



We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the hə́nq̓əmiṇəm̓-speaking Musqueam people.

The mission of UBC iSchool is to enhance humanity's capacity to engage information in effective, creative and diverse ways, through innovative research, education and design.

General information

Program: MLIS

Year: Winter Session I 2019-2020

Time: Mon, 2-4.45 pm

Location: RBSC Seminar Room

Instructor: Dr. Erik Kwakkel

Office location: 496

Office phone: 604 822 4448

Office hours: Wednesday 10 am-12 Noon, or by appointment (no office hours Oct 23)

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Learning management website: <http://canvas.ubc.ca>

Course Goal & Rationale

This course evolves around four key dynamics in the History of the Book, layers of information that help you understand a book as a device for conveying information, no matter when it was made, what text it contains, or in what language it was written or printed. Two of these dynamics are related to production: who made the book (producer or producing institute) and how was the object designed (material features, appearance)? The remaining two pertain to use: who was the user (social standing, level of education, line of work, experienced reader or not) and how was the book used (function, purpose, both on an individual and institutional level)? Focusing on these four variables – producer, design, user, and function – enables you to make sense of almost any book you encounter in libraries and archives today, as well as those on your bookshelf at home.

Of these dynamics, design is the most important, because it is key for our understanding of the other three. Premodern books provide very little information about themselves. Those made before c. 1500, for example, did not even have a title page, making it difficult to date and localize them, or to know who produced them. Contextual information related to a book's use is equally cloaked: it is generally hard to deduce – even for today's publications – what kind of reader handled a book, what his or her cultural, professional or social background was, or for what purpose a book was picked up. This is where book design comes in. Book producers of all times carefully considered what features to include. Crucially for us, their considerations were commonly prompted by the preferences of the future reader and by how the book was to be used. Consequently, design can help us understand why something written or printed looks the way it does, in what setting it was used, and perhaps even by whom. The point of entry for this course is therefore book design.

The focus of LIBR 548F is books, both written and printed, produced in Western Europe between c. 500 and c. 1600. Students are introduced to a broad range of book types from these centuries and will learn to use the correct vocabulary to address all relevant aspects of the objects. There will also be attention for the contexts in which these books were produced and used. This dual

approach of focusing on design and cultural settings invites us to consider more general–universal, perhaps–principles in the History of the Book. What do readers across time value most in the design of their books, and why? What features were deemed useful in certain contexts of use? And can we observe developments in these trends over time? What bookish elements were most prone to innovations? And why did technological changes come about? Such aspects emerge in class discussion through term and will be addressed explicitly in the last class.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the development of the book as a material object, c. 500 to c. 1600, in light of how books and information were accessed and used [1.1, 1.4];
- Understand the technologies by which books have been produced over time [1.1];
- Understand the range of objects preserved in Special Collections libraries, learn how to recognize them, and know how to properly handle them [5.1];
- Consider the social, cultural and intellectual significance of various book media (handwritten, printed, and, through the assignments, digital) [1.4];
- Reflect on topics in the History of the Book in various communication modes (writing, discussion) [2.1, 4.1].

Course Topics

- Production and use of handwritten books;
- Impact of printing;
- Emergence and rationale of new book technologies;
- Impact on book design by societal needs and how a book was used;
- Introduction to common book types in Special Collections libraries.

Prerequisites

- MLIS and Dual MAS/MLIS: Completion of MLIS Core or permission of iSchool Graduate Advisor
- MAS: completion of MAS core and permission of the iSchool Graduate Adviser

Course Format

Short lectures; “labs” in Special Collections; in-class exercises; discussion; written assignments.

Required and Recommended Reading

The course will use the following textbook: Erik Kwakkel, Books Before Print (Leeds: Arc Humanities, 2018). The purchasing costs are c. \$45 - via Amazon ([here](#)) or directly from the distributor ([here](#)). A copy will be made available outside my office for reading in the iSchool. Additional readings will be made available on Canvas.

Course Assignments / Grade Distribution

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Assignment</i> | <i>Weight</i> | <i>Competencies</i> |
|---|---|---------------|---------------------|
| Entire term | Participation in class: attendance, discussion | 10% | 2.1, 4.1, 5.1 |
| Oct 15 | Paper 1: Assessing the design of manuscripts | 30% | 1.1, 1.4, 2.1 |
| Nov 12 | Paper 2: Assessing the design of printed books | 30% | 1.1, 1.4, 2.1 |
| Dec 2 | Paper 3: Analysis of real RBSC artifact of choice | 30% | 1.1, 1.4, 2.1 |
| <i>Notes on the assignments – All assignments are written on an individual basis and facilitate a learning experience regarding the physicality of books in different periods and cultural settings. They also encourage you to gauge how book design relates to readers and the manner of use, and how such considerations may vary depending on the time period, a book’s contents, its</i> | | | |

user, and the setting in which the object was used. Such connections between the material and cultural will be explored during in-class hands-on sessions with real objects. For **Paper 1** and **Paper 2** you will independently undertake similar explorations based on preselected digital facsimiles. In **Paper 3** your view will expand and more emphasis will be placed on the cultural dynamics of book production (producer, reader, manner of use). For this third paper you may select, in consultation with the instructor, any item in UBC's Rare Books and Special Collections, from medieval manuscripts to e-readers. An extensive explanation of each assignment will be made available soon after the start of the course.

Evaluation: All assignments will be marked using the evaluative criteria given on the [iSchool web site](#).

Course Schedule

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Topic</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Sep 9 | Course introduction | What is a book? Why and how to study it? |
| <i>Section 1: Manuscripts</i> | | |
| Sep 16 | Introduction to manuscripts | What is a manuscript? What's everything called? |
| Sep 23 | Making the manuscript | How were manuscripts produced and by whom? |
| Sep 30 | Reading the manuscript | Who read manuscripts and why? Traces of use |
| Oct 7 | Cultural-historical objects | Books as silent witnesses of medieval reading culture |
| <i>Section 2: Early Printed Books</i> | | |
| Oct 14 | No class Paper 1 due Oct 15 | Incunables, beginnings in Mainz, new technologies |
| Oct 21 | Incunables: production and design | Making the early-printed book |
| Oct 28 | Incunable: users and buyers | Personalizing print; Traces of use |
| Nov 4 | The sixteenth century | Further innovations; Title page |
| Nov 11 | No class Paper 2 due Nov 12 | |
| <i>Section 3: Manuscript vs Print</i> | | |
| Nov 18 | Script and typeface | How to study letter shapes and what they tell you |
| Nov 25 | Universal features in manuscript and print | Commonalities of books produced in different periods and through different technologies – and what that tells about us |
| Dec 2 | Paper 3 due Dec 2 | |

Attendance

- Attendance is required in all class meetings. The instructor must be notified of absence beforehand if at all possible.
- Up to two excused absences are allowed with prior notification. Additional absences will require a note from a health professional or Access and Diversity and may require you to hand in an additional assignment.

Evaluation

- Your papers will be marked with the help of an evaluation sheet. These sheets and the rubrics they cover will be made available well before the due date of Paper 1.

Academic Integrity

The Faculty of Arts considers plagiarism to be the most serious academic offence that a student can commit. Regardless of whether or not it was committed intentionally, plagiarism has serious academic consequences and can result in expulsion from the university. Plagiarism involves the improper use of somebody else's words or ideas in one's work. The UBC policy on Academic Misconduct is available [here](#). It is *your* responsibility to make sure you fully understand what plagiarism is. The UBC Learning Commons has a resource page on how to avoid plagiarism, with policies on academic integrity and misconduct found [here](#). If after reading these materials you still are unsure about how to properly use sources in *your* work, please ask your instructor for clarification.

Policies and Resources to Support Student Success: UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>)

Other Course Policies as Relevant: All assignments must conform a citation style of your own choice (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago), as long as you make sure to be consistent.
