

Kari Kraus and Matthew Kirschenbaum  
L-140v: Building a Booklab  
16–30 October, Online Only

## 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. Yes, very. I also appreciated having both required and optional additional readings, for when I wanted to find out more or had additional reading time.
2. Readings were a good selection.
3. The readings were very useful. Set a good foundation for the course.
4. They were fine.
5. Yes, very glad to be alerted to these readings. Readings were manageable for a short class like this, but still were able to gesture to larger resources for later use.
6. Yes, the pre-course reading assignments were helpful as they set the tone for what to expect over the course.
7. Yes.
8. {no response}
9. In this case I would like more practice and less theory based articles. I think sharing more of the Sammelband blog would have been more helpful.
10. Bibliocircuitry was not that useful; maybe replace with an essay from “Teaching the History of the Book” by a BIPOC scholar.
11. Yes, the pre-course readings helped me prepare for class and be more ready to participate.
12. Far less required reading than I expected. All were relevant.
13. {no response}
14. Yes.
15. Yes, useful.
16. {no response}
17. Very helpful. I am a relative newcomer to the idea of building a BookLab, so the few readings that were required and suggested really helped me get a foundation for things that the instructors discussed.
18. The pre-course readings were helpful. No other readings at this time.
19. Yes! Very happy to have these.
20. {no response}
21. Some were useful and some less so. The reading about the BookBeetle reassured me that I had not missed some magic secret about teaching with it (but also did not give me much that was new). The most useful thing about these readings was probably just

becoming aware of the *Teaching the History of the Book* volume.

22. I loved them all and was pleased with what I read.

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. These were fantastic—so many examples and resources, organized and presented really well. I'm very grateful for the instructors creating this resource, which was comparable to a book's worth of knowledge and resources.
2. Absolutely, I got a lot of great ideas.
3. All appropriate and high quality. Great to have access to so many real working documents (syllabuses, class activities, policy documents) having to do with running a booklab.
4. I appreciated getting the RBS chained paper.
5. Course materials were all useful, especially the responsiveness of instructors to add additional documents like a position description.
6. Yes, all will be examined now that the course is over. It is helpful that access to the Google Drive folder will remain after the course has ended.
7. It will be very helpful in making decisions about our BookLab ideas.
8. {no response}
9. I think a California job case layout handout would have been more useful than chain line paper.
10. Yes, slide decks and sample assignments and one-pager on Google Drive will be useful.
11. During the course, the instructors shared very informative slides about how they built their BookLab, and also syllabi, which gave very concrete guidance. It was also very helpful to write a draft mission statement and see other people's mission statements.
12. Google Drive materials will be useful when I have time to review.
13. {no response}
14. Yes.
15. My work is with many disciplines in the humanities, a few in the social sciences, and with studio artists. In a course led by English professors, it was no surprise that the assigned and recommended readings often were of a theoretical nature. The classes themselves were firmly grounded in the practicalities of printing and running a program in book culture, providing a balance that, for my own part, was helpful and welcome.
16. Would be great to include some kind of physical materials mailed out to participants, perhaps for an engaging activity. Or a materials list to gather in advance, like simple paper and thread and a needle to sew a pamphlet. The content and online readings/materials were great—no complaints. I'd just like to see more physical engagement if possible, and I've seen this done in other online teaching formats. For

example, I led a Zoom class introducing graduate students to preservation in the library/archival setting, and before the course I mailed each participants an envelope with a pencil, a sheet of mylar, an acid-free folder, and a photographic negatives envelope so they could touch and talk about the materials we'd discuss. We also did an activity where everyone took a sheet of paper, wrote on it with ink, and then soaked it in water during class. At the end of class, we talked about what we noticed and how that was relevant to the preservation discussion. All this to say, there are relatively simple ways to create opportunities for physical/embodied learning even in an online class.

17. There wasn't a workbook, but rather a host of additional materials that were added to the Google Drive folder. The specific examples of things like sample syllabi and other documents related to BookLab—along with the highly informational slide decks—are all really useful. I know I will go back to them in the coming months/semester as I pursue BookLab ambitions at my own university.
18. The teaching materials were very helpful and am glad I will have access to them in the future.
19. {no response}
20. {no response}
21. N/A
22. I am grateful to have the slides to reference in the future.

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. The emphasis on practicalities—we already knew BookLabs interested us, so the emphasis on how to make one happen where we are, and how to do that well for all involved, was spot on. I also appreciated the focus on social justice and on student learning. I also really appreciated how thoroughly the instructors cited everyone whose work they built on or who was a part of making the BookLab what it is, including the opportunity for Q&A with the graduate students working in the lab.
2. Yes.
3. The most intriguing part of the course was the behind the scenes access to MK and KK and the pedagogical tour of BookLab. So many new ideas and project plans after hearing about the great work happening at UMD! Lots of ideas for new assignments, projects, and equipment to construct our own lab.
4. I appreciated having concrete numbers for budgets & examples of what materials our instructors used in their situation. Similar to how they thought through things & overcame challenges. I definitely have a list of items that I need to add to my purchasing list & ideas to perhaps structure hosting an artistic fellowship or researcher or having a graduate assistant. I really appreciated their candidness & openness to discussing how long things took, what they did & did not pay for, the limitations they experienced, &c.

5. This course really helped me think strategically about my own plans for a book lab. I appreciated the honest answer to questions and how the instructors addressed the realities of academic life. The instructors balanced theory/motivations and practicalities really well.
6. I valued speaking with the GAs/hourly workers in the third session. MK and KK conveyed their enthusiasm for their subject matter each session but it was evident from how the student workers responded to BookLab of how the typical student could respond and relate to BookLab.
7. Plan to purchase a BookBeetle. Helpful ideas about how to expand beyond the classroom. Providing syllabi is always helpful with ideas.
8. {no response}
9. The questions for planning your space or start up were helpful. I found the example events and projects useful too. I do not teach courses. It would have been more helpful to hear how various classes use the Book Lab in a one off session or a few sessions during a course.
10. Really liked the Community Prints aspect of the UMD Book Lab and how it integrates graduate students into its operations and vision.
11. {no response}
12. More breakout sessions would be helpful.
13. {no response}
14. Learning about how BookLab works and how they funded it was important. Some of the theoretical ideas and reading were helpful for thinking through my own projects.
15. This course gave me confidence that I had done my homework in preparing to incorporate printing in the special collections program I oversee. It provided valuable practical information on printing materials, organization, and programming. It also gave me a better (and positive) picture of what I have let myself in for—the class left me eagerly anticipating the arrival of our press, training of staff, and introduction of printing to my campus community.
16. {no response}
17. I really appreciated learning about how BookLab intersected with specific courses that the instructors taught, which is where my own current thinking is. For me, building a humanities maker-space such as BookLab is an aspirational goal, and right now bringing BookLab-inspired pedagogical materials and approaches into my own teaching is the most manageable next step. Overall, though, just getting an inside view of how MK & KK's BookLab came into being (and on a small budget) was hugely inspirational, and their nuanced presentations about matters both practical and theoretical makes me think that some version of what they have created might actually be doable at my cash-strapped, budget-contracting institution.
18. I came away with thoughts on how to use a BookLab in the future, especially how to market the class.
19. Absolutely. It was very helpful to talk about space, equipment, budgets, timelines,

essential materials/supplies, guidelines and administrative requirements. I was hoping to get some of this type of information... and it was all included in the class.

20. {no response}
21. The first session was by far the most useful for me. I did come away with some concrete ideas for what we might do on my campus and for how I might try to convince administrators of the value of a BookLab here.
22. I liked how KK and MK broke things down into manageable themes.

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. Absolutely!
2. Yes.
3. Absolutely they did. The approach was well-organized across the three sessions around building the lab, using the lab, and considering the larger community/institutional questions that come along with running a humanities makerspace.
4. I wouldn't say that I now have all of the skills & information that was promised, but both KK & MK prompted us to think about how we would structure our own programs & gave lots of ideas of things we could do, including syllabi. A lot of what they do at UMD would not fit with my own institution, but it was still helpful to see how they went about their programming and the nuts & bolts of running any sort of similar type thing. I didn't exactly learn what I hoped to, but I came away with some concrete ideas, things to think about & consider & things I'd like to add to my list of purchases. In this case, it's difficult since the course was geared toward a wide array of people from those just in the thinking stage to others who were already running their own program. & of course, everyone's situation is different.
5. Yes! I wish this course had come a few months earlier when I was scouring eBay and teaching myself letterpress. This course reinforced and solidified what I learned on my own, which was very helpful. I have more confidence to navigate institutional waters and a better vision for what I want my book lab to do. I could have used a few more examples of how the instructors handle "one-shots" or one-time visits from other classes. But I recognize they are not in a library setting and may have a different conception of that model.
6. Yes; I wanted a good overview of the process and I received that.
7. Definitely learned a lot.
8. {no response}
9. This course will help keep the momentum for our roll out of a book lab type space.
10. Yes.
11. I learned what I hoped to learn, kind of an overview of what it takes to build a BookLab. I will need to take pieces of what I learned to apply them to my situation, such as events we can support, roles of campus partners, budget, outreach methods,

- &c.
12. I wish there had been more about similar programs that are not in an academic department.
  13. {no response}
  14. Mostly.
  15. Yes, particularly the practicalities of materials, and types and scope of assignments possible in a print/book studio.
  16. Yes! Great intro to one way of doing things, how/why. Appreciated the constant reminder that their path was just one and that there were other options, different approaches.
  17. Yes, all of that, and more!
  18. I learned more than I hoped to.
  19. Yes.
  20. {no response}
  21. Sort of. I thought the overview on the first evening of how the UMd BookLab is structured and of its resources was the most useful. Most of what was covered on the second night could have been given to us in print in advance so that we could have used that time to discuss.
  22. {no response}

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. Building a BookLab :) I've now got additional knowledge, skills, plans, and an informal network of like minded folks.
2. Yes.
3. In teaching and construction of our own book/publishing lab.
4. I have a better idea of what types of materials I may need & ideas for outreach, partnerships & the possibility of help as the program grows. I am lucky that my institution has already committed to creating programming around letterpress printing, so I know I have support in that regard, but having the contact of people I can reach out to for more specified support is great. It was also great to see the possibilities of what could be & perhaps what to aspire to, at least in part.
5. I have a baby book lab and plan to use a lot of the advice from this course in my future endeavors. Even small things like posting extra copies for giveaways outside the lab or putting things up on the door outside the lab were really helpful to hear. MK's guiding questions on the first night were really helpful for scoping the goals and reach of my space.
6. I plan to purchase a small printing press and use it to create links between the makerspace in the library and the special collections in which I work.
7. {no response}
8. {no response}

9. I plan to meet with my colleague to discuss more space opportunities and event planning.
10. Some of the frameworks for making the space welcoming and accessible will be useful.
11. I plan to refine our mission statement, discuss with campus partners, plan reasonable events, discuss our goals as far as presses to obtain, create an annual budget, and discuss outreach options.
12. Create new networks locally.
13. {no response}
14. I'm hoping to get our moribund printing program up and running again with materials that have been in storage for the past 10 years.
15. Acquiring materials, planning our first open press days, and engaging the faculty's participation.
16. Setting up a book arts lab/program at my library.
17. As suggested above, I plan to start with a new course design. Eventually, though, I'd love to build some type of humanities maker-space.
18. Make a list of necessary items for a BookLab. Get in contact with faculty that can help get a BookLab started.
19. I'm hoping to assemble a team of book arts professionals and enthusiasts in my region to work towards establishing a non-profit offering book arts activities, classes, and studio and gallery space.
20. {no response}
21. I hope that in time we will be able to create something like a BookLab on my campus, though because our context is quite different from Maryland's it will look quite different.
22. {no response}

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

1. Anyone interested in book history, makerspaces, the overlap of their personal craft/making interests and their professional/scholarly work, building good community lab spaces, student empowerment and learning.
2. {no response}
3. This course appeals most to folks just starting out in the lab process with a little familiarity of letterpress and other book making/history teaching experience and techniques.
4. I think it was great for those who are thinking about or just starting their own BookLab programs. A lot of what was discussed wasn't necessarily the most relevant due to my own circumstances, but I really appreciate all of the really practical advice about where to source materials, what materials worked well, the sample syllabi, the job description for graduate assistants, & MK & KK's openness to talk about their own experiences.

5. Lots of folks—good attention to a range of funding possibilities. This seems like a good companion to the book history pedagogy classes since my book lab arose from a Lang Fellowship and the purchase of tabletop presses.
6. Academic staff who are interested in finding new ways of assessment, e.g., assignments that would be more difficult to be gamed using ChatGPT.
7. Anyone planning to start a BookLab.
8. {no response}
9. I think this course could have been more effective if grouped first for librarians or makerspace managers and then a second group for faculty. Maybe with a final joint meeting on how to interact. I found the focus on planning a whole course an isolating topic.
10. People in the early stages of planning a book lab.
11. People hoping to build a book lab.
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. Anyone interested in printing as pedagogy in a classroom or community workshop setting.
15. Librarians and professors campaigning—usually against the tide— for the potential and popularity of print and paper culture in which our students are eager to join.
16. Librarians and professors looking to create a book arts program of some kind at their institution, whether it's a formal program in a department or a cart in a closet that is rolled out for events and class visits.
17. English professors, librarians, archivists—anyone interested in the topic, really.
18. Those involved in a history of the book class.
19. {no response}
20. {no response}
21. In the course's current form, it will be most useful to faculty and staff in contexts similar to UMd—large research universities with graduate students, where a BookLab is most likely to be a project housed entirely with an English department. However, I think the course could be easily revised to be extremely useful for a broad range of faculty and staff at all kinds of institutions.
22. {no response}

7) *If applicable, what were the most powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any “aha!” moments you’d like to share?*

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Hard to make this sound scintillating, but the biggest “aha!” moment for me was witnessing the synergy of the BookLab approach: From acquiring equipment, designing activities, stocking a library, and engaging in community oriented

printing/bookmaking projects, “Building a BookLab” offers a really valuable vision for the humanities at work in teaching, learning, and beyond.

4. {no response}
5. The “aha!” moments for me were just the repeated exposure to the lessons learned by someone who has been through it and knows the world. I spent a lot of time this summer trying to find the texts or resources or organizations or supplies that MK and KK had at their fingertips.
6. {no response}
7. Displays of the BookBeetle.
8. {no response}
9. Gojo soap. Need that!
10. The paradox that you can't do it alone and that you also have to own it
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. {no response}
15. {no response}
16. {no response}
17. For me, seeing the syllabi for the BookLab-focused classes—that was the point when I really thought, “Here's a first small step I can implement!”
18. {no response}
19. There is great value in making something of one's own—beyond the object made.
20. {no response}
21. {no response}
22. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Would have liked to spend a bit more time with the readings specifically, and it would have been nice to have a couple more small “assignments” like the mission statement to put class prep time to use and come away with the class with a few useful artifacts (design a unit for a syllabus using a piece of equipment you'd put in your lab, e.g., design an assignment, make a flyer for a project your lab could do right now, find a grant you could apply for). Needn't add any administrative burden (grading) for the profs, but pairing each class with a little activity like that might help give students a bit more investment and something to take away.
4. I wish we had more time—MK & KK were great & there was so much more we could have discussed. It would have been nice to learn more about my fellow classmates too & how they were thinking about things. We did have to submit a class bio, but since

the class was quite large, it was difficult to match those with a face.

5. I think I could have benefited from a little more time to interact with classmates, perhaps in a birds of a feather type setting.
6. If there were videos of each press in action that would be helpful but it's not essential.
7. Obviously being there live would be great.
8. {private response} [See comment on previous page about hybrid model.]
9. {no response}
10. Perhaps more time spent on how to navigate institutional pressures and challenges—such as pressure to run large classes (UMD admin seems to be willing to invest GAships and resources in the book lab like a good operating and consumables budget; this is the not the case in many institutions); some attention paid to how to deal strategically with administrators who don't understand the manual and intellectual labour involved in building a book lab (and on what career stage is suitable for working on such an initiative; some class members for the purposes of tenure and promotion will have to quantify this work on a book lab beyond just reporting guest speakers hosted at the lab, &c.—some guidance here needed); more attention needed on community engagement and the nuts and bolts of developing such partnerships; more on health and safety; I would have liked some more details about the number of class visits; how many students, &c.; GAs provided some of this in break-out rooms. Class size did not permit much discussion; I know there was great expertise among class members and I would have liked to benefit from this more; I would cut the enrollment in half and maybe offer twice a year to catch up with pent-up demand; after that once a year or every two years.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. Online courses are hard to make meaningful. I'm not sure they need to be synchronous. It was helpful as a boost to my interest in this topic, but I'm not convinced that this couldn't have just been a video with a reading list.
15. {no response}
16. {no response}
17. Zoom classes make it impossible to replicate the interactions that happen at in-person RBS classes, so I don't really know how much you can get around the platform issues—but more interaction among students could have been beneficial. I appreciated the smaller, break-out room sessions, but it would have been even more useful to be matched with students with similar backgrounds/interests. In other words, I would have liked to be grouped with other English/lit professors, since our institutional situations are likely to be more alike (compared to librarians, &c.)
18. I wish I could have been at the University of Maryland BookLab.
19. {no response}
20. {no response}

21. I would have found it most useful if we had had much more time in small groups (given the large enrollment) and if those groups (which this year were made up by dividing us alphabetically) were arranged so that we were put with people at similar types of institutions—liberal arts college folks with other SLAC (Small Liberal Arts College) folks, for instance. It was useful to hear what is being done at Maryland, but it would have been even more useful to hear what is being done—or contemplated—at institutions more like my own. We got to do some of this on the first evening, but then not in the second and third sessions. {private response} [I would also recommend to RBS that consideration be given to having the course taught by two people from different institutions—ideally from different types of institutions—instead of by two people from the same department. That change would introduce breadth of experience and, I think, provoke more useful conversations. UMd has more faculty in the English dept than in my entire institution, or nearly so, and there didn't seem to be much consideration from the instructors of contexts other than their own. I was interested to hear what they'd done, but perspectives from more than one school would have been even better.]

22. {no response}

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? On a 1–10 scale, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10
2. 10
3. 10
4. 9
5. {no response}
6. 8
7. 10
8. 5
9. 8
10. 9
11. 10
12. 6
13. {no response}
14. 5
15. 10
16. 10
17. 10
18. 10

19. 9
20. {no response}
21. 6
22. 6

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhance the course experience?*

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Yes! Loved hearing from the graduate students. Would have been great to see the community art collaborator's space, too.
4. {no response}
5. I am sure they could, but I didn't feel their absence in this course experience.
6. Virtual field trips—not relevant. Guest speakers—yes, the student workers in BookLab provided insight into how students relate to the concept.
7. No field trips.
8. {no response}
9. I would have loved to see another space or hear from another faculty colleague on how they use BookLab in their teaching.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. {no response}
15. {no response}
16. Yes—really enjoyed hearing from the graduate students that work in the BookLab. Hearing about their experience as students and as practitioners was very helpful in thinking through how we might involve students at our institution so that both parties benefit.
17. N/A
18. Students gave helpful thoughts and ideas.
19. Not in three sessions. There was a lot of territory to cover in a short amount of time.
20. {no response}
21. We met in small groups with some of the graduate interns. I suspect this was a useful element for folks who have graduate students. Since most of the conversation was about the nitty-gritty details of graduate schedules and stipends, and since I work at an institution without graduate students, this portion of the course was not very useful to me. I would have benefitted from meeting with a graduate intern in a group with other people from institutions like mine for a conversation more focused on the needs and opportunities of smaller campuses.

22. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. Enjoy!
4. {no response}
5. N/A
6. {no response}
7. Just take it. It is worth it.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. Especially for a first iteration, a very good experience.
11. {no response}
12. {no response}
13. {no response}
14. {no response}
15. Take this course, do not hesitate!
16. {no response}
17. Take it!
18. Start building a BookLab and keep in touch with the professors.
19. {no response}
20. {no response}
21. {no response}
22. {no response}

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

1. I'm building a BookLab now :)
2. {no response}
3. Autumn learning / from seasoned pros / reinventing old ways.
4. {no response}
5. GET INK ON PAPER.
6. Access to expertise not immediately available in my home institution.
7. Just take it. It is worth it.
8. {no response}
9. I left with more ideas and a desire to keep going on our BookLab plans.
10. {no response}

11. Lab-a-rific.
12. It was useful, but would have been better at a less frenetic time of the semester for me.
13. {no response}
14. {no response}
15. The intellectual engagement in RBS classes and other programming reminds me of why I became an academic librarian. As with special collections librarianship, the stimulation of the mind is refreshing and affirming. Would that all our work and concerns in academic libraries were like this!
16. Small can be mighty. / Even with a small budget, / Get ink on paper!
17. Always inspiring!
18. I always come away from an RBS course with thoughts and ideas that are helpful to me in my library work and experience. The relationships are the key to an RBS course.
19. Oooh, haiku! Ink stamped on paper / sewn and cased with strength and paste / new galaxy by hand.
20. {no response}
21. {no response}
22. {no response}