



# The Continued Case for Bibliographical Teaching Collections

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**abstract:** First developed to support courses in humanities research methods, bibliographical teaching collections are now experiencing renewed purpose as part of information literacy pedagogy. The items comprising these assembled collections provide a wealth of historical features, which make them ideal for innovative hands-on instruction. However, since such materials are not considered rare or unique, they require no commitment to long-term preservation. This article describes how information professionals can efficiently develop and effectively deploy a bibliographical teaching collection to promote information literacy among a diverse array of learning populations.

## Introduction

First developed in the service of bibliography and research methods courses, bibliographical teaching collections have begun to see renewed purpose as an ideal vehicle for introducing concepts of primary source literacy. Unlike traditional special collections, these assemblages are comprised of items that hold intrinsic worth as artifacts but do not possess significant monetary value, rarity, or scarcity, and therefore carry no requirement for long-term preservation. The consensus in the professional literature of our discipline suggests that time spent with special collections—handling a rare book, sifting through archival documents, or examining a century-old photograph—helps develop the critical thinking skills vital to a strong research methodology. Since 2000, many thoughtful arguments have

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investigated how special collections units can support the overall information literacy mission of an academic library. In particular, these writings have included useful examinations of how exposure to archival collections and historical printing processes may augment curricula. Conspicuously missing from this conversation is the similar use of bibliographical teaching collections. This paper offers practical approaches to developing and effectively utilizing a bibliographical teaching collection as part of a broader information literacy mission associated with library special collections.

### Information Literacy and Special Collections

There is a long tradition of utilizing bibliographical teaching collections in the service of an immersive, experiential approach to instruction in humanities research methods. Before investigating strategies toward building such a collection, however, it is useful first to briefly review the case for a personalized approach to this pedagogy through hands-on engagement with historical materials. During the first half of the twentieth century, a new methodology within humanities scholarship—now known as the New Bibliography—came to the fore, which placed the physical manifestation of a text under intense scrutiny. In tandem with this innovative approach came the need to develop rigorous training regimes through which budding scholars might be instructed in how to responsibly and ethically apply these techniques in their work. A key theorist for this methodology, Fredson Bowers, recognized the need for new, specially designed curricula to support this type of textual criticism. He was an early advocate for devoted formal instruction in the area, which would serve to educate a graduate student in the culture and materiality of his object of study, “so that he can himself make the technical analysis of text.”<sup>1</sup> As Bowers writes:

It is a requirement of bibliographical investigation, though a need not always felt by literary critics dealing with text, to investigate any textual “fact” carefully to make sure that it is a whole fact. I am not now referring to the conclusions that are drawn from an examination, or from a lack of examination, of existing evidence; but instead to the determination of the accuracy and completeness of the evidence itself before conclusions are attempted.<sup>2</sup>

Bowers’s concern here is essentially a matter of information literacy, aligning with aspects of the “Scholarship as Conversation” component of the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education adopted by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2016. This frame reminds us that “a query may not have a single uncontested answer” and thus “developing familiarity with the sources of evidence, methods, and modes of discourse in the field assists novice learners to enter the conversation.”<sup>3</sup> Bowers urges new textual critics to master the principles of bibliography to understand how the mode of physical production has affected the work’s transmission. By doing so, scholars can form reasoned deductions from the evidence they perceive in their object of study and, by extension, more soundly analyze the text it conveys.

As William Proctor Williams and Craig Abbott note in their formative *Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies*,

The basic commodity for a literary scholar is the text, which is physically embodied in letters written, impressed, or transferred onto a surface, that is, in a manuscript, book, or other form of document . . . No matter what else we may know about authors, we must always refer our views back to the texts they have left us and to the physical forms that have embodied them.<sup>4</sup>

This emphasis on the physical evidence of textual transmissions necessitated new forms of instruction for students of the discipline, each of which emphasized an experiential approach. The New Bibliography placed a renewed insistence upon personal engagement with the book as a physical object. In service to the scholarly movement's preoccupation with determining the most correct form of a text, the physical book exists as a repository of evidence that bears witness to the process of textual transmission for those who know how to read and interpret this information.

In the years since Bowers wrote, the media with which scholars must engage have continued to proliferate, creating a complex network of interrelated textual manifestations that D. F. McKenzie dubbed the "sociology of texts." This development in textual scholarship acknowledges the broader influence exerted upon a text by those involved in its production, distribution, and reception, and further theorizes that these effects multiply as a work migrates across media. The ACRL Framework echoes this idea, acknowledging that "the dynamic nature of information creation and dissemination requires ongoing attention to understand evolving creation processes."<sup>5</sup> As McKenzie points out, in this new technological era, the rigorous methods developed by the New Bibliographers have never been more relevant—indeed, more necessary—because they can readily be applied across time and media as a text evolves.<sup>6</sup> In the arena of special collections, providing students with robust, hands-on instruction may provide a foundation for developing strong information literacy abilities, training readers to interrogate what the Framework calls "the underlying processes of creation as well as the final product to critically evaluate the usefulness of the information."<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, libraries served as indispensable partners in the formation of ethical research practices. An increasing body of literature has emerged from this tradition that now seeks to apply the robust recommendations of ACRL to developing information literacy in the area of special collections in particular.<sup>8</sup> The consensus indicates that special collections have a vital role to play in an educational institution's broader information literacy program. Moreover, in application, students are more engaged—and thus absorb information literacy concepts more readily—when they have the opportunity to handle special collections materials directly, as opposed to listening to a lecture or viewing a show-and-tell-style presentation. This kind of activity extends the program envisioned by Fredson Bowers and the other New Bibliographers, and aligns with what has come to be known as *artifactual literacy*: the "practice of criticism, analysis, and pedagogy that reads texts as if they were objects and objects as if they were texts."<sup>9</sup>

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Fostering critical thinking skills in the area of artifactual literacy is essential to preparing students for primary source research. In an age when the experience of handling a book older than oneself has become increasingly rarified, it is more important than ever to acquaint students with the material culture of the period they study. As Peter Carini notes, we operate “in an era when young people are increasingly electronically

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literate but have less and less interaction with physical documents.” Especially for novice researchers, he says, “Primary sources come with many physical characteristics, contextual complexities, and restrictions that make them difficult to access and interpret.”<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the goal of artifactual literacy, there are further benefits to such a hands-on approach to information literacy. Anne Bahde and Heather Smedberg point to the ineffable qualities of special collections, stating that “instruction using original materials can spark

passion, transform understanding, and change students’ lives.”<sup>11</sup> While such a response may be difficult to measure, it is an important part of the work performed in special collections. Melissa Hubbard and Megan Lotts confirm this, citing their own experience:

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“The aesthetic qualities of the items, the hands-on experience, and the act of leaving the classroom to visit a new space all seemed to generate excitement and enthusiasm in the students, which encouraged them to engage in the class investigation of the items and the discussion that followed.”<sup>12</sup> It is a powerful thing to welcome students into a reading

room and invite them to partake of the resources there. Doing so reinforces the notion that this material is not only there but also (more importantly) there for them to use.

While special collections professionals have made significant contributions to the relevant scholarly discourse since the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education were published by ACRL in 2000, few have made explicit connections between this body of literature and that related to experiential learning. In her chapter “Experiential Learning in Historical Bibliography,” Anne Welsh provides a notable exception. There, she explores how hands-on exercises were employed to complement traditional lectures and assigned readings in a rare books librarianship graduate course. Her review, which includes abundant quotations and anecdotes from students, clearly demonstrates the efficacy of such an approach not only in the acquisition of practical skills such as collation and typesetting but also in developing an understanding of theoretical bibliographical concepts.<sup>13</sup> Welsh’s study exemplifies the power of appropriating an experiential pedagogical approach toward special collections information literacy. Embodying processes such as setting type or printing on a hand-pulled press can stimulate students’ imaginations. It encourages them to internalize and apply information received in readings or lectures through a rigorous-yet-fun experience. In

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much the same way that fluency in information literacy is developed “through critical discernment and reasoning,” an experiential learning approach encourages students to participate in self-guided experimentation and draw reasoned conclusions from their actual experiences.<sup>14</sup>

Environmental factors and emotional associations have an indelible effect on the formation of knowledge from experience, and the handling of rare books, sifting through archival documents, or examining historical photographs instills a sense of wonder and sparks passion. The same experiential pedagogical approach that Welsh and others have used to teach concepts surrounding the creation of historical texts can also be employed in instruction surrounding their use. Firsthand physical engagement with materials is the most beneficial approach to teaching research methods in special collections. But how can an instructor offer an immersive learning experience in the principles of bibliographical description or in-depth archival research without ready access to robust special collections? Or, how might a special collections librarian offer the transformative experience of handling rare books for younger audiences while mitigating risk to valuable library holdings? The formation of a bibliographical teaching collection offers an effective way to engage an array of audiences meaningfully with rare books, creating a complementary experiential learning laboratory within special collections. Such materials can be deployed in a variety of creative ways that allow instructors to push beyond many of the boundaries that limit the style and location of instruction performed with rare materials and thus offer new avenues of outreach and instruction for special collections professionals.

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### Developing a Bibliographical Teaching Collection

The formation of a bibliographical teaching collection may be driven by a number of factors, such as the type of instruction one intends to pursue and the time and resources available. This section offers two broad strategies toward effectively and affordably developing a bibliographical teaching collection. The first will focus on gathering from existing holdings, locating books already owned by one's institution and repurposing them as resources for the teaching of book history. The second will focus on locating and acquiring books through strategic external partnerships.

Within the past decade, there has been a dramatic turn toward the appreciation of “medium-rare” books. In particular, the Book Traces project, an effort funded by the Council on Library and Information Resources that began at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville in 2014, has done much to raise awareness of the abundant bibliographical resources available within circulating collections.<sup>15</sup> This crowdsourced project is driven by students and instructors throughout the academic community, who scour the stacks at their institutions in search of unique copies of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century books. While Book Traces was born out of a concern for the depreciation of such volumes

in the wake of mass digitization efforts, its ethos aligns well with what might be called an “internal approach” to developing a bibliographical teaching collection. In particular, the project has amply demonstrated the bounty of fascinating examples that would provide a boon to such a teaching collection. And there is no better time than now to begin these endeavors. As more and more books of this vintage become available in digital copies through resources such as Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), HathiTrust, and Google Books, and as academic libraries experience pressure to free up all possible available space, such low-circulating volumes are increasingly relegated to long-term storage or deaccessioned outright.

Locating appropriate volumes by browsing among the thousands of books in a circulating collection makes for an inefficient approach to developing a teaching collection, especially at the outset of such a project. A more proactive approach might involve partnering with the many likely allies to be found among one’s colleagues, including preservation librarians and subject selectors. The assessment and care of general collections are among the routine duties of most preservation units. Books may be routed to preservation for any number of reasons, ranging from water damage to food staining to broken spines. As part of this book care triage, the extent of the volume’s damage is considered against the cost of repair, and the potential future use against the cost of replacement or availability of another copy (whether print or online). Such decisions are made in conversation with the subject librarians who oversee the collection and know best how it is used. By participating in these dialogues, one may gain access to a rich assortment of potential teaching resources.

Beyond preservation assessment, subject librarians also serve as valuable partners because they are called upon to weed their collections. With the advent of readily available digitized alternatives, many institutions choose to deaccession older, low-circulating books from their stacks. As the Book Traces project has demonstrated, many of these medium-rare volumes may yet provide significant artifactual value. Unlike the books featured in that project, however, worthy contenders for a bibliographical teaching collection do not necessarily possess rich provenances or extensive inscriptions that might otherwise raise the interests of subject selectors. As such, they become all the more susceptible to being discarded, and it would thus be prudent to begin these conversations with colleagues as soon as possible.

It is likewise vital to reach out to colleagues in special collections, especially as they evaluate materials for the transfer from circulating collections. In 2016, ACRL ratified its updated “Guidelines on the Selection and Transfer of Materials from General Collections to Special Collections.” As these note, “with time and changing circumstances,” it is not uncommon that materials first acquired for a circulating collection “become scarce and [thus] gain cultural, historical, and/or significant monetary value.”<sup>16</sup> According to the guidelines, “Librarians have a responsibility to identify the rare and valuable materials held in their general open-stack collections and to arrange for the physical transfer of these materials to a more appropriate setting.”<sup>17</sup> Approaching the selection of items for a bibliographical teaching collection as an extension of these general collection transfer responsibilities is both logical and efficient. Moreover, by folding these two analogous activities together, one ensures that materials are routed to the most appropriate destination. For example, a common scenario begins with a subject selector approaching a





rare books librarian about a peculiar volume that she recently discovered in the stacks, suggesting that it might be better suited for special collections. Upon evaluation, if the book is deemed to have insufficient cultural, historical, or monetary value to demand its transfer, or if it needs extensive repair, the conversation can progress seamlessly toward a consideration of the volume's potential for inclusion in a bibliographical teaching collection.

As with the development of any new collection, it is important to communicate clear criteria for desired materials when forming a bibliographical teaching collection. The ACRL guidelines include some suggestions for what may make a general collections item appropriate for special collections, and these are useful in the present discourse as well. Using these recommendations as a guide for what to look for among circulating collections ensures that one does not select an item for a bibliographical teaching collection that really ought to be transferred to the rare books library. Among these are considerations of market value, rarity and scarcity, date and place of publication, physical and intrinsic characteristics, bibliographic and research value, and overall condition.

Having a set of guiding criteria is also important in establishing a shared vocabulary to use in conversation with special collections librarians and subject selectors. The books that make up a bibliographical teaching collection often inhabit a liminal space between general and special collections, which is defined ultimately by a judgment call agreed upon by the relevant parties.<sup>18</sup> The extent to which one can enunciate what periods, physical features, or even varieties of disrepair one hopes to find through strategic partnerships within an organization will greatly improve the return results. Equally important, however, is that these selection criteria be first discussed and agreed upon by all the relevant stakeholders, including special collections, subject librarians, preservation, cataloging, and administration.

There are many benefits to drawing from one's own institutional holdings in the early formation of a bibliographical teaching collection. From a practical standpoint, the books are already cataloged and, as such, more easily discovered. One might begin by simply searching for all the eighteenth-century books that remain in the circulating collection. Likewise, it is relatively easy to get up and running with such an approach. Depending on the depth of the institutional collection and the amount of peer support, it may be possible to build a serviceable bibliographical teaching collection within several weeks. Beginning in this manner also affords books not destined for special collections the opportunity to make further educational contributions before being discarded.

In Terry Belanger's reflective essay on the development of the rare book program of the Columbia School of Library Service in New York (later the Rare Book School at the University of Virginia), Belanger states that the development of a devoted bibliographical teaching collection was essential to the pedagogical mission of the institution. Such an assemblage allowed instructors "quite literally to rub students' noses in books" without any consideration of "the scarcity, fragility, and replacement value of these objects."<sup>19</sup> In

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building what is now perhaps the preeminent collection of this kind, generous donations of “dogs and disasters” from libraries, antiquarian dealers, and collectors were a vital complement to the staff’s own systematic acquisition.<sup>20</sup> Such an approach remains immensely productive. Booksellers often accumulate many items they cannot sell. These might include incomplete or damaged copies, odd volumes from a set, or materials that are simply out of scope for the bookseller’s area of specialty. For a variety of reasons, it may be easier for dealers to remove the books from their inventory than go to the time and effort to try to sell them. Since a bibliographical teaching collection is focused primarily on the book as a physical object, the librarian or instructor need not share such concerns. Provided there are no issues such as mold or pests, imperfect copies and single volumes can make valuable additions.

In developing a bibliographical teaching collection through this “external approach,” it will likewise be advantageous to pursue strategic partnerships. Looking to the network of booksellers with whom one’s institution already deals is a logical way to begin.

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These individuals will likely be familiar with the extant holdings and instructional mission of the institution, making them invaluable as collaborators as an extension of an established professional relationship. There is also significant benefit to widening the circle of participation. By making a general call to relevant professional e-mail lists announcing the collecting of appropriate unwanted or unsellable books, one can greatly expand the range of people from whom one receives donations, which in turn promotes a more diverse teaching collection. To encourage such philanthropy from individuals with whom one typically shares a more commercial

relationship, it may prove advantageous to provide incentives such as free shipping and handling for donated materials. Especially in the case of domestic shipments, such expenditures often make worthy investments toward the development of a rich teaching collection.<sup>21</sup>

As a bibliographical teaching collection begins to take shape, strengths as well as weaknesses will naturally emerge. Concurrently, as one incorporates the collection into instructional activities, it will become clear what materials are most useful. At this point, traditional collection development techniques may be employed to further enhance the holdings. For this reason, a hybrid approach of building from what is locally available in concert with looking externally will prove the most effective way to proceed.

### **Bibliographical Teaching Collections and Information Literacy**

Bibliographical teaching collections have a long record of demonstrated success in support of information literacy. Soon after Fredson Bowers’s call for the inclusion of formalized bibliographical instruction in English graduate programs, academic institutions





began to amass teaching collections demonstrating key physical features of books and other printed materials. Many of these remain intact, such as that built by William Todd and Ann Bowden at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin or the formal teaching collection at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto. That these collections continue to demonstrate value in institutions whose cataloged bibliographical holdings boast an embarrassment of riches is an important indicator of their unique contribution. Especially where the more advanced principles of descriptive and analytical bibliography are concerned, a bibliographical teaching collection remains an indispensable resource for providing rigorous hands-on training. The Rare Book School at the University of Virginia has amassed immense holdings of books, manuscripts, tools, specimens, and ephemera, now totaling some 100,000 items. One subset of this, comprised of more than 600 books, is maintained for students' analytical exercises in the course Introduction to the Principles of Descriptive Bibliography.<sup>22</sup> Each item has been painstakingly scrutinized by instructors to develop detailed formulas and notes. These solutions to the "bibliographical quandaries" that await students who encounter these books add significant value to the collection. Taking the time to learn the features of one's own bibliographical teaching collection is thus time well spent, serving as an indispensable preparation for enriching classroom discussions.<sup>23</sup>

Bibliographical teaching collections can also be integrated into curricula outside the bounds of research methods in diverse and creative ways. For example, they can serve to introduce students to the world of historical materials in instances when it is not possible to bring a class to special collections. One fruitful exercise takes an "adopt a book" approach, during which students locate, identify, and describe medium-rare volumes among the teaching collection. The exercise begins in a manner much like a scavenger hunt: Following a brief introductory tutorial on the physical makeup of a book, students are instructed to search among the bibliographical teaching collection for exemplars demonstrating, for example, different formats (such as folio, quarto, or octavo), bindings (including marbled endpapers, morocco-style leather, or gold tooling), or evidence of prior readership (inscriptions, bookplates, or marginalia). In practice, this exercise proves fun and exciting, as students compete with their colleagues to find the most esoteric oddities among the collection. Students are encouraged to puzzle out for themselves or in pairs what they see in these books, developing their own explanations and building their own knowledge throughout the exercise. As an instructor, one often sees students naturally progress toward attempts to discover details that they cannot explain for themselves. At the conclusion of the exercise, students return to the group with these questions and may be encouraged to develop their own theories to answer them. In practice, offering learners the increasingly uncommon opportunity to browse among historical materials provides a low barrier of entry for a self-guided immersion into the world of rare books. It is easy to then segue to instruction in how the students can navigate the library catalog if they wish to pursue further study in special collections. Finally, this exercise has the additional appeal of being transportable. Since the preservation of these materials is of only modest concern, this exercise could occur off-site and the materials could be brought to the classroom. This portability is particularly advantageous for special collections departments lacking sizable instructional spaces.

As a tool for introducing students to the world of special collections, bibliographical teaching collections can likewise be utilized as part of “care and handling” instruction. This approach is effective for librarians positioned outside the special collections unit—for example, in a preservation department or in smaller institutions that lack a rare books

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division. Students and patrons can be introduced to such practices as proper handling of rare volumes, how to turn delicate pages, effectively using cradles and supports, and similar activities, which are routine in most reading rooms. Taking a hands-on approach to this important instruction offers a more engaged and interactive experience for the participant, which is more effective than an instructional video or leaflet. Moreover, it provides an opportunity for the student or patron to dispel any anxieties they may have about handling rare materials before they enter the reading room. In her consideration

of how experiential learning may enhance bibliographical instruction, Anne Welsh notes that bibliography exists as a “practice-based discipline” and thus “one can only learn how to handle rare books by actually doing so.”<sup>24</sup> While such instruction may be moot for faculty and more advanced researchers, the majority of undergraduates and a good many graduate students will never have encountered such materials. By experiencing this “practice run” using a teaching collection, they will become more capable and more confident as they begin their research.

Bibliographical teaching collections have a far broader use today than when they were first devised. In particular, they provide an opportunity to democratize exposure to special collections, opening up new avenues for hands-on outreach to such audiences as K–12 students and those with physical or learning disabilities. For many of these patrons, who are often underserved by traditional special collections instruction, the experience of touch can be essential for learning.<sup>25</sup> As with care and handling directions, since the experience of these materials may take precedence over their long-term preservation, a bibliographical teaching collection is ideal for providing a positive introduction to the world of special collections in a low-anxiety emotional setting. Leveraging such a collection in this manner is an easy modification to standing information literacy instruction, which will ensure a meaningful experience for these populations.

### The Lasting Legacy of Bibliographical Teaching Collections

As D. F. McKenzie conceived textual scholarship at the end of the twentieth century, an indispensable continuity exists between the recorded forms of the past and those of today.<sup>26</sup> However, the proliferation of media, such as film and television programs, born-digital data sets, and traditional archival collections, by no means diminishes the vitality of the book as an object of study. Indeed, McKenzie makes a convincing case for the application of traditional bibliographical principles to the study of these textual



forms. In the wake of the digital revolution, students now find themselves inundated with information flowing from an ever-increasing number of platforms. Having the skills to construct reasoned arguments based upon textual evidence has never been more vital. Thus, McKenzie states, "Bibliography can be an essential means by which we recover the past."<sup>27</sup> In an era when a student's natural encounter with a text will most likely be digital, an essential component of information literacy resides in understanding how the book's physical makeup is transmuted by digitization and electronic delivery through a database.

In her handbook *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450–1800: A Practical Guide*, Sarah Werner invokes McKenzie's sociology of texts, stating succinctly that "we must look at a book in order to know how to read it."<sup>28</sup> We must engage in deeply focused study of the physical object to understand its nature—how its shape and form serve to create meaning—after which we may interpret and synthesize the perceived data. Werner stresses that doing so relies upon the formation of good research habits, which must be further honed by practical experience.<sup>29</sup> For many, the development and effective utilization of a bibliographical teaching collection may create the opportunity for students to sharpen these important research skills, offering the chance to cultivate this practice as part of their academic training.

Beyond these traditional uses, however, bibliographical teaching collections also serve as useful outreach tools, with the ability to go beyond where traditional special collections are allowed. Magia Krause has noted that exposure to original sources in a classroom can foster a deep emotional connection with students, helping "students relate to the past on a personal level, a benefit that goes beyond the classroom and has implications for lifelong learning."<sup>30</sup> While bibliographical teaching collections will never replace actual special collections, they may serve as a complement with which to reach new audiences and perhaps spark a passion for special collections that will last a lifetime.

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## Appendix

### Features to Consider in the Formation of a Bibliographical Teaching Collection

Provided here are some sample categories that may be further developed depending on teaching goals and available resources. These are by no means exhaustive but are offered merely as a starting point:

- **Handpress printing practices:** While one would not expect to see incunabula in a teaching collection, books from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries may yet be found in some circulating collections, may be donated by booksellers, or both. These volumes are immensely useful in teaching matters related to format, imposition, and signatures.
- **Industrial printing processes:** With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, new and innovative processes made book printing faster. Two of these methods were the stereotype and the electrotype—related processes that involved producing a mold from pages of set type, which could then be used to cast metal printing plates. Often, these processes are identified (or even advertised) within the information supplied by the book's publisher; in other instances, one must rely upon physical bibliographical evidence to deduce the process.
- **Printing substrates:** One of the chief benefits of a hands-on approach is the tactile quality of the education. It may be useful to alert students to details of the substrate, the material on which a book is printed, such as the differences between laid and wove papers; the location and identification of watermarks and countermarks; the physical qualities of cotton rag paper versus later wood pulp-based papers; the appearance of deckled edges; and identifying printing on vellum and other non-paper substrates.
- **Binding and book structure:** Students are often surprised to learn that one can, in fact, judge a book by its cover. Indeed, we can learn much about a volume's history by the material used to produce its binding, any embellishment or decoration applied thereto, and the presence of decorated endpapers or a dust jacket. Related to the book's structure, much can be deduced from binder's waste, discarded sheets used to support the binding; tipped-in plates, which are printed separately from the main text and attached or bound into the book; errata lists; and corrected substitution leaves, known as cancels.
- **Typography:** Even when they are familiar with a text's language, students may have difficulty reading antique typefaces. This provides an ideal opportunity to discuss important typographical developments, regional preferences of typefaces, and abbreviations and contractions common to the period. Related to this is the use of printer's ornaments, including headpieces and tailpieces used to mark the beginning and end of chapters; factotums, carved blocks with blank spaces at their center into which a piece of type may be placed; and decorated initial letters at the beginning of a paragraph or chapter.



- **Illustration methods:** Students are often drawn to the illustrations within a book, which presents a valuable opportunity to discuss printing practices. In particular, an instructor might talk about the differences between the preparation and printing of relief (woodcuts or wood engravings) and intaglio (plate engravings) illustrations, as well as later processes, such as lithography, etching, and photography.
- **Evidence of provenance:** Fostering a personal connection between the student and the object with which they are engaging is a valuable teaching tool. Finding evidence of previous ownership, readership, or both, including inscriptions, marginalia, bookplates, and personal items such as pressed flowers or locks of hair laid into books, can make an object come alive for the student who holds it.

## Notes

1. Fredson Bowers, *Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon, 1964), 63n.
2. *Ibid.*, 41.
3. Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," 2016, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
4. William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbott, *An Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1999), 5. Williams and Abbott note that while this new methodology had its roots in the study of English Renaissance literature, it expanded throughout all literature in English and other modern languages in the years following World War I. Thus, their claim might be extended to disciplines throughout the humanities (history or philosophy, for example), in which scholarship relies upon sustained engagement with written texts.
5. ACRL, "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education."
6. D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12.
7. ARCL, "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education."
8. ACRL first released its Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education in 2000, which defined information literacy as an "intellectual framework for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information." See ACRL, "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education," 2000, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency>.
9. The concept of "artifactual literacy," which Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres here describe, was previously introduced by Randy Bass in his online essay "The Garden in the Machine: The Impact of American Studies on New Technologies," 1999, <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/bassr/garden.html#rationale>.
10. Peter Carini, "Information Literacy for Archives and Special Collections: Defining Outcomes," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 16, 1 (2016): 193.
11. Anne Bahde and Heather Smedberg, "Measuring the Magic: Assessment in the Special Collections and Archives Classroom," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 13, 2 (2012): 152.
12. Melissa A. Hubbard and Megan C. Lotts, "Special Collections, Primary Resources, and Information Literacy Pedagogy," *Communications in Information Literacy* 7, 1 (2013): 34.
13. Anne Welsh, "Experiential Learning in Historical Bibliography," in *Ambassadors of the Book: Competences and Training for Heritage Librarians*, ed. Raphaële Mouren (Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2012), 147–62.
14. ACRL, "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education."



15. For more information on this project, see the Book Traces website, <http://www.booktraces.org/about/>.
16. ACRL, "Guidelines on the Selection and Transfer of Materials from General Collections to Special Collections," 2016, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/seltransfer>.
17. *Ibid.*
18. For example, a group of items may meet only some of the criteria necessary for their transfer to special collections, but nevertheless need to be cleared from the general collection due to space constraints or shifting priorities on the part of the subject selector. This is the ideal scenario because the books have been identified as possessing some intrinsic physical interest, but their removal would not diminish the value of the general collection.
19. Terry Bellanger, *Thanks for the Memories: The Rare Book Program at Columbia University, 1971–1991* (New York: Book Arts, 1991), 10.
20. *Ibid.*, 20.
21. In general, one ought to avoid devoting much in the way of pecuniary resources toward the formation of a bibliographical teaching collection, as it is in the nature of such a collection that its contents ought to be expendable. If one devotes funding lines to the building of a teaching collection, the materials acquired take on a different sort of value, one that is more closely aligned with traditional special collections, which require devoted preservation and custodianship. However, a modest expenditure toward the shipment of donated goods can prove a disproportionately favorable investment.
22. Introduction to the Principles of Descriptive Bibliography is among the most established courses at the University of Virginia Rare Book School in Charlottesville, having run every year but one since 1985. Further details, including a more complete timeline of the course's history, are available on the Rare Book School website, <https://rarebookschool.org/courses/general/g10/>.
23. I am grateful to my colleagues Aaron T. Pratt, Carl and Lily Pforzheimer curator of early books and manuscripts, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin; Pearce J. Carefoot, head of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto; and Ruth-Ellen St. Onge, associate curator of collections, Rare Book School, University of Virginia, for sharing details of the bibliographical teaching collections housed at their respective institutions.
24. Welsh, "Experiential Learning in Historical Bibliography," 150, 162.
25. There is a surprising gap in the professional literature about providing special collections-based instruction for students with disabilities, particularly in the area of book history. While the Guidelines for Accessible Archives for People with Disabilities approved by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Council in February 2019 encourage professionals to engage multiple senses during exhibitions and other public programming, there are no further recommendations for creating more accessible classroom instruction. The guidelines are available on the SAA website, <https://www2.archivists.org/standards/guidelines-for-accessible-archives-for-people-with-disabilities>.
26. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 71.
27. *Ibid.*, 55.
28. Sarah Werner, *Studying Early Printed Books, 1450–1800: A Practical Guide* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 102.
29. *Ibid.*, 103.
30. Magia G. Krause, "'It Makes History Alive for Them': The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36, 5 (2010): 401.