Palmer School of Library and Information Science  
Long Island University  
LIS 713: Rare Book and Special Collections Librarianship  
Instructor: J. Fernando Peña  

Syllabus  
(Fall 2011)

“Rare book librarians are a happy breed of men and women. We share common experiences and common pleasures, but there is nothing common about us. There is excitement in our lives for we work daily with the fabric of what has made the world what it is. We are an integral part of that world. We are frightfully competitive but almost never vicious or unkind to one another ... There are no saints among us that I know of, but we are blessed in many ways ... We are concerned. We have a sense of human. We are aware that we have a special privilege to understand the motivations of a special mystique.”


**Time and Place:** Bobst Library, NYU, Avery Fisher Center, 2nd Floor (70 Washington Sq. South, New York, N.Y. 10012), Wednesdays, Sept. 7 through Dec. 21, 2011 (except Nov. 23), 6:30-8:20 p.m. Note that decisions about closings made for C.W. Post do not affect Palmer classes at NYU. In general, if the subways are running, this class will meet even if weather is poor.

**Contact Information:** Bobst Library, NYU, Suite 707, 70 Washington Square South, New York, N.Y. 10012; tel. 212-998-2681, fax 212-995-4072, email fernando.pena@liu.edu. Email communication is always preferable to telephone.

**Office Hours:** 2-6 p.m. on class days and by appointment, in the Palmer suite in Bobst Library (7th floor). Appointments are available during weekdays, week nights, and weekends. Even for regular office hours, appointments are a good idea to reserve enough time for your concerns. Telephone conversations are always possible both during the week and on weekends. Please provide your name and times of availability by email if you want me to call you.

**Purpose, Scope and Method:** The purpose of this course is to prepare students for management roles in rare book and special collections libraries. Sessions address the major aspects of the librarian’s curator’s job. At the conclusion of this course students should be able to join the staff of a rare book and special collections unit and participate in an informed way in discussions and decision-making concerning professional issues. Students will become acquainted with the issues, vocabulary, major information sources, and significant documents in the field.

This course will make heavy use of the case method. Students will gain experience in applying information and finding solutions to typical problems in rare book and special collections. In order to give students experience in the essentially collaborative nature of rare book and special collections librarianship, class sessions will include group exercises. Students will also
work on individual written projects and will be required to visit rare book and special
collections as well as antiquarian bookshops on their own time during the term.

This course is required for the concentration in Rare Books and Special Collections.

Please note that this course does not address the history of the book. Book history courses at
Palmer include the annual “History of the Book” as well as “Artists Books,” “Great Collections of
New York City,” “The Antiquarian Book Trade,” etc. Courses taken at Rare Book School (based
at the University of Virginia, with occasional courses in other cities including New York City),
and courses at the University of London’s Rare Book School (including the gradable final
project) may count as a “history of the book” course for purposes of the Palmer concentration.
For details on that concentration see http://www.liu.edu/CWPost/Academics/Schools/CEIS/PSLIS/Graduate-Programs/MS-LIS-RBSC.aspx.

Palmer School Learning Objectives: This course, which focuses on managing rare book and
special collections libraries, addresses all parts of Objective 4 (“Administration and
Management: Students will understand and be able to apply principles of managing libraries
and information centers”). From Objective 3, Information Services, the course particularly
addresses part 3C (“Students will be able to utilize and assess both existing and emergent
resources, systems and services and develop new ones”). Additionally the course addresses
part 3I (“Students will be able to apply professional standards for collections and collection
development, such as acquisition, selection, purchasing, processing, storing, preservation and
conservation, and de-selection”).

Assignments and Grading: Students will be assigned written exercises and work sheets that test
their ability to solve typical problems in the rare book/special collections context, with
reference to pertinent sources and documents. Each assignment will require students to deal
with the following aspects of professional practice: issues, vocabulary, major information
sources, and significant documents of the field. Logic and technical aspects of writing will also
be evaluated. For full credit, all written assignments must be submitted in a timely manner and
in a professionally appropriate form. All written, graded assignments have equal weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Five written assignments</td>
<td>17 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Participation: Because much of the work for the class will take place during meeting times and
because collaboration is the usual mode of work in libraries, attendance and participation are
important. There will be extensive use of group work on sample problems during class.
Students who miss more than three sessions cannot expect to receive full credit for this course.
Those who plan to miss any session should let the instructor know well ahead of time in order
to schedule a make-up session or to complete extra work. The instructor may occasionally ask
students to turn exercises completed during class, and these may count toward the
“participation” portion of the final grade. Students will be expected to complete written assignments outside of class. Additionally, students will be expected to make four visits to rare book and special collections-related units or events (e.g., libraries, antiquarian booksellers, exhibitions, lectures, etc.) on their own time and to report back during class, in Blackboard, and in written assignments.

**Planning Your Time:** The State of New York specifies that a three-credit, for-credit course should require a minimum of about 150 hours. This is a rigorous, professional, graduate course. Students should prepare to spend much more than 150 hours to get full benefit from the course. For assignments that are intermittent, students should divide their time weekly so that they are not overwhelmed by the fast paced schedule and due dates of graded exercises. For planning purposes, students may find the estimations of time commitment below helpful. Keep in mind that this is an indication of minimum time necessary to complete the required work in a satisfactory manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worksheets (10 hours x 5 worksheets)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings (4 hours x 14 weeks)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal visits to libraries, booksellers, etc.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4.5 hours x 4 visits)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class meetings (2 hours x 14 sessions)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>152 hours (average 10.8 hours/week)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Information Sources:** The readings listed here form the basis for class discussion and exercises. Most are available freely online, through LIU electronic reserve, or will be made available in class. This list of texts and readings is by no means a comprehensive bibliography; students should be prepared to seek additional sources as they see fit.

**Required Textbook:** There is no textbook for the field of rare books and special collections librarianship, as none of recent vintage exists. However, all students intending to work with rare books should acquire John Carter’s *ABC for Book Collectors* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Books, 2004; 8th ed., or any more recent edition). Students should become familiar with its contents and be able to use this terminology in ways that are consistent with the practices of the rare book and special collections field. Also highly recommended is Geoffrey Ashall Glaister's inexpensive, paperback reference work, *Encyclopedia of the Book*. 2nd ed. (New Castle, DE and London: Oak Knoll Press & The British Library, 1996).

**More about the Readings:** Most of the class reading are available freely online or will be available in full text through the online database *Library Literature and Information Science*, accessible via the internet to Palmer School students through the LIU library web page. Some course materials listed in this syllabus are available in NYU Bobst Library’s reference area on the ground level (all non-circulating); a few items will be on reserve in the reserve sections of Bobst
Library (level A). Some online sources are available on site at NYU (and on site at other libraries), but are not available to Palmer students at home. Please do not wait until the last minute to complete the required assignments. These assignments, though not lengthy, take time. Some materials in the NYU online catalog may be housed off-site and take several days to recall them for use in the library. Some reference materials in the NYU catalog may be available only in NYU’s Fales Library, which has restricted hours.

You may also wish to obtain some of these books through interlibrary loan via your local library or by consulting reference copies at NYPL (Fifth Avenue and 42nd St. building) and other specialized libraries.


**Citation Formats:** Use current Modern Language Association (MLA) formats consistently for all assignments. Note that the new formats discourage extensive footnotes and generally call for citations within a text that refer to a list of sources at the end of the paper. Examples of the MLA format can be found online, most conveniently at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/). Examples of MLA formatting can be found at [http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm](http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm).

Regarding plagiarism, see [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/). If you have questions about plagiarism, ask the instructor for help before turning in questionable material. LIU’s policies on plagiarism can be found at [http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/exhibits/plagstudent.htm](http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/exhibits/plagstudent.htm).

**Style Manual:** If you have questions about grammar or want to ensure that your style is clear, effective, and readable, see William Strunk, Jr.’s *The Elements of Style*, online through [http://www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/). This succinct work is available cheaply in used copies at many used book stores or online.

**Codes:** E-reserves at LIU: Peña.
Class Schedule and Assignments

September 7

Introduction: What are Rare Books and Special Collections?; Major Information Sources; Scholarly and Professional Societies; Collecting Institutions

Readings:

Carter’s ABC for Book Collectors: “Rarity,” “Unique,” and “Unrecorded.”

Belanger, Terry. “Rare books and special collections in American libraries: seeing the sites.” *RBML* 1.1 (1986): 11-24. [http://rbm.acrl.org/content/rbml/1/1/11.full.pdf+html](http://rbm.acrl.org/content/rbml/1/1/11.full.pdf+html)


Websites/Web Pages to Browse:


Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA). [http://www.abaa.org](http://www.abaa.org) [Note esp. resources listed under “Learn about rare books”.


Association of Research Libraries (ARL), “The unique role of special collections.” [http://www.arl.org/rtl/speccoll/](http://www.arl.org/rtl/speccoll/) [Includes important reports and other documents, some of which will be required for later course sessions.]


Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies (FABS).  http://fabsbooks.org/default.aspx [Lists various bibliophilic and book collecting clubs in the United States, with information and links to websites of individual member societies. Some FABS members include Baltimore Bibliophiles, Caxton Club (Chicago), Grolier Club (New York City), Club of Odd Volumes (Boston), and the Ticknor Society (Boston). The Grolier Club has a library on book collecting and some programs open to the public.]

Independent Research Libraries Association (IRLA).  http://irla.lindahall.org/ [Includes contact information of its member libraries.]

International League of Booksellers (ILAB).  http://www.ilab.org/

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).  www.rbms.info


Rare Book School.  http://www.rarebookschool.org/


September 14

Collection Building: Library Collection Development Policies; Antiquarian Book Trade; Appraisal

Readings:


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**

**Examples of Collection Development Policies**


Fales Library Special Collections. [http://library.nyu.edu/collections/policies/fales.html](http://library.nyu.edu/collections/policies/fales.html)

Fales Library Downtown Collection. [http://library.nyu.edu/collections/policies/fales_dwntwn.html](http://library.nyu.edu/collections/policies/fales_dwntwn.html)

Grolier Club Library. [www.grolierclub.org](http://www.grolierclub.org) [In the left-hand menu select “The Library” – “Collections Overview” – “Library Collection Development Policy.”]


**Antiquarian Book Trade**

AddAll. [http://used.addall.com/](http://used.addall.com/)

*American Book Prices Current (ABPC).* [http://www.bookpricescurrent.com/](http://www.bookpricescurrent.com/) [Description of resource at this website; see NYU Bobst Main Collection Z1000.A51]

Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA). [http://www.abaa.org](http://www.abaa.org)

International League of Booksellers (ILAB). [http://www.ilab.org/]

ViaLibri. [http://www.vialibri.net/]

**September 21**

**Collection Building, continued: Collectors and Libraries; Transferring Books to Special Collections; Deaccessioning; Professional Ethics**

**Readings:**

Carter’s *ABC for Book Collectors*: “Association Copy,” “Bibliomania,” “Bibliophily,” “Chronological Obsession,” “Follow the Flag,” “Grolier List,” “High-Spots,” “Presentation Copy,” and “Provenance.”


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**

**Professional Ethics Governing Library Acquisitions**


September 28

Organizing and Describing Rare Books and Special Collections Material: Descriptive Bibliography; Scholarly Bibliographies; Auction and Dealer Catalogs

Readings:


The Anatomy of a Book I: Format in the Hand-Press Period. Terry Belanger, Rare Book School; directed by Peter Herdrich. 1991. Video. [Will be shown in class.]

Websites/Web Pages to Browse:


Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL). http://www.cerl.org/web/ [Various useful resources, including the “Heritage of the Printed Book in Europe” database, described as a “a steadily growing collection of files of catalogue records from major European and North American research libraries covering items of European printing of the hand-press period (c. 1455-c. 1830) integrated into one file.”]

Core Standard for Rare Books (DCRB Core). http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/bibco/coredcrb.html

Early English Books Online. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home [Subscription database of over 125,000 titles listed in Pollard and Redgrave’s Short-Title Catalogue (1475-1640), Wing’s Short-Title Catalogue (1641-1700), etc., all in full digital facsimile.]
English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC). http://estc.bl.uk/ [Electronic bibliographic database maintained by the British Library that seeks to catalog all known printed in English before 1800; currently has over 460,000 records.]

Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC). http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/index.html [Electronic bibliographic database, also maintained by the British Library, that records all known editions of books printed before 1501.]

OCLC/WorldCat. http://www.worldcat.org/


October 5

Organizing and Describing Rare Books and Special Collections Material, continued: Archival Principles for Control and Processing; Describing Manuscripts, Prints, Maps, and Other Non-Book Materials

Readings:

Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS). Chicago: SAA, 2007. [Selections will be made available.]


Websites/Web Pages to Browse:


National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC). http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc [Provides access to OCLC/WorldCat’s bibliographic database of manuscripts and archival collections.]


Controlled Vocabularies Used in Special Collections Cataloging


RBMS. Controlled Vocabularies for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloging. http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/controlled_vocabularies/


October 12

Catch-up day (more information to follow)

October 19

Housing of Rare Books and Special Collections; Conservation and Preservation; Security

Readings:

Carter’s *ABC for Book Collectors*: “Preservation,” “Repairing and Restoration,” “Original State,” “Re-Backed,” “Re-Cased,” “Re-Jointed,” “Remboîtage,” “Re-Set,” and “Solander Case.”

Adams, Randall G. “Librarians as enemies of books.” *Library Quarterly* 7 (1937): 317-331. [Read “How to care for your treasures—Books” and “How to choose a conservator.”]


Websites/Web Pages to Browse:


*MissingMaterials.org.* [http://missingmaterials.org/](http://missingmaterials.org/) [Together with the RLG Partnership, the RBMS Security Committee and the ABAA, OCLC Research developed MissingMaterials.org, a free mechanism for sharing reliable information about missing rare books and other materials at the network level. A description of the project and slides from the May 10, 2010 webinar can be found at [http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/missingmaterials/default.htm.](http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/missingmaterials/default.htm.)]

[http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/disaster/planningpreparedness.html](http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/disaster/planningpreparedness.html)


RBMS Security Committee. Committee webpage.


**October 26**

**Digital Libraries: Creating Online Access to Collections; Current Issues, Standards, and Best Practices**

**Readings:**

ALA. “Digital rights management (DRM) and libraries.”
[http://www.ala.org/ala/issuessadvocacy/copyright/digitalrights/index.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/issuessadvocacy/copyright/digitalrights/index.cfm)


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**


**November 2**

**Legal Issues and Libraries: Contracts and Agreements for Intellectual Ownership and Access; Copyright and Fair Use**

**Readings:**


Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)/Society of American Archivists (SAA). “ACRL-SAA joint statement on access to research materials in archives and special collections


Websites/Web Pages to Browse:


November 9

Staffing of Rare Books and Special Collections Libraries and Training of Librarians

Readings:

Dimunation, Mark. “Red wine and white carpets: what we didn’t learn in library school, or when the dog and pony goes bad.” RBM 7.1 (2006): 73-84. http://rbm.acrl.org/content/7/1/73.full.pdf+html


Schreyer, Alice D. “What’s so special about special collections librarians?” *RBM* 7.1 (2006): 49-54. [http://rbm.acrl.org/content/7/1/49.full.pdf+html](http://rbm.acrl.org/content/7/1/49.full.pdf+html)


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries. RBMS Diversity Committee web page. [http://www.rbms.info/committees/diversity/](http://www.rbms.info/committees/diversity/)

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**November 16**

**Reference, Research, and Other Rare Books and Special Collections Library Services**

**Readings:**


Traister, Daniel. “Is there a future for special collections? And should there be one?: a polemical essay.” *RBM* 1.1 (2000): 54-76. [http://rbm.acrl.org/content/1/1/54.full.pdf+html](http://rbm.acrl.org/content/1/1/54.full.pdf+html)

Websites/Web Pages to Browse:

Public and Research Services Links on Library Websites

University of Chicago Library. http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/


Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room. http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/


New York University, Fales Library & Special Collections. http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/fales/

Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. http://www.library.yale.edu/beinecke/

Cornell University Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections. http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/services/services_overview.html

November 23

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holiday)

November 30

Interpreting Collections: Exhibitions and Publications; Instruction

Readings:


RBMS. “Guidelines for borrowing and lending special collections materials for exhibition” Jan.
2005. [Currently being revised and combined with RBMS’s “Guidelines for the interlibrary loan of rare and unique materials” (June 2004).]  


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**


**December 7**

**Outreach: Public and Donor Relations; Fundraising**

**Readings:**


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**


National Endowment for the Humanities, Humanities Collections and Reference Resources. [http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/HCRR.html](http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/HCRR.html) [See also “Sample Narratives” on right-hand menu.]


**December 14**

**Curating Manuscripts, Ephemera, Archives, and Other Special Collections Materials**

**Readings:**


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**

Ephemera Society of America web site: [http://www.ephemerasociety.org/](http://www.ephemerasociety.org/)

**December 21**

**Future Needs and Trends; Professional Development and Career Building**

**Readings:**


**Websites/Web Pages to Browse:**

Additional Readings
(arranged by topic according to syllabus schedule)

Introduction


*National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* (NUCMC, rhymes with “luck-luck”). [http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc](http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc)


2001. [Includes information on collections of major libraries; also essays on different types of specialized libraries, some important to the history of special collections. NYU Bobst 1st Floor Reference, Z721.I572 2001.]


**Collection Building**

Archives Association of British Columbia. [http://aabc.ca/TK_03_acquisition_appraisal_accessioning.html#APPRaisal] Links to several online resources re: archival appraisal.


Hyry, Tom, Diane Kaplan, and Christine Weidman. “‘Though this be madness, yet there is method in ‘t’: assessing the value of faculty papers and defining a collecting policy.” *American Archivist* 65 (2002): 56-69. [Available online through LIU.]


Sauer, Cynthia. “Doing the best we can? The use of collection development policies and cooperative collecting activities at manuscript repositories.” *American Archivist* 64 (2001): 308-349. [Available online through LIU.]


**Describing Rare Books and Special Collections Material**

American Antiquarian Society. “Electronic resources.” [www.americanantiquarian.org/digital2.htm](http://www.americanantiquarian.org/digital2.htm) [Proprietary database must be accessed onsite at AAS, NYU Bobst, NYPL, and other participating libraries. Bibliographical resources available include American Broadsides and Ephemera; Early American Imprints – Series I [Evans, 1639-1800]; Early American Imprints – Series II [Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801-19]; Early American Newspapers [1690-1876], and more.]

Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia. *Studies in Bibliography*. etext.lib.virginia.edu/bsuva [Scholarly journal essential to serious students of bibliography; all issues available for free online.]


Dunkin, Paul S. *How to Catalog a Rare Book.* 2nd rev. ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 1973. [Sections may be made available in class. Now out of date on particulars, but useful for the philosophical statement underlying Dunkin’s approach, which is practical and pragmatic.]


Library of Congress. *The National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints: A Cumulative Author List*


McManis, Sam. “Auburn collector has more than 700 Books — all the same title [*Two Years Before the Mast.*]” *Sacramento Bee* (July 26, 2010).


Housing of Rare Books and Special Collections


Sheehan, Jennifer K. “Making the most of what we have: a framework for preservation management in rare book collections.” *RBM* 10.2 (2009): 111-121. [http://rbm.acrl.org/content/10/2/111.full.pdf+html](http://rbm.acrl.org/content/10/2/111.full.pdf+html)

Zeidberg, David S. “We have met the enemy... : collection security in libraries.” *RBML* 2.1 (1987): 19-26. [http://rbm.acrl.org/content/rbml/2/1/19.full.pdf+html](http://rbm.acrl.org/content/rbml/2/1/19.full.pdf+html)
Digital Libraries


Legal Issues and Libraries


Staffing of Rare Books and Special Collections Libraries and Training


*RBM* 8.2 (2007). [Entire issue devoted to diversity and collecting for and from diverse communities.]


Interpreting Collections: Exhibitions and Publications; Instruction

Brannock, J. “Creating an exhibit in special collections and using it to promote collections and educate users.” *Mississippi Libraries* 73.2 (2009): 32-34. [Available online through LIU.]


Curating Manuscripts, Ephemera, Archives, and Other Special Collections Materials

Miscellaneous videos that describe processes used to produce prints, ephemera, etc.:

- Relief: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0skLwaFpn0
- Intaglio: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNKn4PORGBl
- Lithography: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHw5_1Hopsc
- Woodblock printing: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dliF74ojOho

Future Needs and Trends; Professional Development and Career Building

