



Ph.D. Program
School of Communication and Information
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
4 Huntington Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1071

comminfo.rutgers.edu

Fax: 732-932-6916

Marija Dalbello
November 2, 2021

Rare Book School Scholarships (2021)

To Whom It May Concern:

Dear Rare Book School Scholarship Committee:

I am delighted to write a letter of recommendation for Lauren Bell who is applying for 2021 RBS Scholarships because I believe she would be an active contributor in a number of courses offered by the RBS in the hope that she will be selected as a recipient of one or more of your scholarships. I have known Ms. Bell for over five years, ever since she contacted me to learn about our Master of Information (MI) program and then decided to pursue that graduate degree at Rutgers. I was her instructor in several courses and her academic advisor but I also worked with her closely in my role as advisor of the Rutgers student chapter of the Society of American Archivists (SOURCE) that focuses on rare books, special collections, and digital humanities. I continued as Ms. Bell's mentor post-graduation, after she started her professional career in the digital imaging studio at Princeton University Library. Since 2020, she has been a valued part-time lecturer in our MI Archives and Preservation concentration. I actually encouraged her to take that opportunity because I saw her potential and that she would bring state of the art preservation knowledge to that role and especially in the developing areas of that field. We are fortunate to have her. Her teaching has been stellar; she received a very prestigious teaching award this year. She is one of our top adjunct instructors in an area of growth. As the course instructor for the *Preservation of Library and Archival Materials* class for which our students always ask a seat more, she consistently receives evaluations in the top range. She is currently developing another course on digital preservation of visual materials to be offered in summer. Apart from being a consummate professional she has been an excellent colleague.

Ms. Bell is a person of many talents but in this letter, I will comment on her as my former student primarily and the parts of her career path that have most relevance in judging her excellence as a potential recipient of rare book school scholarships.

Ms. Bell has been a standout student in all my classes, from *Foundations of Preservation and Archives* to *The History of Books, Documents, and Records in Print and Digital Environment*. The contributions she has been making in the preservation and archives class were thoughtful, original, and demonstrated how incredibly capable and talented she has been. She takes initiative and completes them. She is an excellent writer and communicates effectively. She presented her work at a regional archival conference at MARAC 2017 as a student poster. At the conference she helped me promote our then brand-new archives program. She developed a delightful archival art project especially for that conference, which attracted attention in the professional community and was featured in the association's newsletter; consequently, Lauren was invited to blog for the SAA. Thus, she has been an important cornerstone for our then newly launched MI concentration as a student representative. In all my interactions with Lauren then as well as now, I have been impressed by her motivation, curiosity, and dedication to the field of art preservation, special collections, archives, and museum

RUTGERS

work. She was a top notch, stand out student and I see that she is has not lost that edge post-graduation.

She is very organized, a born leader, an excellent scholar. She excels in written communication and her interactions are extraordinarily competent, very professional and mature even as a student. She is open-minded and seeks to learn and loves to be challenged. Always efficient when facing tasks, she finds constructive ways to resolve obstacles while not losing any of her calm and 'the big picture', a quality that makes her an excellent professional and valuable colleague. She fits in easily in every group and is very jovial and positive; her team spirit, patience with people, and warmth in her interactions are unique. As a student leader, she brought to Rutgers a number of speakers, organized field trips to cultural institutions, and very useful professional events. During her time as a student, she was fully engaged in volunteering in the special collections at Rutgers and held many prestigious internships. Her extensive experience with digital imaging and archival work as an intern in a range of research collections and institutions predating her professional career included Rutgers Special Collections & University Archives, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Frick, and The Museum of Modern Art. Post-graduation, she secured a competitive position in the Digital Imaging Studio at Firestone Library, Princeton University. This has been ideal next step for Ms. Bell, offering unique opportunities. I was excited to learn that her capacity as digitization expert led her to interact with a legend in the field of rare books, Paul Needham, the recently retired Scheide Librarian at Princeton. She acquired first-hand knowledge of the structure of the book in its many forms.

Ms. Bell has a deep understanding of the materiality of documents and book culture and has consistently combined her artistic sensibilities and historical scholarship with top-notch technical knowledge, having taken efforts to build her capacity in a deeply technical field that combines the knowledge of digital methods with a forensic and historical understanding of the material texts she works with.

Apart from being a brilliant student, energetic leader of the student chapter of the Society of American Archivists, and now adjunct instructor at Rutgers in parallel with her demanding full-time professional position at Princeton University, she now needs another challenge. I believe that attending RBS courses comes at the right time in her professional career. As noted, she has been one of the most exceptional students I have ever had at the Master of Information program level where she stood out for her curiosity, capacity for learning and collegiality and I am pleased and excited that her curiosity and desire to learn now leads her to the RBS curriculum where she will excel as well. I hope that she will considered and awarded this opportunity.

If there is any other issue that you would like to discuss related to this recommendation letter please do not hesitate to contact me by email.

Sincerely,



Marija Dalbello
Professor, Dept. of Library & Info Science
School of Communication and Information
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
dalbello@rutgers.edu