

David Rundle

M-60: Researching Medieval Manuscripts: From Cataloging to Cultural History

29 June–4 July, 2025, Oxford, UK

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. N/A
2. We didn't have any pre course reading, but I think it would have been very valuable to have a little on paleography and also on binding and manuscript production as a primer.
3. The material provided prior to the course was helpful to familiarize ourselves with.
4. There was no specific preparatory reading, but having the course materials slightly further in advance may have been helpful.
5. There were not any pre-set readings for my course, it would have been good to have something set prior out of interest rather than necessity.
6. While our course did not have a formal reading list, the materials uploaded to our shared folder helped demonstrate what direction the course would take. I would defer to the instructors for recommended readings.
7. {no response}
8. I would have liked to have seen more reference books related to manuscripts and cataloging, such as a vocabulary/glossary of terminology so I could refer back. Perhaps other reference sites related to manuscripts.
9. There were few assigned readings, but of the catalog description types, it was most helpful to have them prior to the course.
10. There were not pre-course readings.
11. {private response}

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. There were so many lovely manuscripts, and each one was useful in demonstrating important information about manuscripts and studying them.
2. Very useful to see comparisons between different ways other institutions and time periods have catalogued manuscripts, and the formatting guide will be especially useful.
3. I am so thankful we were given a list of the shelf marks for all the manuscripts consulted in the Bod while we were here! Extremely useful for future reference.
4. All of the content was appropriate and useful; I will continue to refer to the course materials in the future.
5. Everything was incredibly useful, we were given a list of the manuscripts that we consulted throughout the course which I will use in the future.

6. The provided materials assisted my learning. The bibliography I've acquired will help direct my comps lists and my continued scholarship.
7. It was amazing to get to work with so many manuscripts in person; the sheer variety was its own course, text and workbook! All you need is a pencil.
8. There weren't a lot of teaching materials distributed during class, it was more hands-on work and writing down notes for personal use. There were a range of manuscripts, including size, topic, and hands/scripts. We also went to other libraries, like Magdalen, All Souls, Christ Church, and the Bodleian to see manuscripts there. Those visits were fun, plus we were able to see more of the university. I especially enjoyed seeing the Bodleian Library and seeing Duke Humphrey's Library. Please keep these types of visits.
9. A list of the manuscripts we saw during the entirety of the course might have been helpful prior to the beginning of the course but was appreciated at the end of the course to cross-reference.
10. Materials were minimal, but well-chosen and useful.
11. {private response}

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. Learning about fragments and how to create a catalog record was very useful. Also, thinking of the manuscript as a story and a living thing completely changed the way I will interact with manuscripts going forward.
2. How much you can learn from things that seem incident in the flyleaves, the furnishings (or where they used to be). Fragmentology is also fascinating. I walk away wanting to try and create my own MS records for fun!
3. Everything in the course was interesting and relevant to my personal research projects. The cataloging portion of the course is the most relevant to my work and hopefully will be useful if/when UR acquires medieval material.
4. DR is a brilliant, engaging instructor. I'm in disbelief at how much I've learned in the past week. What I've learned in the course will directly support how I work with medieval materials in the future.
5. The teacher of the course, DR, made every single aspect of the course intriguing and exciting. The way in which DR addresses manuscripts is inspiring, and his approaches to manuscripts as objects will be something I carry forward with me in my career as a bookseller.
6. Working hands-on with medieval manuscripts was a major draw to this course. I come from an institution where we do not have any medieval manuscripts in our library collection. The chance to work with these materials—and a large volume of these materials—pointedly was incredible. I can say I am leaving this class far more informed than when I arrived. Likewise, this course has enabled me to see where gaps in my learning exist, and I can better address those areas of concern now as well.
7. How to begin a discovery process through the small details of a physical codex or fragment—how to look, and how to (begin to) see. DR taught us to approach each

textual object through systematic detective work that, with enough patience and context, will open up further and further. I also learned how texts speak to each other and cannot be understood in isolation.

8. I enjoyed the visits to different college libraries and the Bodleian. I have some manuscript experience, such as paleography and Latin, though it's been a while since I've used these daily. I definitely want to brush up on these skills and learn how to describe manuscripts and what to describe. I definitely want more experience with medieval manuscripts and possibly enroll in a Medieval Studies/Medieval History degree.
9. Working with the manuscripts with my own hands was helpful to understand how the quire structure and binding work in tandem with the actual text to give more history & context to the manuscript.
10. The hands-on elements of the class were significant and provided the most relevant training in the class.
11. {private response}

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, DR's breadth of knowledge is truly incredible, and he was so willing to share it with us (with good humor as well).
3. 1000%. I do wish I had a better grasp of manuscript collation formula and foliation in more complicated examples, but DR did really attempt to walk me through it by the end (my brain was just too full of all the other wonderful information to grasp it all).
4. Yes, I learned more than I'd thought was possible in one week, and I am feeling much more confident. However, the course has also usefully highlighted how much more I need to learn and where my skills gaps are in this area.
5. The course completely exceeded my expectations; we were given plenty of material to work with, which DR brought to life. The skills surrounding cataloguing methods and approaches are something I will take forward within my professional life.
6. Absolutely! DR is an exceptional instructor. It would be difficult to name anyone more qualified to teach the M-60 manuscripts course. We covered all the described material and more; we were provided instruction on cataloging and researching medieval manuscripts, and also a history of the Bodleian, Oxford, and the story behind its collections.
7. I learned a great deal about nearly all aspects of manuscripts and walked away with a much better grasp of how to 'read' the material codex and its hidden lives. This includes its institutional lives, and I was very grateful to be given a crash course in the logic of manuscript shelf marks and what they tell us.
8. Yes, DR did a great job and it did enough to pique my interest and I want to continue the research and cataloging and hopefully transcribe some folios.

9. As the course was on creating catalog entries, I feel confident with the material taught and the small amount of class time given to go back to my research projects capable of creating entries.
10. I learned significantly more than I anticipated. The instructor did an excellent job bringing students from their baseline to the necessary skillset.
11. {private response}

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

1. I plan on looking through my institutional collection and seeing if I can improve their descriptions.
2. I am hopeful that I will be able to move into resource description and cataloguing in special collections, so this has been a very useful exercise in what to expect. I also am considering applying for a DPhil in medieval literature, so learning how to dig deep into the material object and itemize it is as useful as the content itself.
3. I am hoping to apply what I learned this week to my future research work with manuscript holdings in Virginia and North American at large. I am working on tracking down some of the 'untraced' collections in Davis and Conway that were originally listed in de Ricci.
4. I will take the skills and knowledge from this course to help me more effectively manage a collection of more than 100 medieval manuscripts.
5. DR's approach to cataloging is something that I will use going forward within my own professional cataloging. Both in terms of how I approach the information and in how I structure it.
6. I plan to complete my Ph.D. in the coming years, and my dissertation will involve researching one or more medieval manuscripts. The knowledge gained in this course will undoubtedly aid me in this goal. Furthermore, as I continue my work as an educator, I can bring the knowledge gained in this course to my students in the classroom.
7. To complete my dissertation and continue discovering the archives, as a future scholar and teacher. In particular, a greater understanding of written culture has helped me to see differently—the texts I work on, their significance and evolution, and why they exist (and survive) at all.
8. I plan to use these skills and knowledge for my future career and personal interest in medieval manuscripts and to become a Curator of Manuscripts and what skills I need that would help me reach those goals and develop more connections.
9. I plan to create catalog entries for an online database of manuscripts.
10. I intend to use the skills while developing a book history course at my institution.
11. {private response}

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

1. Rare book librarians or historians.
2. Librarians hoping to move into special collections, graduate students in the medieval history discipline, anyone hoping to learn more about codicology.
3. Medievalists and librarians who want to create or need to read catalog records for manuscripts.
4. Librarians and researchers who work with medieval material.
5. Anyone and everyone who is interested in books and manuscripts. No matter what experience, the teachers at RBS make the information exciting and accessible.
6. Students interested in codicology and library collections.
7. Anyone with an interest in learning more about how to read the context of medieval manuscripts—how to find them, how they have been and are currently preserved, and what their plethora of details have to teach us. This class would be accessible and useful for both the novice and the budding expert alike.
8. Anyone who is interested in medieval history, catalogers, processing archivists, special collections librarians, and rare book librarians.
9. Both individual researchers and librarians.
10. Medievalists, literary scholars, rare book archivists.
11. {private response}

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. The way that DR linked the manuscripts' history whilst also bringing in the salient points on manuscript ownership, book culture, and codicology was incredible. Particularly in the fragmentology afternoon session and at Magdalen.
3. Definitely thinking about how we collect and dissect all the various cataloged information, and THEN how do we make it available.
4. I'm very grateful to have had a place on this course. I have been deeply uncomfortable with my lack of skills in this area, and this course has set me on the right track to further development.
5. By the end of the course, I had started to get my head around a script I struggle with through seeing many examples throughout the course.
6. I think the best thing I learned in this course is how much more I have to learn. Working alongside esteemed scholars, students, and exemplary staff from RBS was an eye-opening experience. It is a rare opportunity to be in the presence of so many scholars; that in itself was incredible.
7. There were many aha moments as we discovered texts (and even manuscript fragments) in new places!
8. I found that this course was more conversational and not too much of a lecture, which definitely helped with the learning atmosphere. I was comfortable asking questions for class assignments and for other resources that may help.
9. The most "aha" moment for me was realizing the connection between the purpose of a catalog and why information may/may not be included in a catalog entry.
10. Being assigned my own manuscript for research and analysis.

11. {private response}

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

1. {no response}
2. A course reading list ahead of time.
3. None.
4. No.
5. I have no improvement suggestions.
6. None. I am thrilled with what was accomplished here in our short week!
7. {no response}
8. No, please keep this course!
9. {no response}
10. Not that I can think of.
11. {private 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. 10
5. 10
6. 10
7. 10
8. 10
9. 10. I feel that this class may have been the most beneficial RBS course I have taken thus far. The insight field trips to Christ Church & Magdalen College were amazing experiences.
10. 10
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. Yes, very much so. The field trips to see different manuscripts in different collections helped make the material stick and were very enriching.
2. Yes, it was really great to be able to access collections that are usually apply-ahead only, and also great for those who aren't familiar with Oxford.
3. Our visits to other Oxford libraries were incredible for expanding the pool of material examples for what we discussed.
4. Yes.
5. That could certainly be an interesting thing to try in the future!
6. We were fortunate enough to visit several sites on the Oxford campus: Christ Church College and Duke Humphrey's Library to name a couple. We were able to view several manuscripts and collections, gaining better knowledge about research avenues and potential threads.
7. Yes, the college visits added great variety and complexity. It was so fun to follow DR's knowledge and interests around the university!
8. {no response}
9. 100% the field trips enhanced the experience.
10. Trips to Christ Church and Magdelene College were highlights of the course.
11. {private response}

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

1. Look at bindings and paleography before taking the course. Even just cursory will help.
2. Enjoy it, take time to digest the content, and try and brush up on paleography and book production!
3. Start working on finding accommodation early and check often for changes in availability.
4. I would highly recommend the course.
5. These courses are defiantly worth doing; the learning doesn't end within the classroom at the end of the day; it is something that continues. They are dynamic and impactful; they are definitely worth doing!
6. Take the course!
7. {no response}
8. Please bring a measuring tape, as you will be measuring manuscripts and that would be useful to have.
9. Go into the course knowing that you won't know everything
10. This course provides a rigorous, yet accessible overview of analyzing and researching medieval manuscripts in a systematic way.
11. {private response}

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

1. I had the time of my life.
2. Intense but extremely rewarding!
3. Brilliant, once in a lifetime, phenomenal chance to learn from the best, at the best.
4. Thank you to the instructors, course staff, and library staff for a brilliant week!
5. RBS brings manuscripts to life.
6. Exceptional!
7. {no response}
8. This course piqued my interest in medieval manuscripts, and now I want to learn everything I can.
9. The best hands-on experience any manuscript enthusiast could have!!
10. Time of my life.
11. {private response}