University at Albany
State University of New York
Department of Information Studies

IST 655  Rare Books  3 Credits  Fall 2011

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Prerequisites:  None

Course Objectives:

1. Introduce students to the world of rare books, book collecting, and the antiquarian book trade.

2. Introduce students to the principles of descriptive bibliography and to the scholarly uses to which collections of rare books can be put.

3. Introduce students to some of the issues involved in the administration of rare books and special collections.

Student Exit Competencies:

Students completing this course should

1. Be acquainted with the nature of rare books and special collections and their role in the world of libraries and scholarship.

2. Understand the fundamentals of the physical make-up of books.

3. Be able to collate and describe a book according to accepted principles of descriptive bibliography.

4. Be familiar with the various segments of the antiquarian book trade and the avenues for collection development in rare books and special collections.

5. Be familiar with the basic reference tools used in rare book librarianship.
This course addresses three of the objectives the department has identified for students in the M.S. in Information Science program:

1. Demonstrate a sense of professional identity by applying the concepts and principles of the information sciences and related disciplines.
2. Know the history and evolving roles of the information professional in the changing global society.
3. Create, select, acquire, organize, manage, preserve, retrieve, evaluate, and disseminate information using relevant theories and practices.

Course Requirements:

1. Required readings. See outline of course content.
2. Book research assignment. Students will explore the publishing history of a single book. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed in class. Due September 21.
3. Reference assignment. Students will complete an exercise in the use of bibliographies and other reference works and Internet sources pertinent to the study of rare books. Due October 26.
4. Two quizzes, October 19 and November 2. The quizzes will cover terminology, reference works, and test knowledge of collational formulae.
5. A full bibliographical description of a book from the University Libraries' Special Collections along with a short description of the artifactual value of the book. The book will be selected in consultation with the instructor. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed in class. Due November 30.
6. Final project: A paper (with short in-class presentation) in which you will use an allocated amount of (fictional) money, shop antiquarian book dealers on the Internet, and develop a collection of books in a particular area. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed in class. Due December 7.

Evaluation of Student Performance will be based on:

1. Participation in class discussions  5%
2. Book research assignment  10%
3. Reference assignment  10%
4. Quizzes  25%
5. Bibliographic description  25%
6. Final project  25%
Teaching Methodologies

1. Lectures
2. Discussions
3. Audio-visuals

Statement on Academic Dishonesty:
The Department of Information Studies takes academic dishonesty very seriously. Before taking classes within the Department of Information Studies, you should familiarize yourself with the department’s penalties and procedures for violations of academic integrity, available in both the department’s Graduate Handbook and online at <http://www.albany.edu/informationstudies/ist_resources.php>
Professors reserve the right to add to the department’s policy as they see appropriate.

Outline of Course Content and Required Readings:

In addition to Carter and Gaskell, the following books have been placed on reserve in Dewey Library:


Other readings are available through the University Library’s electronic reserves or through the library’s collection of online journals.
Internet Resources:

A wide array of useful information on rare books and rare book librarianship is now available on the World Wide Web. The home page of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) [a unit of the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association] is one of the most convenient points of entry into the world of Internet resources. The URL is: http://www.rbms.info/

August 31

Introduction to the course. The nature of rare books and special collections. First editions and the allure of book collecting.


September 7

Rare books and libraries. Bibliography vs. librarianship. Video: How to Operate a Book.


September 14


Pearson, Books as History, pp. 4–75.

Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography, pp. 5–77.

Carter and Barker, ABC: Paper terms; Terms for collecting categories.
**September 21**  
*Class meets in special collections reading room in the science library.*

BOOK RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT DUE.  
Introduction to Special Collections at the University at Albany. Book production in the hand press period: Imposition, presswork, binding.


Carter and Barker, *ABC*: Binding terms; Terms used in printing and bibliographical description (column 1).

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**September 28 — No Class — Rosh Hashanah**

**October 5**

Book production in the machine press period. Introduction to descriptive bibliography.  


Carter and Barker, *ABC*: Terms used in printing and bibliographical description (column 2).

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**October 12**  
*Class meets in special collections reading room in the science library.*

Descriptive bibliography (continued)


For Reference:  

October 19

QUIZ #1.
Descriptive bibliography. Reference works for the rare books librarian.


Carter and Barker, *ABC: Reference Works*.

October 26

REFERENCE ASSIGNMENT DUE


Carter and Barker, *ABC*: Booksellers' and cataloguers' terms.

November 2

QUIZ #2.
Cataloguing rare books. Video presentation: Rare Books at Auction


Carter and Barker, *ABC*: General terms and publishing terms.

**November 9** Class meets in special collections reading room in the science library.

Work on descriptive bibliography assignment.

Great collectors and collections.


**November 16**


**November 23 — No Class — Thanksgiving Break**

**November 30** Class meets in special collections reading room in the science library.

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY PROJECTS DUE.


December 7

FINAL PROJECTS DUE.
Rare books and special collections in the digital age. Rare book librarianship as a profession. The future of rare books and special collections


“Competencies for Special Collections Professionals.” (July 1, 2008) prepared by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, ACRL/ALA Task Force on Core Competencies for Special Collections Librarians. Available at http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/comp4specollect.cfm