



Elizabeth Williams-Clymer

2016 Professional Development Grant Awardee

Thanks to the generous support of the Ohio Preservation Council's Professional Development Grant and my home institution, Kenyon College, I was able to travel to Rare Book School in Charlottesville, Virginia, for a week long class titled, *Printed Books to 1800: Description and Analysis*. Rare Book School is an independent, non-profit institute that provides continuing-education opportunities for students of all disciplines and levels to study the history of written, printed and born-digital materials with leading scholars and professionals in the field.

David Whitesell, the Curator of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia, led twelve eager students through the week long course. Each day was composed of four one and a half hour power packed sessions. Of course, there was no food or drink allowed in the classroom and prior to each class session there was a line at the sink to be sure we all had clean dry hands – Preservation 101! In addition to daytime classes, there two sessions in the evening to practice what we had learned in class that day.

It was clear from the first morning session that this class had been meticulously planned. There was an abundance of example materials that each student got to examine during each session. Then, after a class break, there would be another array of examples to review for the next topic. We covered the following: paper, type, printing and typesetting, illustration, book binding, collation, provenance, bibliographical description. These session topics were very clearly mapped out in a workbook created by Whitesell that I am sure will be a heavily relied on resource for me in the future.

In addition to reading about and discussing the topics, we got to experience setting type on a composing stick and then each of us were able to ink and print a sheet on a hand press. Another class session included a book binding demonstration that included various stitches and decoration techniques. We also had a session in the Special Collections Library of the University of Virginia where Whitesell had selected specific volumes for us to review.

It was an intense week of learning but at the end of it I was so energized because I had gotten more out of the class than I had anticipated. I thought I would gain a better understanding of the construction of a book which would lead me to improved skills for identifying preservation needs. It certainly met those expectations, I just didn't expect to enjoy every step along the way. I am very grateful to the Ohio Preservation Council and Kenyon College for supporting my professional development. I am certain that this experience and knowledge gained will only make me a better Librarian. I look forward to attending future Ohio Preservation Council events.