Connecting Users with Special Collections
Describing Rare Books Without A Rare Book Cataloger

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https://rarebookschool.org/course-descriptions/reading/.

Includes reading lists for Rare Book School courses such as The Bible and Histories of Reading, Rare Book Cataloging, and Advanced Descriptive Bibliography.

http://beinecker.library.yale.edu/info/bookcataloging/home.htm.

Cataloging procedures from the rare book catalogers at Yale University.


Includes medium-length definitions of rare book terms suitable for a non-specialist audience. Great for helping to identify unfamiliar genres and formats.


We cataloged some early Bibles, and this book helped us provide more detailed descriptions of some of them. Freely available online in HathiTrust.


Contains biographical information on people in the English and Welsh book trades through 1851. Good for looking up details on publishers, bookbinders, engravers, etc.


A helpful glossary of terms. Not the newest edition, but this one is available for free online.


Cataloging procedures from rare book specialists at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

We didn’t use this for our work, but we kept encountering it as a standard text in the field.


Includes links to standard cataloging manuals for rare books, manuscripts, maps, and more.

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section. “RBMS Controlled Vocabularies: Controlled Vocabularies for Use in Rare Book and Special Collections Cataloging.” Accessed June 12, 2018. [http://rbms.info/vocabularies/index.shtml?PHPSESSID=8ba066bf9bde0d8ba910c05e80bfc0d3](http://rbms.info/vocabularies/index.shtml?PHPSESSID=8ba066bf9bde0d8ba910c05e80bfc0d3).

Includes binding terms, genre terms, paper terms, printing & publishing evidence, provenance evidence, type evidence, and relationship designators. A must-see for terms to include in 655 fields. Has some overlap with LC vocabularies and RDA relationship designators.


We cataloged several undated tracts from the American Tract Society, and this web page was essential for helping us supply publication dates.