

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the hñqminm 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.

LIBR 548F (1) History of the Book
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General information

Program: MLIS

Year: Winter Session I 2018-2019

Time: Wed, 9-11.50 am

Location: RBSC Seminar Room (9-10.45 am) and IKBLC 461 (11-11.50 am). Note that Sep 5 & Sep 19 our class will convene in IKBLC 461 for the full three hours

Instructor: Dr. Erik Kwakkel

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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, design is the most important dynamic, because it is key to understanding the other three. Books provide very little contextual data. Those made before c. 1500, for example, did not even have a title page, making it difficult to date and locate 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.

From papyrus rolls made in Antiquity to digital publications, in LIBR 548F (3) students learn about a broad range of book types and their contexts of production and use, while being able to use the correct vocabulary to address all relevant aspects of their design. This dual approach of focusing on design and cultural settings ultimately invites us to also 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?

Course Objectives

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

- Understand the development of the book as a material object, from Antiquity up to the present day, 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, digital) [1.4];
- Reflect on topics in the History of the Book in various communication modes (writing, discussion) [2.1, 4.1].
- Consider electronic and web publications in light of their historical roots [1.4].

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

Both required and recommended readings will be assigned throughout the term and be made available on Canvas. These will be articles and chapters available in PDF and in electronic format from the UBC Library or via other online sources. There is no required text book.

Course Assignments / Grade Distribution

<i>Date</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Competencies</i>
Entire term	Participation in class: presence, discussion	10%	2.1, 4.1, 5.1
Entire term	Design and curate a discussion thread	15%	2.1, 4.1
Oct 10	Paper 1: Assessing the design of manuscripts	25%	1.1, 1.4, 2.1
Nov 14	Paper 2: Assessing the design of printed books	25%	1.1, 1.4, 2.1
Dec 3	Paper 3: Analysis of real RBSC artifact of choice	25%	1.1, 1.4, 2.1

Notes on the assignments – Students will design and “curate” a **discussion thread** in groups of four. Each type of medium discussed in the course (handwritten, printed and digital books) will be covered by three discussion threads. It is up to you to come up with a suitable topic (i.e. one that provokes discussion), an appealing thread format (e.g. by using links to websites and images), and effective strategies to get people involved and keep the discussion going. You will receive a group mark based on *your* input and effort, not on the frequency or quality of the responses. **Papers 1-3**, all written on an individual basis, facilitate a learning experience regarding the physicality of books in various 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 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, commonly in groups of two or three students. 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.

Course Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Description</i>
Sep 5	Course introduction	What is a book? Why and how to study it?
Sep 12	The handwritten book	Manuscripts: technologies and innovations
Sep 19	The handwritten world	Producers and readers of manuscripts
Sep 26	Early Codex*	Papyrus codices and early parchment manuscripts
Oct 3	Late medieval manuscripts	Birth of the modern book
Oct 10	The early printed book	Incunabula: technologies and innovations
Paper 1 due Oct 10		
Oct 17	The world of print	Printers, readers and the birth of publishing
No class Oct 24		
Oct 31	Popular genre: Religious texts	Bibles in Latin and the vernacular
Nov 7	Popular genre: Scholarly texts	Books for students and scholars
Nov 14	The modern book	Technologies and innovations from c. 1800
Paper 2 due Nov 14		
Nov 21	Books in the digital age	E-readers and their design
Nov 28	The universal book	Innovations and continuities in book design

Dec 3	Paper 3 due Dec 3	

* Class includes a guest lecture (10.45-11.50 am in IKBLC 461) by Dr. Brigitte Ouvry-Vial (Le Mans University) about EUR-TRAIL, an EU-funded research project about digitally studying European reading experiences.

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.

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.
