

Soren Edgren
H-85: The History of the Book in China
9–14 June, 2024, Charlottesville, Virginia

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. Pre-course readings were useful, providing good overviews and helping to establish a baseline vocabulary/understanding for the course.
2. Really useful, please take your time reading it carefully and you might want to re-read it after taking the course for fully absorb the knowledge
3. The pre-course reading was extremely useful. I might like to see the “oracle bones to ebooks” reading come with a bit of a disclaimer, though, given how unreliable or outright wrong it is on some aspects of Chinese book history.
4. Very comprehensively helpful for me to get prepared prior to RBS and for my future research as well.
5. Yes. I only did one required reading but just doing that, I felt more comfortable entering the class.
6. I found them very useful—however reading/re-reading during the course was more helpful than before. I had a better sense of context and got more/retained more from the readings.
7. **Extremely** helpful advanced reading list. I thought the required list was very appropriate and manageable and I **loved** how SE provided **tons** of additional resources!
8. Yes!!
9. Very useful.
10. Very useful. They were a great combination and no changes necessary.
11. They're 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. Workbook is fantastic, and the terminology lists and citations are especially appreciated.
2. It was really useful, you might want to take notes on your phone for all your pictures taken but it's a good guide
3. The course workbook is indispensable. It really feels like a distillation of SE's knowledge and experience in his career. I absolutely see myself returning to the workbook, whether it be to consult sources, relearn vocabulary, or sharpen up my own knowledge should I be teaching more down the line. It's an absolute gem and worth the cost of tuition by itself!
4. The workbook is very clear, well-organized, rich in content, and can be used/referred to repeatedly even after I leave RBS.
5. Excellent workbook. Very useful for bibliography reference for the future. I do wish, where it's possible, for the name of the museum/collection to be included in object description.

6. It was well designed and really helped facilitate note taking and connecting pictures of materials—VERY KEY since I did not read or speak Chinese. I expect the workbook and the extended bibliography to be very helpful.
7. Excellent! Very useful after class. Truly life-changing. I feel like I have a reference library because of my notes and SE's materials.
8. Loved the workbook. Wish we could have a digital PDF version of the workbook and PowerPoint. Will absolutely reference back to it later.
9. Course workbook is very well structured. I appreciate the extra reading lists. It will definitely be helpful after the course.
10. Yes. If the workbook can leave more blank space for note taking that would be the best.
11. I do wish the PowerPoint used in the lecture could be accessed later after the course.

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. Having a guided discussion of the realia, pointing out what to look for and how to understand what I am holding, was really intriguing and relevant for my work. The anecdotes and trivia were enriching. I learned a ton of new information, from how Chinese books are made, to the history of printing in China, to details about book collectors and collecting not available anywhere else. It is the sort of course you could take over and over again, and still find new nuggets of information and insight to learn from.
2. Being surrounded by students, it made me more willing to pursue the path of studying the history of the book, and to finally being able to see and feel things like different types of paper, movable types and books after only studying was amazing
3. Naturally, the most intriguing parts of the course to me were our sections on Ming/Qing book illustration. However, I also loved our portion in session 10 devoted to the survival of xylography in modern and contemporary China. The work of Chen Qi was particularly stimulating to me, prompting me to think about a new project on large scale woodblock printing in contemporary East Asia in comparison with artists like Yoshida Hodaka.
4. To get a better idea of how Chinese printing technology, especially woodblock printing developed, boomed, and profoundly impacted the social and cultural aspects of China, Japan, and Korean as well. It is extremely helpful to be able to see and feel the old book materially—paper, size, weight, design, &c.
5. OMG too many insights. I never realized one can have such a rich *material* history of the books. I have so, so much to take back to my community of Islamic bibliophiles.
6. I came into this class knowing very little on the subject, so pretty much every session was filled with insight. We are potentially purchasing more in the area of historical Chinese rare books and I feel so much more capable to work with my colleague in EAL moving forward.
7. It was great to realize that everything I ever learned about European books simply *isn't China.* China is so unknown to me even though I've studied it for a decade that it was ALL NEW. Truly I have so much more to read and learn but now I feel I have the foundation.
8. Too many... especially book restoration.

9. The opportunity to see so many varieties of paper, books, examples, interesting cases are the best.
10. The interaction with all the realia. Extremely useful because I am new to my field and am accumulating experience. I would like to use knowledge from this course in future acquisition and teaching.
11. The anecdotes of book collectors/dealers told by the instructor were eye-opening and are hard to be learned/read elsewhere.

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. SE was a font of knowledge and often humorous anecdote. It was a pleasure to have Dr. Mårten Söderblom Saarela in our class this year and benefit from his insights as well.
2. Even more, all the explanations and personal experiences shared with us were so precious and made everything more and more enjoyable.
3. I learned what I hoped to learn and then some. Of course, you can never cover in-depth an entire civilization worth of book history in a week. However, SE equipped me with the tools, the knowledge, and the beginning proficiency to be self-sufficient in this field. That's really as much as I could ask!
4. Absolutely! I learned a great deal more than expected. SE is a passionate scholar of Chinese printing and books; he has a rich treasure box ready to share with us every day!
5. *Yes.* SE is generous and patient, and so willing to share. He talks about books being national treasures but he is an *international treasure.*
6. 100% yes. SE obviously has beyond expert subject knowledge. His conversational and anecdote-filled discourse style made it easy to soak up information.
7. Yes—I do not feel intimidated about East Asian books anymore. I may not have the connoisseurship to know exactly what I'm looking at, but I have the resources and underpinnings to go further and develop as a scholar/collector.
8. Yes, although the class moved very, very quickly, and I think to make the most out of the class material I'll be spending next week reviewing any notes and the workbook.
9. Yes, and yes!
10. Yes. The professor is also very inclined to answer any questions affiliated with materials.
11. Partially. I feel like the course period is too short and the materials we looked at are too much. On the last few days things got a little but mixed up.

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. This class will inform both my personal research projects and my professional work.
2. By now, I'm just collecting the knowledge for applying for a future master's program.
3. I plan to use my knowledge of Chinese books acquired at RBS to better understand Japanese *comparanda* and to be able to properly describe Chinese books in the collections at my institution.
4. The knowledge will definitely benefit me in my research on Chinese literature in late Imperial China.

5. To expand my source pool of {undecipherable} when investigating material history.
6. Hopefully to aid in acquisitions and teaching.
7. I feel that I can more intelligently operate in both the world of books the world of Chinese culture, and both of these are major aspects of my life.
8. Collect more books and catalogs and have the background knowledge (because it's so broad) that will guide my future research.
9. It will definitely be great in my future work.
10. As supporting knowledge to my collaboration with special collections.
11. When writing an art historical article talking about a book, I can do more visual analysis of the physical features of the rare books now.

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

1. "History of the Book in China" will be of interest to a broad range of students, from undergraduates just starting out in Chinese studies to seasoned professors; from librarians or professionals in book-oriented industries, to collectors, hobbyists, or anyone with a passion for the book in China.
2. Anyone interested in East Asian book culture or Chinese culture and history in general.
3. To me, this course makes most sense for students and professionals interested in East Asia and with a strong either linguistic or historical background in that region. While I didn't feel overwhelmed, I think it would be easy for those with little experience in these fields to feel a bit awash, just due to the intense nature of the course.
4. Me personally.
5. Me and my students—first and my field (Islamic manuscripts history).
6. Coming in as a complete novice who has no facility for Chinese, I can confidentially say that anyone genuinely interested in the subject will get a lot out of it.
7. China scholars, book scholars, educators who teach about books on China, sellers and collectors, historians, and curious people.
8. People with less familiarity with Chinese book history but work in East Asia related fields (Japanese, Korean, religious Buddhism), and librarians during cataloging working on Chinese rare books.
9. Whoever has interest in rare books.
10. Scholars needing a full overview of Chinese/East Asian printing history.
11. {no response}

7) *If applicable, what were the most original, powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any "aha!" moments you'd like to share?*

1. Being able to touch paper, centuries old, and learn little tricks here and there about what SE looks for in his analysis of rare Chinese books were certainly "aha!" moments for me. Just becoming aware of the vast amounts of materials that are out there, and where to look for them, has broadened my horizons tremendously.

2. Understanding the book binding differences was definitely it.
3. The Korean movable type book brought back by Hideyoshi was an absolute gem. What an incredible opportunity to be able to see this and learn from the absolute best. SE is really an absolute gem, so giving with his time, expertise, and many (beloved) anecdotes.
4. SE's many episodes/stories, for example when he was in a book fair and someone said to him, "So you are dealing some third-world books," and he said, "I wanted to punch him..."
5. SE's details about the details revealing the bigger picture. Don't take info for granted. Examine everything critically.
6. So many. In general, I know a fair bit about print culture in the West and seeing how the two cultures were the same and where they were different was endlessly interesting.
7. Too many to count and I don't say that lightly. I really felt that every few minutes something that had been foggy clarified for me.
8. {no response}
9. To see and to touch realia.
10. To physically interact with East Asian printing books —they are very different from Western books and it's rare to be able to interact with them.
11. When learning how some of the book dealers treated the books to make them look older or more "complete."

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

1. {no response}
2. We should make our own seals by the end of the class! Hahaha
3. {no response}
4. Perfect!
1. It's perfect. Can't think of any.
5. None. SE is a national treasure. I love SE's tangents because they *aren't* tangents, they are relevant stories that show his personal connection to the books.
6. {no response}
7. I wish PowerPoints could be shared.
8. N/A
9. I think a digital version of the handbook should be provided so I can take notes using my computer. I would also love to have the PowerPoint available for future visual reference.

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? On a 1-10 scale, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10
2. 10
3. 9
4. 10
5. 10
6. 10

7. 10
8. 8
9. 9
10. 9
11. 9

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhanced the course experience?*

1. {no response}
2. N/A
3. {no response}
4. Field trips might be considered, but it depends on how relevant it is to our course content.
5. N/A (P.S.: no one is better at this field than SE).
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. The classroom time is fully packed, and I don't think there is room to add in more activities. Would appreciate e-link to recorded lectures and if the class had a Google classroom forum.
9. N/A
10. N/A
11. {no response}

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

1. {no response}
2. Knowing Chinese would be really helpful, but come with an open mind, do the readings and enjoy!
3. If possible, start reading the sources provided in the Google drive as soon as possible, and read absolutely everything.
4. Arrange your time well and enjoy the course!
5. Don't be afraid if you know less than zero about Chinese book history or Chinese lit.
6. SE knows so much and is so generous in sharing his knowledge. He is interested in why you came to the course, teaches at a level for everyone, and it is worth your time to take the course if you are interested.
7. Read the required materials and some of the additional readings. This helped me hit the ground running and I feel like it helped me ask better questions.
8. Do the required readings in advance, and the recommended ones after the class as you find your interests.
9. {no response}
10. Do the readings.
11. It's great to get some Chinese rare book handling experience in your home institution (or anywhere) and prepare questions.

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

1. Just a simple “thank you!” What a wonderful experience and opportunity, very grateful to have participated in the course.
2. A week to never forget! I loved it!
3. Book people.
4. This is a really rare chance of learning!
5. A breath of fresh air. Inspiring teacher and book culture.
6. Worth it.
7. Holy sh*t, give me more. Can I do this every day? (Not a haiku but heartfelt.)
8. A learning retreat perfect for introverts! {heart and smiley face}
9. I wish to do more if I can.
10. A time of knowledge in a brain explosion.
11. Books are also important art objects in their own right.