

Soren Edgren  
H-85: The History of the Book in China  
19–24 July 2015

**Narrative Course Evaluations**

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Did you do any additional preparation for your course? Are there any books or articles that you would like to see included in future years? Any that you might suggest removing?*

1. Pre-course reading was helpful.
2. The pre-course reading was very useful. I did additional preparation for the course.
3. Yes, the pre-course readings were helpful for a general orientation. I had to skim several of them, but found this was fine since seeing the physical objects in class is what makes the content in them stick.
4. The pre-course reading was broad enough to prepare for the class. I did read two short contemporary books on the Chinese language. This would be an interesting addition to pre-course reading—a bit more information on the script.
5. The reading assignments were quite useful, though we did not discuss them a lot in class, so perhaps it would be helpful to find ways to divide these readings according to the relevant day of the course and spend a short time (fifteen to twenty minutes) each day to go over them.
6. The pre-course readings for this class were very helpful, though some were difficult to acquire, outside the umbrella of an institutional library or database. PDFs were provided later, but would have been helpful in advance.
7. The pre-course reading assignments definitely provided the context for the class discussion. Besides these readings, I went over my reading notes about related books. I think it would be of great help if the reading list included more general, but decisive, works on book history.
8. Yes. Will be great to include some of the instructor's articles related to the course.
9. Yes, all of them. Supplemental readings, too.
10. I found both sets of encyclopedic articles a good refresher and indication of the scope of the class. The 1984 exhibition catalog was also a useful guide—a PDF of this might be helpful to future students.
11. SE's own articles might be a good addition, since they are shorter and he refers to them a lot.
12. The readings were all useful, but to different degrees. I did spend time preparing for the course by studying Chinese pronunciation, and I found that helped me follow along during the course lectures.

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 content was helpful, especially the list of items we examined during class and additional readings. I will definitely use these and the descriptions of the types of Chinese bindings.

2. The course workbook was worth the price of the trip. It will remain a valuable resource for years.
3. The course workbook was my bible in class, and I anticipate that it will continue to be an important reference. It must have taken a lot of effort to put it together—thank you.
4. There couldn't be a better way to have been exposed to these materials. SE's sharing of so many fine materials is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I'm certain.
5. The workbook is a priceless document, which I will cherish as long as I live. It could be helpful to attach the outline of the course currently in the workbook's first pages to the pre-course readings.
6. The course workbook for this class was very rich, and was helpful throughout the class. I am sure that I will continue to use it for reference to texts, art objects, and historical documents.
7. It was very useful, and I believe I will refer to them again in the future for my own research.
8. Very helpful.
9. Very good. Slides were very helpful. Workbook kept us oriented to subjects. Yes, it will.
10. The workbook will be extremely helpful, particularly the vocabulary lists, realia citations, and appendices three through five.
11. The course workbook was useful, especially the glossary. It might have been even better if there were more space to take notes.
12. I especially like the lists of additional reading sources and the glossary of terms. Yes, it will be much referred to in the future!

3) *If you've taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*

1. N/A
2. {no response}
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. Less organized, more information, groundbreaking in scope.
10. N/A
11. {no response}
12. N/A

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

1. Yes! This course helped me make a big leap forward in terms of understanding the history of the book in China. I have a much better foundation for understanding what I have read and for speaking with faculty and students about this topic.
2. The course allowed me to handle and acquaint myself with the physical characteristics of the Chinese book. It was what I came here to do.
3. There might be many people who can give a verbal review of the history of Chinese

- books, but few can share such a precious collection of books, and even fewer can tell the personal stories surrounding the books in the way SE can!
4. I will leave here with a true commitment to learning more about East Asian history. This experience has introduced ideas about the book—the thing—that I had not considered. I have work to do!
  5. Being with SE (he is unique in his knowledge, expertise, and intelligence), seeing the {illegible}, the diversity of the class participants. I will continue to benefit from this course as a scholar and as a human being for as long as I live.
  6. I was most impressed by the rare Chinese books that we were able to personally handle and observe—this process was highly educational, but also inspiring. The books ranged from very old documents to relevant works by contemporary Chinese writers and printmakers.
  7. Overview of the subject within a week really gave me leverage to incorporate Chinese book history into my own work. Although it is obvious that I gained invaluable toolsets throughout this course, new insights seem to be the homework of the course.
  8. Instructor's knowledge is super impressive; I walked away with much new insight. SE's personal collection, knowledge, background info are most interesting.
  9. So many. So so many. I do not have the words.
  10. I found sessions two through four the most informative and useful because of their focus on describing the different aspects of the material objects.
  11. Yes, I would like to look at more Chinese books at libraries, museums, and archives.
  12. The instructor's immense knowledge of individual book collectors, and the detailed descriptions of provenance for each item were so impressive, and each day was filled with fascinating tales that sparked ideas for further research on book collectors, curators, libraries, &c.
- 5) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Was anything left out or undeveloped? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*
1. I learned what I had hoped to, plus much more.
  2. The instructor was very good, great!
  3. Although I know SE felt rushed at times in order to fit everything in, I experienced this as an extremely complete course. I liked the fact that it was a broad overview. {private response} I came away with both an appreciation and understanding of Chinese books as artifacts, and for the arc of East-Asian book history.
  4. The warmth and sharing obvious in SE's instruction to us is deeply appreciated. As with the materials, receiving these lessons from SE has been such a gift.
  5. Yes; no; yes, and some more!
  6. The scope of this class is very broad—for this reason, it was sometimes difficult to spend as much time as we all might have liked to go in depth into the history of certain time periods. However, I think the instructor worked very hard to cover all essential bases, and also was very willing to discuss resources for further research. Most of all, he was certainly available to clarify any and all questions.
  7. It was truly great to get to know about all new materials that I did not know. However, I believe that some time should be saved to think and discuss what knowledge we can get from all new information.

8. Yes!
9. Yes. SE left very little out. Yes.
10. Although many, many things we touched on could have been developed further, the course more than delivered on the course description. I would be very interested in a more advanced class with a narrow-but-deep focus, following on from this course's broad scope.
11. Yes, SE is very knowledgeable, and answered all of my questions fully and thoughtfully.
12. Yes, absolutely. But the course was rushed as there is so much information to cover with such a broad scope. It would be nice to have a follow up with even more hands-on examination of different types of paper, printing techniques, and how to tell the difference.

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

1. To help care for, process, curate, and share a collection of Chinese books. Also, as a basis for further education on related topics.
2. I plan to start collecting books from China, and I will use the book in China as a way to contrast western book culture.
3. I will incorporate it into my research and writing as a comparative case (one which is particularly illuminating).
4. I plan on truly focusing my interests in the world of the book, which includes returning to RBS as often as you'll have me.
5. In all areas for my work as a teacher and as a researcher.
6. {private response}
7. It would be integrated into my book project to make it more relevant to the readers who are not familiar with my field. At the same time, what I learned from this course would make the distinctiveness of my work more explicit.
8. Help my faculty.
9. Total re-orientation of my concept of printing history.
10. They will inform my archival research and future scholarship.
11. I will use them in my research and future papers.
12. I will be helping a private collector assess and catalog a library that includes many Chinese and Japanese books, so the knowledge and skills from this course will be extremely helpful.

7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*

1. Anyone interested in history.
2. All book historians specializing in western printing culture should take this course.
3. I am a graduate student in history, but I only had superficial knowledge of Chinese and East Asian history. I found the course to be very well pitched to someone of my background. East Asian language skills weren't necessary.
4. I am not an academician or a scholar, but I was able to "keep up" with the class.
5. I think the great thing about this class is that it has so many entry points, so it is accessible to anyone interested in the topic of the course!
6. I think that this class would be useful to a wide range of academics, library-science

- professionals, and book collectors interested specifically in Chinese history—but also to anyone interested in thinking about the history of the book in a global context, not only in the West. Highly recommended!
7. I think this course would be ideal for library specialists who will deal with East Asian materials, or academics who are from non-Chinese subjects. {private response}
  8. {no response}
  9. High. Some exposure to western book history would be useful.
  10. Since SE gave us the opportunity to examine so many rare/early editions from his own collection, I would imagine all but the most experienced collectors/curators would gain a lot.
  11. Anyone interested in learning about non-western books. Even those not interested might find the class enjoyable because the history of Chinese books is so different from the western one.
  12. The course was taught at a high level, but the instructor made it very accessible to someone with no prior knowledge of the subject.
- 8) *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. Importance, relevance of xylography culturally, western versus Chinese values regarding books, writing, &c. (in general, historically).
  2. China’s modern xylography.
  3. As SE told his wonderful stories (and he is the reason to take this course—he’s lovely, knowledgeable, and radiates enthusiasm), I deeply understood, to a new extent, how every book is surrounded by stories and human relationships.
  4. My “aha” is that as with many cultures, though we are very different, we are very much the same. Community is community.
  5. Oh, there were so many! Possibly, and overall, having SE as a living resource for so many important facets of the issues covered. His generosity is paralleled by his knowledge, and they both seem boundless.
  6. {no response}
  7. It was a truly invaluable opportunity to scrutinize and have hands-on experiences. All these experiences, which are not possible in many places, dramatically enhanced my understanding of Chinese book culture.
  8. {no response}
  9. {no response}
  10. N/A
  11. All of SE’s anecdotes were fun to listen to. It was amazing being able to touch all of the books.
  12. This course completely changed the way I think about book history, as I was formerly only familiar with printing in the West. The entire week was an “aha” moment.
- 9) *How could the course have been improved?*
1. {no response}
  2. Another week is needed.

3. I think it would help to set guidelines around picture taking. One or two students spent too much time taking pictures, leaving less time for others!
4. {no response}
5. Aside from my observations above (see Q1, Q2, above), I would suggest having SE teach week-long courses on each/most of the topics of the individual sessions (e.g., color printing, &c.); also it would be great to have access to the PowerPoint slides.
6. I think this class could have benefited from putting more resources online—as we did later on, in a shared Dropbox—but more extensively. This would have been useful for images and articles.
7. Again, it would be even better if all students could join the discussion with the instructor after examining fine examples and specimens.
8. PowerPoint slides with captions.
9. {no response}
10. I felt like much of the information was front loaded, Monday through Wednesday, while Thursday was a bit light. The position of Friday's topics (different from the ones earlier in the week) was very sensible.
11. More time could have been spent on materials on Tuesday and Wednesday (on printing culture and the history of printing), since we had time left over on Thursday and Friday. Labels for objects on the realia were useful for pictures.
12. It is extremely hard to cover such a long period—with so many innovations and such a rich history—in just a week. There should be a series of courses on different aspects to delve deeper!

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

1. Yes!
2. Yes, I got my money's worth. I will recommend this course to others.
3. This is an extremely high-quality educational experience. I have already written to several colleagues recommending the course! I consider it a priceless experience.
4. Yes, yes!
5. Yes, and so much more! And of course I'll recommend to anyone I meet.
6. N/A
7. Absolutely, I think this is the best way to expand your knowledge about the given topic in a week.
8. Yes.
9. Yes. Yes.
10. Yes, absolutely.
11. Yes, I would recommend this course to other graduate students and book lovers.
12. Yes, absolutely, would recommend.

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

1. {no response}
2. {no response}
3. N/A
4. N/A
5. N/A

6. N/A
7. N/A
8. {no response}
9. {no response}
10. N/A
11. {no response}
12. N/A

12) *If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience? Any that you could have done without?*

1. {no response}
2. Evening events provided social time to make contacts.
3. I appreciated these opportunities very much. I'm continually amazed by the RBS staff—they seem to have thought of everything! I found the first lecture to be less informative than I had hoped; the Booksellers' Night was great fun, and has rekindled a love of used-book browsing in me.
4. I attended both lectures. They were excellent. I particularly appreciated the university publishing lecture. The challenges presented should be important to all of us.
5. I was too tired by the end of the day to be able to attend or enjoy the optional events, but I still think it was nice to have the option.
6. I was a little bit disappointed by the evening lectures, which seemed to speak primarily to students involved either in special collections or library science. However, based on talks from other weeks, this doesn't seem always to be the case.
7. Some lectures, which do not include serious intellectual engagement, made me feel like I wasted my time. I would suggest inviting academics, as we are in the "school."
8. {no response}
9. Lectures were great.
10. The Booksellers' Night was unexpectedly fun. Sadly, the lecture topics from other weeks looked more interesting.
11. I wished that I could have attend Nancy Tomasko's talk earlier in the summer, as it would've been relevant to our class.
12. The group dinners on Sunday night were an excellent way to start the week comfortably, and I highly recommend attending.

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

1. Read a general book on Chinese history if you are not familiar with it. Try to get some orientation to the history of the Chinese language, too.
2. Bring a high-definition camera.
3. I suggest writing the best possible application to maximize your chances of getting into the course. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience.
4. Rest up!
5. Take it and enjoy it, because this course is unique—you will not find anything like it anywhere else in the world (unless SE teaches it)!

6. {no response}
7. I would suggest to complete readings, both required and supplementary, as much as they can. The more they have prior knowledge about the topic, the more they would learn.
8. A great course.
9. Don't skip the pre-course reading.
10. Bring your camera!
11. Take it!
12. This course was very accessible to me, even though I had little to no background knowledge of Chinese history prior to doing the readings. Do not be discouraged if you don't read Chinese either!

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

1. Fabulous! SE is a wonderful human being, as well as a great teacher. Very generous to bring and share so much from his personal collection. He is amazing, kind, and passionate about this topic.
2. Old heart. Modern man.
3. Inspiring, fun—an in-depth, full-immersion educational experience of the highest quality, from a true expert.
4. I'm glowing. The week was perfection.
5. A truly wonderful journey of the heart, eye, and mind combined. Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity!
6. {no response}
7. Best learning experience over the years.
8. Fantastic.
9. {no response}
10. {no response}
11. Chinese books are amazing.
12. Intense and enlightening.

## **Student Data**

*Number of respondents:* 12 (of 12)

*How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?*

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 3 (25%)

I am self employed, and can arrange my own schedule: 1 (8.33%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 6 (50%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 2 (16.67%)

*Who paid your RBS tuition costs?*

I paid 100% myself: 3 (25%)

My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (16.67%)

I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 4 (33.33%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; my institution/employer paid the rest:  
1 (8.33%)  
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 2 (16.67%)

*Who paid your RBS housing expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 5 (41.67%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (8.33%)  
My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (8.33%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 3 (25%)  
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

*Who paid your RBS travel expenses?*

I paid 100% myself: 4 (33.33%)  
My institution/employer paid 100%: 2 (16.67%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (16.67%)  
I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)  
My situation does not fit any of the options above: 2 (16.67%)

*Which of the following best describes your current occupation?*

Library disciplines:

Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (8.33%)  
Public services librarian: 1 (8.33%)  
Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)  
Other: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

Ph.D./D.Phil: 3 (25%)

Professional educator:

K-12 teacher: 1 (8.33%)  
Associate professor: 1 (8.33%)

Other occupations/vocations:

Book collector: 2 (16.67%)

No Response: 1 (8.33%)