

Robert Riter
L-155v: Institutional Book Arts Collections: Evaluating & Describing
7–11 July, 2025, Online

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. I did not have time to do the pre-course readings, but the reading list has been very helpful.
2. Yes, they were helpful. I was mostly unfamiliar with this course, and the pre-readings gave me a better understanding of what I could expect.
3. Yes! They provided the necessary context for the course, which I would not have had otherwise!
4. Yes, I really enjoyed the readings. We have the Drucker book in our collection.
5. “Yes, but I would have preferred to receive them further ahead of time. Some felt like they duplicated the same information. {private response}
6. {private response}
7. Absolutely. It was a long reading list, but I definitely plan to save the list to return to.
8. I was (am) doing research for my Ph.D. dissertation and finalizing a chapter, so I confess I didn’t read any of the pre-course reading assignments before the course. However, I did look at them after the first class and thought they were great.
9. The course readings were interesting and informed conversations in class. I would not say they were necessary depending on your level of familiarity/background in the field. I really appreciate having those supplemental resources though and believe they are exceptionally valuable.
10. Unfortunately, I just didn’t have the time to dive into them, since it was such a huge list. I started to read the Drucker book, but it’s very verbose. I think it would be helpful to pare down the “required” readings to a few essentials, as my other RBS classes {private response} have effectively done, to make the list more manageable.
11. These readings were incredibly useful and insightful, and I’ll be returning to them frequently and talking about them with colleagues as well. While there aren’t specific ones I’d want to see removed, there are some areas where it might be interesting to see more contemporary sources or challenges to some of the assumptions and “givens” that have been established in this field. (For example, several of the sources on databases/digital collections talk about the importance of browsing as a student method of information-seeking, but those are often based on studies 25+ years old and where there might be different perspectives on browsing vs. other modes of info-seeking—and it would be interesting to think about how we’re approaching the design of databases/indexes.)

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. Yes, the links shared during the course were very helpful, especially for someone who is new to institutional book arts collections. I will continue to revisit the notes and links I got from this course.
2. Absolutely! All of the questions, definitions, and resources are extremely valuable and helpful.
3. All appropriate, useful, and engaging. I plan to revisit the materials after the course.
4. Yes, they will be useful after; the introduction to classmates via their bios was lovely.
5. There was no course workbook. {private response}
6. {private response}
7. I appreciated the daily session outlines, in terms of being able to see the topics covered and some useful terms and definitions, and many useful questions that we discussed or questions for us to reflect on after the class sessions. I will definitely save these and return to them in the future, so yes, they will continue to be useful to me!
8. It was really good! Concise, on point, and will absolutely be useful after the course.
9. I appreciate the session notes included along with their linked resources. I will definitely refer back to these resources going forward.
10. RR shared a lot of great links, and I like that each session was well-organized and stayed right on time. I will certainly be referring to these later while exploring the references and collections that RR has collected for us.
11. The questions that guided and organized each day were thoughtful and expansive enough to generate conversation, but also specific enough to help me think about the practical concerns in my own institutional context. The teaching examples were also thoughtfully chosen and represented a range of types and concerns—I learned about so many new books and have also reconsidered my thinking on known books based on the discussions!

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 variety of methods to define, acquire, describe, and manage book arts collections. These will all be very helpful as I help to build a new book arts collection in my institution.
2. Looking at art books!
3. Meeting like-minded individuals and gaining info on a facet of library studies I was not deeply familiar with. I plan to write a blog post for my institution highlighting a few of the artists' books in our collection.
4. Better knowledge of the history, collection management, collections, and artists/processes. The various examples of cataloging were extremely useful.
5. I loved the detailed review and discussion about collection development and access policies.
6. {private response}
7. Issues related to description were the most directly relevant aspects for me, but I also got a lot out of the discussions on digitization and access and the various

projects other institutions have done or are involved with. I am definitely curious to see how I might incorporate these ideas in my own work.

8. The discussion on what is or can be an artists' book and is or can be a book art object, particularly the latter, really got me. I wasn't familiar with the term "book art object" or "book arts collection", by the way, and I" still not sure it's common or even a thing here in Brazil, but it makes so much sense. So, my plan is to look a little bit more into it, as a side project.
9. I think that this was really interesting from an academic perspective and gave me lots to chew on. In particular, I'm thinking a lot about the institutional divide in access to special collections and artist books more generally. It's such a rich medium with the capacity to express ideas and impart knowledge with subtlety and nuance lacking in other mediums but the inroads to discovering works must be so well cultivated so as to exist at all. {private response}
10. I appreciated the instruction and discussions on all the essential aspects of stewarding a book arts collection. It made me think a lot about approaches to cataloging, access, collection management, outreach, instruction, &c. not just for book arts, but any bibliographical or archival material, which is great for me as a librarian who straddles these areas.
11. The readings really helped me shape my thinking in advance of class, but the discussions were equally important and challenged (or expanded) some of those ideas I was coming in with. We've been wrestling with how to approach a "re-visioning" and digitization within our collection, and this has given me the tools and insight to finally approach this with more confidence and clarity.

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, I managed to learn what I wanted to as part of the course.
2. I learned more than expected, especially for an online class. This will hopefully lead me to further engagement with this field and a potential career pivot.
3. Yes! Wonderful course and a great introduction to RBS as an institution.
4. Yes, RR was great!
5. Yes.
6. Yes.
7. Yes
8. Yes!!!! For me I went into the course really interested in the 'evaluation' part of it, and although it was a very brief part, it was very helpful.
9. Yes! I would say that the course provided a really great platform to discuss ideas I've been trying to resolve independently for a while. I've come away with a renewed excitement for this subject and hope to find opportunities to engage more in the future.
10. Yes, the description is very accurate. I learned so much about book arts. Hearing the perspectives and ideas of students in other domains and other walks/stations in life is one of my favorite things about RBS, and it rang true in this class, even virtually. I think the virtual format is suitable for this particular instruction (collection development, management, description, and access), as well as being more practical and affordable than a week-long, in-person course. If I decide

down the road that I want to get more hands-on experience with using/reading artists' books, to dip my toes into book arts techniques, and/or to dive into their history as an art form, I would want to take that course in-person.

11. Absolutely! I only wish we'd had more time to work on some of the evaluative elements—maybe each selecting a work and trying to write an assessment or minimal cataloging record. (I know there's another RBS course on modern special collections cataloging, but I would have loved to have a chance to test this out in the class and maybe have a dialogue/critique/feedback with the other participants about the process.) I also really, really appreciated RR's approach to the class instruction/design and how much knowledge and experience he brought to the session. It's easy for Zoom classes to feel like you're staring at a blank wall for hours, but this felt dynamic and engaged the entire time.

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

1. The skills and knowledge will be helpful as I am involved in building a new book arts collection in my institution.
2. I plan to engage more with the Book Arts Archives to gain a deeper knowledge of the field.
3. I plan to write a blog post for my institution highlighting a few of the artists' books in our collection and to use the thoughtful questions provided to guide my interactions with artists' books in the future.
4. In my current job, and better appreciation of other collections/librarians/educators/institutions.
5. I will use it in stewarding new librarians at my institution.
6. {private response}
7. I would love to dig further into the topics and works discussed. I hope to figure out how I might incorporate these skills and knowledge to improve description and access to my institution's local collections, but I don't have any specific ideas at the moment.
8. As special collections librarianship is what I identify with more, I think the knowledge I gathered during the course will help me in the future. But it was mostly for my own research purposes and side projects.
9. {private response}
10. I plan to explore book arts collections more freely and armed with a solid grounding in this art form. My workplace isn't one that collects artistic materials, but it's of great interest to me personally.
11. My most immediate plan is to (start) revising our collection development policy, but also to start putting together a project plan for digitization in the coming year. I'll also be contributing to some pre-assessment of artists' books in our collection to help with cataloging and potentially taking on some copy cataloging. I also hope to use this as an impetus to co-write internal policies for cataloging and description (we have a new cataloger who is excited to work on the artists' book collection, so it's well timed).

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

1. Someone who is tasked to start an institutional book arts collection.
2. Anyone interested in Book Arts!
3. Someone seeking additional info on how to treat works and records of artists books within a special collections context.
4. Anyone working with artists' book collections, students especially
5. New librarians of artists' book collections.
6. (Gain a lot of information and access to many resources I never knew before.)
7. Anyone interested!
8. People who work with or want to work with book arts collections, book arts objects, and artists' books, or people who are interested in this subject, even if just a little.
9. I think working professionals connecting niche areas across institutional, professional sector, and geographical divides.
10. Anyone looking for how to manage the practicalities of stewarding a book arts collection, or just learn more about artists' books generally, would get a lot out of this class.
11. Librarians, archivists, or creators—whatever their experience or knowledge of artists' books—will benefit. I came in with some years of experience working with these collections but still felt like there was so much to learn. This class was the perfect impetus to do some of the foundational and core reading, so those who are also interested in artists' books from an art historical or research angle would also greatly benefit!

7) *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. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. This course introduced me to concept of "bookness" which is delightful and provides a vehicle to articulate a concept I adore.
4. Interdisciplinary teaching with artists' books.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. {no response}
8. Understanding what a book arts collection is, what the book arts itself is, —that it exists—kind of shifted something for me.
9. {no response}
10. The dialogue on cataloging issues/approaches was quite rich since we had a mix of catalogers, non-cataloging librarians, students, and nonprofit workers. There were many nuggets of wisdom RR dropped that I thought were great; he's a very thoughtful, insightful, and responsive instructor.
11. Our class discussion about how to represent artists' books in digital collections—and specifically, what the participants would want to see or how they'd want to experience/engage with a collection—was this moment. I feel like I came away

from that with so many new ideas but also questioned assumptions I'd had about digitized collections before (and how/why people might use them).

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. No!
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. It is great now.
7. {no response}
8. Maybe add something about the preservation of these materials? Even though it was discussed a bit, I think it would've been nice to see practical things or projects done by other institutions.
9. {no response}
10. I think many of us would have liked to spend more time in class. {private response}
11. This session would have been wonderful to do in person to get to see some examples directly—maybe if there's a way to share or connect participants with materials near them, so they could look at some examples ahead of class and bring that experience in fresh?

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. 8
2. 10
3. 8
4. 10
5. 7
6. 8
7. 10
8. 10
9. 7
10. 8
11. 10

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. {no response}
6. Yes.
7. {no response}
8. N/A
9. {no response}
10. N/A
11. N/A

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. While the readings provide wonderful context, do not stress if you are not able to get to them all because the course explains things wonderfully.
4. Take a field trip to Bainbridge Island Museum of Art!!! :)
5. {no response}
6. {private response}
7. {no response}
8. Do it! If you like, work with or are interested in book arts, you'll like it.
9. {no response}
10. If you want to get a grounding in book arts collection development, management, description, and access, this is the course for you!
11. Even though it's mostly "recommended," read as much from the list as you can!

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

1. {no response}
2. Haiku: Book arts is so cool/Who knew you could do so much/I am left wordless
3. Celebrate bookness.
4. I feel like I traveled all over and visited these collections, thank you for the journey!
5. {no response}
6. {private response}
7. I'm glad I did it!
8. Amazing!!!!!!

9. {no response}
10. Consider my curiosity about book arts both quenched and sparked!
11. Everything I wanted, and not enough!