new sources into my work, so it will enhance my abilities for sure.
5. Tons of “aha!” moments. I’ve ordered several of the basic sources to begin cataloging and describing my collection(s). Pricing guide-auction information will be invaluable for pricing.
6. This course provided exactly what I needed a jumping-off point (actually 300 jumping-off points) to begin delving deeper into a large collection of rare donated materials. I not only gained an awareness of the VASTNESS of the bibliographic resources but also the extraordinary breadth and depth of tools available to anyone interested in or working with books.
7. As I discovered in one circulating bibliography there is an amazing amount of indexed information if one goes looking for it. This course is an initiation in how to do that.
8. First, I plan to review and improve my institution’s reference collection based directly on integrating those materials I found most helpful and salient to our collections. I also plan to integrate many of these sources directly into my collection development work, exhibition program, and teaching.
9. Too many! I was exposed to so many new resources this week that I am brimming with ideas for potential research projects!
10. Too many “aha!” moments to mention. As an accredited appraiser, my “toolbox” has exponentially grown in strength, diversity, and utility.

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. I wasn't quite sure what to expect. To tell the truth, the course description, while entirely accurate, had sounded so abstruse that it gave me some pause. I might consider rewriting the description to make it clear that this course serves as an introduction to rare books in general.
2. Yes. Everything I had hoped for and more.
3. Yes. I definitely learned what I hoped to learn. The course description was very accurate, and I realize now that my earlier definition of available bibliographies was only a drop in the proverbial bucket.
4. Absolutely. It was very helpful to have had the opportunity to learn more on the history and evolution of these reference books!
5. Exceeded expectations many times over. Now need to apply the knowledge.
6. Yes. I learned so much more than I could have imagined. I garnered a vast list of resources for books I possess, but in addition this course gave me an appreciation of book arts, book collecting, librarianship, history of the book that will continue to inspire and inform mt interaction with printed material both personally and professionally.
7. I think this was an excellent introduction by someone who is a MASTER of the subject. The handouts easily enable my soft brain to continue to access the information.
8. Yes, it was very much as described. JS covered everything I had hoped he would but I don't believe I learned it all—it was, for me, way too much to observe.
9. I wanted to learn where to start searching for reference sources in the rare book field, and I learned that (and more) in this class.
10. Yes.

5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. {no response}
2. If possible, it would be nice to have the books out on a shelf for our use outside of the lectures. It was a bit much to take in all the information as books were passed around during the discussion. I would have liked to have returned and looked at them in a more leisurely way.
3. Given the sheer amount of resources, I think that the class is about as refined as it could be.
4. No, as the professor's knowledge and presentation of the sources made everything he taught very clear to me!
5. More exercises to apply, even if just questions for discussion.
6. I LOVED this course! If there was anything any of us were the least bit curious about that may have been outside the references covered, JS was quickly and graciously eager to fill us in!
7. I don't know how to practice more, but I think more study questions could have been useful. One set we reviewed on the last day really revealed my weakness in absorption!
8. This relates to my learning style, but I found with the onslaught of new sources, it was difficult to stay focused. I would have really appreciated some "lab time" or

other opportunity to apply the information—a chance to look up a book from my own collection, for instance. The questions we were asked to respond to on day 5 might best be handed out in parts, nightly, to encourage review, absorption, &c.

9. {private response}
10. Yes. Way too much too fast! Redesign course to deal with half or fewer the number of sources—otherwise, the course threatens to become a pleasant out-of-town junket with a high-priced purchase of a master bibliography with anecdotes. Too much valuable information there to be reduced to a crammed course. Reconfiguration highly recommended.

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

1. I think this is a good course for almost anyone who's interested in rare books. In some ways it could be pitched as a course for beginners, but it would also be good for more experienced folks who haven't had a systematic overview of the literature.
2. Book dealers, collectors, librarians—anyone who would benefit from a better understanding of the literature around rare books.
3. I think this course is useful to librarians, archivists, and anyone who loves books and their physical and descriptive natures.
4. Anyone that works with all subjects of rare books.
5. Collectors, sellers, librarians.
6. ANYONE dealing with books, anyone who loves books, collects books, sells books, or is the steward of a collection.
7. Anyone interested in the knowledge in books would benefit from knowing what books to look in.
8. Anyone doing cataloging, collection development, curation, especially early in career. Really, any rare book person, though.
9. Absolutely anyone who wants to learn about books, the field, or the people in this field should take this class!
10. Anyone serious about learning about books, history of same, using this information, &c.

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

1. Yes and yes, though I am disappointed that I missed the end of the course.
2. Yes, I would certainly recommend this course.
3. I definitely got my money's worth and now have the resources to find out more on my own. I will be recommending this course.
4. Yes and yes!
5. Yes. Yes.
6. Yes! The handouts alone were so valuable! But JS's insightful details on the relative merits or disadvantages of the resources were priceless!
7. Yes. Yes.
8. Yes I do, and I definitely think the class will serve me well for years to come. This is the kind of class where you can't possibly realize the full impact and value until you live with the information, work with it, and grow into it.

9. Yes and yes.
10. Absolutely recommended but See Q4.

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

1. There were none, unless you count the optional happy hour at my house. I enjoyed it, but don't know whether it was useful for other students.
2. The tour of the Lilly was great! I hope it will remain part of the course.
3. Loved seeing behind the scenes at the Lilly Library.
4. Absolutely!
5. This course was hosted by Bloomington, IN, Lilly Library staff, who are outstanding stewards and educators in their own right. The experience of exploring another great US library was invaluable.
6. We just had meals together and I loved that! The food in Bloomington is off the hook!
7. Evening meals to start, and midway along with a visit to a local participant's own collection were valuable.
8. We had an (unscheduled but requested) tour of the Lilly which was terrific.  
{private response}
9. Yes!
10. Lilly (mini-tour).

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

1. Just to take the course. Having a few days to talk about rare books with JS is an experience not to be missed.
2. {no response}
3. Get lots of rest. Focus and attention are needed to absorb all of this encyclopedia of knowledge offered by JS.
4. Take plenty of notes!
5. This course is appropriate for all aspects of books: bindings, illustrations, literature, bibliography, incunabula. It is utterly empowering.
6. This course is absolutely VITAL for reference librarians and anyone in the book dealing/selling business. That said, I'm an academic outside of librarianship or bookselling and I gained so much from this course!
7. Read and reread the two recommended chapter in Peters. Be familiar with Carter's ABC book.
8. {private response}
9. Just sign up! I guarantee you will walk away with a clearer idea of how to use reference materials and which sources to use!
10. {no response}

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

1. Library shelves groan  
the book you need is somewhere  
Joel Silver knows where.
2. I learned bucketloads.
3. A week of learning books about books!
4. Awesome!
5. Nobody does books better.
6. Joel is the MASTER  
Everything you need to know  
And so much more too!  
Thank you! I LOVED your course! ☺
7. Energizing. {private response}
8. From Frost Fairs to Ricky Jay—we covered a lot! I only wish I would have signed up for this course years ago. But, I still plan to put all I learned, and all I will learn as a result of it, to good use! Thank you!
9. There's always more to learn, so let's give that learning experience a clearer direction.
10. Extraordinary introduction to the panoply of available literature and opportunity to sit at the feet of an acknowledged master/encyclopaedian: Silveriana Hosanna!

## **Student Data**

*Number of respondents: 10 (of 10)*

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

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 5 (50%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 1 (10%)

I am self-employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 2 (20%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 1 (10%)

I am retired, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (10%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (30%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 4 (40%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 1 (10%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 1 (10%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; my institution/employer paid the rest: 1 (10%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (30%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 5 (50%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 1 (10%)

I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 1 (10%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 6 (60%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 3 (30%)

I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (10%)

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

**Library disciplines:**

Archivist: 1 (10%)

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (10%)

Library administrator: 1 (10%)

Special collections librarian: 1 (10%)

Other: 1 (10%)

**Professional educator:**

Lecturer/adjunct: 1 (10%)

**Book trades:**

Antiquarian bookseller: 1 (10%)

**Other occupations/vocations:**

Retired: 1 (10%)

Other: 2 (20%)