How do we teach? - Continuing Education Programmes. Masters and LRBS Programmes in London University

Simon Eliot
• Modularised courses: a single credit course, a postgraduate certificate, a postgraduate diploma, an MA, an MRes.

• In practice we run a continuing education programme, a certificate programme, and a degree programme.

• Our formal MA and MRes degree programme is small. We impose a maximum of twelve students per year.
• Purpose and intent: to convey to our students that the creation of information and its transmission is a series of material acts in a material world.

• Modes of delivery: the materiality of the subject means that we have to teach using a host of material objects.

• This creates a teaching problem. We now tend to have ten minute breaks in each hour for ‘laboratory’ sessions where we look just at the books. Each term we have a two-hour laboratory session in Senate House Library.

• Of course, all those who take the MA programme are aiming at a qualification. However, those taking LRBS courses frequently are not.
• Our audience is encouragingly wide in origin: our youngest student was twenty-two, our oldest eighty-six.

• We are looking at ways of increasing size of the constituency from which we recruit students. Half-credit courses could be offered for half the price over a long weekend. We could offer courses at other times of the year, and some courses could be offered in other libraries and archives throughout the UK, and beyond.

• Half-credit course offered over the Web. That is, there would be one half-credit on-line devoted to exploring the historical context of the subject, while the other half would consist of a ‘laboratory’ weekend in a library.
• This will be as far as we shall go, because if we abandoned the material nature of the subject we would be subverting it.

• Another way of extending our audience is to offer a much wider range of courses. We already have courses taught by antiquarian book dealers, and we are planning a complementary course on establishing provenance. A series of courses on the history of libraries, on the history of maps, and on the history of reading.

• We are also going to offer a course on the sending and receiving of letters 1500-1919, which will involve the national postal museum in London.