

Soren Edgren  
H-85 The History of the Book in China  
5–10 June in Charlottesville, VA

**Narrative Course Evaluations**

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*

1. I thought the materials were very helpful, if a little redundant at times. Most are addressed to an audience that is not assumed to know anything about the topic, so it's quite easy to begin.
2. They were helpful, and provided a good foundation for keeping up with the fast pace of the course. You really do just need to know some Chinese history though, in addition.
3. Yes. Useful.
4. Excellent and necessary.
5. The readings were an essential foundation for this class. Fully necessary for understanding the history behind the many objects in this fast-paced class.
6. Yes, they were useful. I only wish we had gotten them a few weeks or so sooner. I'm a slow reader and we had A LOT of readings. I only had time to read some of the required readings. I'll finish the others plus the recommended ones later.
7. Yes. I found them to be very interesting and supportive of the class materials.
8. I wish the publications from the course instructor could be included in the recommended readings.
9. Some required readings were repetitive and could be substituted with other, more useful articles. The recommended readings are already included in the workbook we got in class, and I see all of them as recommended readings.
10. {private response}
11. Yes. The reading assignments are really wonderful. They set up the basic background for the course. I would like to see some more East-West comparison pieces included.
12. Everything was useful.
13. Extremely useful.

2) *What are your thoughts on the course workbook and/or other teaching materials distributed during class? Was the content appropriate and useful? Will it continue to be useful for you after the course?*

1. The course workbook was definitely helpful, but it might be even easier to navigate if it were organized by slide/realia instead of by day. I will definitely continue to use the

- bibliographies after this course has concluded.
2. It was helpful, although there were some misprints due to the two previous sections being re-combined. The bibliography is extensive and will probably be quite useful.
  3. Useful. I would like a master list of all the bibliographic materials. Now it is divided by session.
  4. SE used the workbook to structure the class, and its structure made it easy to link my notes to it.
  5. I was grateful to have the list of slides, captions, and the appendix to follow along.
  6. Excellent course workbook. Greatly helped to follow along during each session. I plan to keep it and refer to it in the future. It has an excellent bibliography with additional citations to more readings and a useful glossary of terms.
  7. The content was great and I appreciate the detailed bibliography by SE. It gave me ideas of sources to look into. Content-wise, pictures from the PowerPoints would be nice. Being able to handle objects was an incredible learning experience!!
  8. {private response}
  9. The workbook and the teaching materials were very helpful. The recommended readings in the workbook were useful in referencing the topics discussed. I wish the PowerPoint could be shared in conjunction with the workbook after the course for future reference.
  10. The course workbook is really helpful and clear for both learning and further research, especially recommended readings and terminology. I will use it for my catalog internship at my university's library and my future study of Liulichang from eighteenth to twentieth centuries.
  11. The workbook is a really good idea. Without it, students would have lost track of the materials presented on the slides. I would like to see more content on overall trends, larger developments, &c. But definitely, it will remain helpful after the course. I would like to use it for my own course design in the future.
  12. The workbook and teaching materials were appropriate and useful. I plan to use them after the course.
  13. The teaching materials are just wonderful. So grateful that I got the chance to handle so many books.
- 3) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your RBS course? Did you walk away with any "aha!" moments, new ideas, or project plans?*
1. My main use for the knowledge acquired this week will be disabusing colleagues of their Western biases in the field of book history. Besides that, many of the anecdotes and historical episodes related by SE have instilled in me a keen interest in Chinese culture and the history of collecting Chinese books and antiquities.
  2. This has really helped me to understand the background of a lot of materials that we teach with and was a good foundation for learning more about East Asian books and

- book culture.
3. I have many books (primary sources) to track down now.
  4. As someone with a background in Western books, there were countless “aha” moments regarding book format, roles in the book trade, and the history of printing technologies.
  5. I built up my visual and material memory that will help me assess items in my institution’s collection with greater expertise and confidence.
  6. I’m not sure yet. Time will tell whether I’ll be able to use the skills and knowledge acquired. Whatever the case, I’m glad I took the course and enjoyed it.
  7. Increasing my understanding of East Asian print culture has made me reevaluate the collections at my institution. I would love to discuss inviting SE and/or figures he’s mentioned in class to my university.
  8. Yes. New materials were made known to me.
  9. Definitely! I learned how sophisticated the books can be.
  10. {private response}
  11. The course set up a structure for my patchy understanding of Chinese books, so that I can delve into the parts that I’m really interested in. The skills and knowledge will be directly fused into my research projects. There were so many “aha” moments, especially when I learned about printing technologies.
  12. Mostly for my current projects. I think terms and their definitions are really useful.
  13. The skills and knowledge will definitely help me a lot in future cataloging. SE’s course book with bibliography is a great reference material.
- 4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*
1. Definitely. In general I learned what I expected to, but I would have liked to learn more about the social aspects of book production and consumption, especially the conditions in scriptoria/presses.
  2. I learned a lot and definitely feel that I’m walking away with new skills. I did hope to gain insight into identifying books from bibliographical data, which I basically learned is possible, but not without an incredible amount of experience.
  3. Yes and no. There are many basic terms related to book history and to East Asian history that I would like to study or review more intently.
  4. Yes.
  5. Yes and yes!
  6. Yes, yes.
  7. Yes, I wish we had more time because I definitely would love to take this for a whole semester. This class was a treasure trove of stories and fascinating details and solutions to unusual problems with East Asian books.
  8. Yes. Useful book history and print method.

9. Somewhat. I wish I could learn more about the authentication methods but it requires years of study and experience based on what SE said. I also learned a lot from classmates.
10. {private response}
11. The instructor helped me learn much more than I expected. I hoped to gain more knowledge about the technical and economic aspects of Chinese book production. The realia we had accomplished just that. The instructor is so incredibly knowledgeable.
12. Yes!
13. Yes and yes! Hope there will be more time in this course!

5) *Are there other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. No, everything else was brilliant and the instructor was unbelievable.
2. Some parts really had to rush to get through everything. Also some of the objects didn't circulate with their labels, or the labels didn't include some of the most interesting information.
3. Some of the viewing of realia could be sped up. It would be nice to view in detail a single piece with the professor and other classmates simultaneously and hear comments/analysis.
4. On the one hand, the quantity of books ensured that we got exposure to a very wide range. At the same time, the quantity could also become overwhelming. Fewer books would have given us more time to pursue students' questions. Often the best discussions occurred when everyone gathered around the table to examine just one or two books.
5. There were too many students to be able to pass around the trays in a timely manner. There needs to be a better system for viewing objects. A few videos would have helped students less familiar with materials understand key concepts like papermaking.
6. The only suggestion I would make is to cut down on in-class content. The instructor is super knowledgeable and enthusiastic, but I felt at times he was more concerned about getting through content and specimens than anything else. I think the course would still be excellent, perhaps even more so, if we covered just half or two thirds of what we did.
7. A smaller class so we could get more time to handle collections would be nice. Possibly homework or small quizzes or challenges in class to be more engaged/active?
8. {private response}
9. I wish the professor would share more on authentication methods.
10. {private response} In addition, it seems like a better idea to get the workbook before the first day of the course for good preparation.
11. Maybe after introducing an object the professor could emphasize more of what he wanted us to take away by looking at the object. Sometimes, I felt lost about the

- professor's intention.
12. If it's possible, it would be wonderful to have a workshop for Chinese (or East Asian) style bookbinding.
  13. Hope there will be more time! If this could be a two week course that would be perfect.

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Anyone studying Chinese/history at the graduate level.
2. People getting into EAS book history, scholarship, the history of collecting, or teaching with EAS books.
3. Other graduate students, curators, and professionals.
4. Great for scholars with a background in Western books who want an introduction to East Asian books.
5. Catalogers, collectors.
6. Anyone with even the slightest interest in non-Western book history. I have a long-standing interest in China, so the course was perfect for me. Also, even those with no interest in non-Western books could benefit if they're open-minded and intellectually curious in general.
7. Anyone interested in East Asian arts and culture or interested in diversifying their knowledge of books both pre-Gutenberg and non-Western.
8. {no response}
9. Anyone who is interested in EA books.
10. {private response}
11. Librarians, but also researchers.
12. Early-career special collection staff who handle Chinese language materials.
13. Anyone in the US who is involved in this field.

7) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*

1. Absolutely. The program was extremely well run and organized and we were treated with great respect.
2. I would—I feel like it was very useful and I enjoyed it a lot.
3. Yes, but I hope to return with funding either from RBS (as a fellow) or my own institution. (I would pay for accommodation and travel again if tuition were waived.)
4. Yes!
5. Yes and yes
6. Yes. Yes.
7. Yes. One hundred percent. I will tell any students interested in East Asian literature and print culture about this course. I hope SE will continue teaching it! Being in-person was amazing.

8. {private response}
9. Yes and yes.
10. Yes. I will.
11. Yes. Yes.
12. Definitely yes.
13. Totally! Already recommended to colleagues.

8) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. We didn't.
2. We did not.
3. X
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. {no response}
9. N/A
10. {no response}
11. Not much for this course.
12. My course didn't make any trips outside.
13. {no response}

9) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. {no response}
2. Just that basic knowledge of Chinese history is really helpful so you don't get lost. Being able to read standard Chinese would have been amazing.
3. Consider it, then come and participate. A truly unique learning experience. Plus 350-plus year old books.
4. Do all the required reading carefully. Some knowledge of Chinese history would also be very valuable.
5. Do the readings and have some background knowledge of Chinese history.
6. No.
7. Do it! Broaden your perspective of non-Western print culture and book traditions.
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. I will think about it, if there will be more courses about East Asia.
11. Do go through all the readings. They are extremely helpful.
12. Basic knowledge of Chinese characters would be helpful.

13. Enjoy!

10) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*

1. It was extremely inspiring to learn with such unpretentious, curious people for a week.
2. I felt like a tired sponge trying to soak up everything, but I really enjoyed the tea I was steeped in!
3. The classrooms are cold, the books are old, some young too, just waiting for you.
4. {no response}
5. Such a treat to learn from a formidable expert in the field. Come for the books, stay for his stories.
6. Pleasant. Worthwhile. Intellectually stimulating.
7. "What is a book?" H-85 made me redefine my view of books! Thank you, Prof. Edgren!
8. Overall very useful. The objects and rare books reminded me of my motivation to pursue a career dealing with art works and antiques.
9. Very "hands-on" with the books.
10. The Chinese have always believed that "read thousands of books, and travel then thousand miles." Many thanks for RBS giving me the opportunity to practice this belief.
11. Read one thousand books, but do walk one thousand miles. (Experience is more important than knowledge.)
12. It was AMAZING!
13. Best summer break you can imagine as a book lover.