

Jill Gage
T-10: The History of Typography
3–8 August, 2025, Chicago, Illinois

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. The pre-course reading was both useful and fascinating. I felt adequately prepared for the course.
2. I was able to complete the two required readings thanks to their presence in my institution's reference collection and the public library — I found them incredibly useful to have read prior to taking the course. I was vaguely familiar with the history prior to the readings but they gave me a solid sense of the timeline and some exposure to the names and terms used in this part of the field before diving in.
3. There was a lot of overlap and similarity between Wright and Shaw. I could imagine assigning only one of those. I found myself returning to the chapter on Printing Type in Gaskell's *New Introduction to Bibliography* which might be good overview reading.
4. I found the readings very helpful, it would have been nice to also have some videos (ex. of the linotype machine working) or free online articles, as they were expensive without having access to a university library.
5. {private response}
6. {no response}
7. Yes! The pre-course readings provided a great baseline to work from, and as a graduate student, I wish there was more!
8. Yes! It was a good way to get a primer for the course materials.
9. Definitely very useful! The required readings allowed me to familiarize myself with different typefaces and look at them in a more analytical way.
10. {private response}
11. I felt the course readings were a good overview of what the class would cover and enjoyable. I would've loved to have seen one of two readings (or videos) on the physical process of type making.
12. The required texts were extremely useful. They provided foundational understanding of the major figures and their contributions to the subject.

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. It will be useful for post-class reflection as I applied what I learned to my work.
2. I found the course handouts to be very thoughtful — it's evident that JG understands what will be useful for people studying typography at any level and I already know I'll reference some of the sheets after the class. I am particularly

grateful for the handouts with the information on what objects we saw. Taking notes on these sheets and matching them with images I've taken will be incredibly helpful in my synthesis of all the material post-RBS.

3. The online website that was available real-time when the class was offered previously will be made available to us later. It would have been nice to have it available this time, but I can imagine how hard that would be to do with only one instructor. The actual paper handouts were useful, particularly the list of materials we looked at in labs.
4. I found them very helpful, and JG is making a website with other resources which I can't wait to have access to as well!
5. {private response}
6. {no response}
7. JG provided thoughtful + relevant handouts every session, I will be returning to them earnestly.
8. Materials were good. Might be helpful in the future for more examples of the type being discussed. I know a lot of us tried to hand-draw the characters for notes but seeing the characters + typefaces printed might be handy.
9. Distributed materials were good at helping identify the materials we looked at, and I think will be helpful after class to remember everything we looked at/studied. There was no specific workbook, which I think helped since we could write down what we personally felt was important about a specific typeface. I feel that the division of lecture/note-taking and looking at specific materials was good, and helped put materials into perspective.
10. Yes I found everything helpful + will hold onto them.
11. In past RBS courses, handouts for the week would be compiled into a booklet or PDF — a little more organized this way! I do love getting information to look back on later, just got to organize it all now because it's loose at the moment.
12. The handouts outlining what we looked at in class will be put to good use. I will use them to check the holdings of my institution and plan to pull items we hold for closer examination.

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. New insights, ideas, and project plans — yes to all three. This helped me better consider my institution's collection through the lens of typographic history and I've already begun planning exhibitions and workshops for my patrons.
2. I walked away from the course with almost too many new areas of inquiry and research questions to grapple with. I came into working with early printed books almost by accident, so I was particularly drawn to our discussions on the materiality of the early type industry and the physical and often dangerous and harmful labor that went into making books and printing type — these were facets of the history I had simply never considered before. I am left thinking about the comparisons between historical type punchcutting and the present python coding tools for graphic type design, about the work being done to study early metal types from Asia, about the evolution of the ampersand as a letter glyph to a punctuation mark, about how politics and religion both shape and are shaped by typographical forms.

3. The chronology of historic reading types was useful; the display types of the 19th and 20th centuries less so for my work.
4. I loved that JG discussed accessibility and reading through early books for the blind, and discussed labor involved in making texts. This gave me a new perspective because many of the older texts I love looking at were inaccessible or had lots of hidden labor involved that can be overlooked without considering the text.
5. {private response}
6. {no response}
7. JG really made the course for me, specifically in thinking about the materiality of type. Her teaching/instruction has undoubtedly influenced/contoured how I think about my research and how to describe it (Arabic type trade and the movement of technology and people).
8. I really enjoyed learning the historical contexts for the types. Being able to place type was a goal of mine, and I feel more confident in my ability to do that. Also working hands-on with the material was a huge plus!
9. All of it! This course taught me a lot about the history of type-making and type-setting (and printing) that I would not have learned otherwise. While most of my work is unrelated to this course, it definitely reignited my love of typography and interest in the evolution of type.
10. A project plan I have is to prepare a small exhibition for my library's display cases highlighting some seminal publications we have on the history of typography & type specimens. Everything in the class was intriguing! All my insights are new.
11. JG offered a lot of historical context to the types I have known/read for a long time. Throughout the week, I kept thinking about the people (seen/unseen) who "powered" type history and began to also connect them to their time and place. I love looking at the letterforms too, but looking at print history from the lens of letterform design was fun, challenging. {private response}
12. Being more familiar w/ more recent developments of the field, I appreciated the historical context the class provided. I now have a greater understanding of the field.

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. JG's comprehensive understanding of the history of typography allowed for a course design that somehow covers 500 years of history in five days without making you feel dizzy. Her selections of guest lectures were a perfect way to show us different perspectives on type. I came into the course with a hope that I'd leave understanding the history and learn about the people and I feel this has been accomplished. On top of this, I am leaving with dozens of additional resources to explore and a whole new set of eyes to look at the world with.
3. Yes, a strong introduction to the history of typography. In addition to learning the basics of identifying type, I also improved my aesthetic for type — what I like, don't like, and why. {private response}

4. Yes I learned what I was hoping and even more!
5. {private response}
6. {no response}
7. Yes; I learned more than I could hope, and though regionally different, took away so many insights that I seek to apply to my own research.
8. Yes.
9. 100%! The history of typography spans 500 years, which would be very difficult to condense into one-week of study, but Jill did a wonderful job going through each era and how they influenced one another. I feel like I am able to appreciate typefaces and what they represent better than before the class, and I definitely learned a lot.
10. {private response}
11. I think so! {private response}
12. JG delivered what was promised in the class and more. For example, I didn't know I needed nor that I would appreciate a deep dive into Black Letter Typography.

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

1. First it broadened my appreciation of the subject matter and, by extension, the works in my institution's collection, which I knew held some significant items on typographic history but which I lacked the knowledge to understand. This new knowledge, in turn, will allow me another avenue in which I can approach exhibitions, presentations, instruction, &c.
2. Regularly and with a ton of gratitude and gusto.
3. I want to look at a lot of 18c books and see if I can identify typefaces.
4. I work at a letterpress studio at my school and I look forward to having more knowledge on how the type was made (both design and the casting process), this will provide a new perspective when i give tours or guest lectures. These skills have also given me a new type of literacy, as i can see the design behind words that i read everyday.
5. {private response}
6. {no response}
7. By applying it directly to my graduate research in thinking about materiality, labor, and the movement of typography.
8. I hope to take the information back to help more with current interior book layout and cover designs. I feel like I can provide more feedback on type design and other typographical works.
9. I would love to continue researching type and its evolution! Since this is more of a personal project than a work one, I think there are a lot of directions I could go.
10. It doesn't directly relate to my job, but fortunately I have the flexibility to pursue interests such as this. My library's collection is rich in this area + I am looking forward to exploring it deeply. Hopefully I'll be able to do the exhibition. I know I'll be able to do blog + social media things. I also hope I can help acquire things for our collection in this area.
11. Columbia has a huge typographic materials collection — I'm hoping to go back and think of new ways to get people to come engage with it.

12. Enhancing our cataloging will be a priority. I'll also use what I learned when giving collection presentations. It will also be critical to processing the archive of a 19th/20th century press.

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

1. Anyone. Really, anyone.
2. As an early career scholar in printed materials, I feel this was the perfect course for me to orient myself in the history that wasn't covered in my library schooling and exposed me to tons of physical specimens. I think students and early career scholars would find this incredibly helpful.
3. People interested in design, book history, and the evolution and specialization of jobs within the book trade.
4. This would apply to anyone interested in art, design and history of the book, as it is the foundation of many printed and manuscript works, which rely on the design of the letters to tell a story and compliment the content of the text.
5. {private response}
6. N/A
7. Anyone interested in type, in whatever capacity.
8. Librarians + educators interested in the study of material culture as well as graphic designers.
9. Anyone interested in the history of printing should take this course! Printing and typography go hand-in-hand, and I feel that any study of the press should also include the typefaces that came with it. I also think this would be a good foundational course for someone with an interest in graphic design, since so much of modern design draws on type development of the past.
10. Book historians, graphic designers, design historians, anyone interested in printing.
11. Anyone who has ever been curious about type and its origins!
12. Catalogers, curators, special collections librarians , designers, students of book History + Graphic design.

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. The amount of work that goes into creating type. Both historically and in current digital type making. Letterforms are so ubiquitous and its designers so quiet about their workflows. This made me think about type differently and I wish it was something more people knew about.
2. The realization that type had a trade in the same way books did, the fact that copyright and piracy has been an issue since Aldus Manutius and remains murky for 21st century type designers, discussions of labor and unions and the industrial era of the linotype widened my whole understanding of the print industry. Successfully looking at two "Aldines" to spot piracy was a memorable moment.
3. "In the last session, Jackson Cavanaugh, a type designer, described his work and the software tools he used to accomplish it. It was a superb talk and effectively pulled a week's worth of work together. An aha moment was seeing the Aldine

Polyglot Bible and learning that the Hebrew vowels below the consonants were set as separate pieces of type. Wow!"

4. As previously mentioned, JG brought the history to life by explaining the lives of the people who made the fonts, and not just the design elements. This helped with understanding the context they came from and its implications in use today. She also brought guest speakers from many areas of research, so we could learn from their specific studies and see how the history of typography can be written and shared in many audiences. She also considered the accessibility of type through a layout and disability lens, which has transformed how I view typography and the history of the book. Every day was packed with “aha” moments as JG encouraged discussion and hands-on learning, we even had a joint lecture with the Environmental History of the Book course, which helped us learn from fellow students, and share our learning. Overall, JG was an amazing teacher who made every student feel valued and eager to learn.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Going to the conservation lab, hearing from JG + other guest lecturers, and understanding the laborious-ness of the craft of print/type.
8. I feel like being able to work directly with the material was the most impactful. It provided an up-close look and new level of study in the class. It was nice to "feel the history" in a way.
9. So many! Getting to see pieces printed or designed centuries ago was such a wonderful experience for me, as it put a lot of the historical study into a more 'real' context. I also really appreciate typefaces in a new way now, and find myself noticing a lot of small details that were invisible to me previously. I noticed on day 2 that the letter "a" goes from "a" to "ɑ" when roman type is made italic, and now it's all I see!
10. I just loved looking at all the specimens, and learning about all the tools + processes for making type. I also like JG's style — she presents things in a very down to earth way + made it all very fun.
11. Dakota Brown/Environmental book history meet up — Jackson Cavanaugh Bring them back! — the blind testing (it was really hard, but really helpful exercise).
12. Studying the developments of the 15th–18th century provided context to what I know about 19th and 20th century design. I feel my knowledge base has found strengthening!

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

1. {no response}
2. N/A
3. {private response}
4. I loved having a joined lecture with the Enviornmental History of the Book course, and think it would have been fun to have more overlap with other courses for a session or guest speaker, so we can learn from each other, and see how our area of focus fits into others.
5. This was a fantastic course. No suggestions for improvement.
6. {no response}

7. If possible, it might have been interesting to see the entire process of putting type on a press, but understand the structural constraints!
 8. I would have liked more time in the 20th-Century with more discussion on the impact of digital fonts, but I understand that only so much can be discussed in a week!
 9. The lectures could sometimes feel disjointed, but I think JG did a good job explaining everything and showing how they relate. Early in the course, we tried to match titles/printers to materials around the room, and I think it would have been fun to do that again towards the end to see how our knowledge improved.
 10. As I mentioned earlier for us newbies, it might (would) have been helpful to have read something ahead of time — sort of a Cliffs Notes of printing history — so that what we looked at + talked about would have immediately clicked.
 11. This might be a stretch, but I know SAIC has a great artist books library and thinking about how fine press/typography history loves in artist books could be fun!
 12. Nothing comes to mind.
- 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. 9
4. 10
5. 10
6. {no response}
7. I would recommend this course to anyone! I'm broke so money's worth would be like an 8 (probably a rich person's "10!")
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10/10 would recommend - just for the jokes and stories
12. Yes! I feel this class well well worth the money (even though it was a scholarship!) I'd give it a 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. Absolutely, all the guest speakers were very interesting.
2. 100% JG chose great guest speakers and I think having their other perspectives on top of her instruction made the course much less monotonous than it could have been and much more enjoyable than I expected.
3. As noted earlier, the Cavanaugh session was a highlight.
4. YES! The guest speakers were very knowledgeable and kind sharing their expertise with the class and helped us see other ways of studying the history of

typography. Although they were all amazing, my favorite guest speaker was Jackson Cavanaugh from Okay Type, because he brought a modern perspective of the history of typography, and how it impacts our daily life.

5. All of the guest speakers greatly enhanced the course experience.
6. {no response}
7. Everything that JG had planned felt intentional, relevant, and incredibly thoughtful. The range of expertise she and the guests showed was really inspiring.
8. N/A
9. Definitely! All of our speakers were very knowledgeable about the field and offered a lot of insight. Hearing from a practicing type designer was particularly nice, since he is in 'in the weeds' so I felt like his firsthand experience was helpful in seeing how typography has shifted and grown.
10. Yes, we had several guest speakers which were all fantastic + were absolutely appropriate for what we were studying.
11. Absolutely! I think having different perspectives is important and there are so many ways to think about all this history, having these guest speakers only enhanced the class!
12. The {illegible} lab w/ type equipment was great!

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

1. Try to ensure you have a passing knowledge of the vocabulary associated with letterforms (ahem...do the advance readings). Take time after every day to reflect on the discussion and information that was had in the classroom.
2. Drink a lot of water, ask a lot of questions.
3. {no response}
4. This is an amazing course and truly the foundation of understanding the history of the book, as it shows advancements in style, technology, national identity connected to text and the techniques and skill that goes into making the books we love. Going into this course I was intimidated trying to memorize the anatomy of type, dates and names, but please don't let that overwhelm you, because this course did not fixate on those little details, but focused on the more influential aspects. Although typography and design can be seen as a less important part of a book, it is hugely influential and something I think every book historian should have some understanding of.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Make the most of it, go to everything, and ask all the questions!
8. Be prepared to learn a ton each day + never be able to look at certain letters the same way again.
9. If you're like me and take a lot of notes, I'd definitely suggest bringing a laptop/tablet to type everything! And don't be afraid to ask questions or make a comment during class, it's a really good way to facilitate the conversation.
10. I might just reiterate that they may just want to have some very basic print/type history in mind — do some basic reading, perusing (like 1 hour, nothing major) of the topics ahead of time. {private response}
11. {no response}

12. Nothing comes to mind.

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

1. I had a wonderful time.
2. How long until I can take another?
3. In addition to the expertise of the instructor and the opportunity to engage with the Newberry collection, I appreciated the contributions of my classmates who brought varied backgrounds and much expertise.
4. Make the most of this opportunity and don't be afraid to try! Ask questions and enjoy the ride. As a current undergraduate student, I was intimidated taking a Rare Book School course, but by diving into it and getting to know my classmates, it became an unforgettable experience. Never underestimate the benefits of hands-on experience, because it can teach you so much more than you ever imagined! Thank you for this opportunity and everything I learned, it's been truly life-changing.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. This was one of the most formative learning experience (both in content + methodology) for a historian of typography that I could've asked for. Thank you RBS + JG!
8. Consider the crystal goblet smashed.
9. Getting to look at, touch, and hold materials from the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries was one of the coolest experiences of my career.
10. Type is a beautiful grouping of letters, not a group of beautiful letters!
11. If we're sticking to Matthew Carter, design is a dialogue as much as the history surrounding it is. How does the alphabet and all its endless interpretations intersect memory and space? What's different and what stays the same?
12. Immersive and exhilarating as always!