Director’s Report

The big news for the Fairbank Center at the start of the spring semester is that William Kirby will be leaving the FAS Dean’s office and taking over the directorship of this center as of July 1, 2006. Bill has kept the promise which he made to me last May when asking me to return to the director’s office: it’ll only be for one year! I am only halfway through that year, but it’s been a very happy experience to have been reminded of the intellectual vigor of the Center and the warm friendliness of its staff and associates. I am sure that, as he too comes to appreciate them firsthand, Bill will be very happy in his new role. On behalf of all associated with the FCEAR, I welcome him back to his roots in the China field.

I want to take this opportunity to thank again everyone who helped to make our fiftieth anniversary celebrations and conference so successful, particularly Holly Angell who was kindly lent to us by the Asia Center to take over day-to-day command of the operation, Ron Suleski who wrote the FCEAR’s fifty-year history, Wen-hao Tien who helped to ensure our meals and hospitality were up to the mark, and Melanie Wang who designed the book, T-shirts, mugs, and tote bags to look elegant for the occasion. Larry Summers and Bill Kirby said all the right things in their keynote addresses, and Ezra Vogel and Merle Goldman reminisced interestingly. And after it was all over, former chairs of the Fairbank Center Committee John Guth and James Welch, who attended with their wives, generously underwrote the whole occasion, for which we are tremendously grateful.

—Roderick MacFarquhar, Director

In September, Assistant Director Ronald Suleski was engaged in one of the Center’s community outreach projects. He helped to lead a delegation from the Massachusetts non-profit Primary Source on a tour of China. Primary Source is dedicated to promoting a greater knowledge about the world among educators and the general public. Currently they are concentrating on China, Japan, and Africa. The delegation was composed of well-educated and well-traveled professionals who were all visiting China for the first time. The route included the bustling capital city Beijing, the sprawling historical center Xian, the seductive scenery of Guilin, and Shanghai, “the city of China’s future,” as the locals like to say.

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Former Ambassador James R. Lilley and Professor Ezra Vogel during the Charles Neuhauser Memorial Lecture Series held in October.

In November, a colloquia series of five sessions titled “Assessing Mao’s Place in History: The Continuing Story” was held. The central focus of consideration was the new book by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, Mao: The Unknown Story. The book has an extensive bibliography and is based on hundreds of interviews, but its analysis is an extremely one-dimensional, blanket condemnation of Mao Zedong. The scholars in the colloquia series felt that such a one-factor analysis does not assist us in coming to a useful understanding of Mao or his role in history, and that there are many question marks over the book’s sources and analysis. Top Mao scholars from Harvard and other schools made presentations.

Fall 2005:
A Productive Semester for the Fairbank Center

In early September 2005, the Fairbank Center moved from its temporary offices at 625 Mass. Ave. in Central Square, Cambridge, to its new location in the CGIS South Building. We had grown fond of the sunny offices at 625 Mass. Ave., but were looking forward to being back on the Harvard campus where we would be more easily accessible to students and visiting scholars. The fall 2005 semester was the shake-down cruise for us and for the new building, and with the help of the building crew each problem was tackled and solved.

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In December, the Fairbank Center celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a major three-day conference titled “Studying Modern China: Past, Present, and Future.” It was held from 9 to 11 December 2006 on the concourse level of the new CGIS South Building. Distinguished scholars of modern China, including many Harvard faculty as well as scholars from other American universities, presented papers giving their thoughts about the evolution of research about modern China over the past fifty years. These papers were commented on by Chinese scholars from universities in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. A blinding snowstorm, including white-out conditions, swirled down upon the Center on Friday. This caused some participants to miss their presentations or to arrive late, but it did not stop the standing-room-only audiences from attending on all three days. President Larry Summers spoke at a reception following the first day of talks, and formal dinners were held on both Friday and Saturday. As part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, a new book titled The Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University: A Fifty Year History, 1955–2005, was published and made available to conference attendees. Written by Assistant Director Ronald Suleski, the book is based on archival research as well as interviews with many of the key figures who have guided the Center since its inception.

In addition to the major activities mentioned here, a number of ongoing seminar series held programs, in continuation of the Center’s tradition of fostering a lively and stimulating intellectual environment.


Photos © Gwendolyn Stewart 2006.
Studying Modern China: Past, Present, and Future
The Fairbank Center’s Fiftieth Anniversary Conference

Clockwise from left: Qin Yaqing, Robert Ross, and Alastair Iain Johnston; the audience settling into Room S010; reception on the concourse level enjoyed by Peter Perdue and others; Thomas Rawski and Dwight H. Perkins; Roderick MacFarquhar. (Photos top right, middle left, and bottom left © Gwendolyn Stewart 2006.)
Plans for the Spring 2006 Semester

*Shum Fellowships Offered Again This Year*

A generous grant from Desmond Shum has enabled the Shum Fellowships to be offered again this year. The award is officially titled the *Desmond and Whitney Shum Fellowship*. The first round was offered in spring 2005, and the two PhD candidates who received the award have been doing research in China.

Competition is open to all Harvard PhD candidates from any school within the university specializing in a field of the social sciences. Applicants should submit a brief letter setting out the title of their project, the institution in China where they will be affiliated, and their planned dates of travel. In addition, applicants should provide a project description of no more than two pages, a letter of support from their thesis supervisor, and if available a letter of acceptance from the Chinese institution. The deadline for these materials is **15 March 2006**.

The winners of the competition, who will be studying in the fields of contemporary Chinese social sciences, will receive a grant of $20,000 each.

*2006 Annual Reischauer Lectures*

This year’s Reischauer Lectures will be held from Wednesday through Friday, 19 to 21 April 2006, beginning each day at 4 p.m. in Room S020 on the concourse level of the CGIS South Building. The lecturer will be Leonard Blussé, Professor of History and Asian-European Relations at Leiden University, and this year a Visiting Professor in the Department of History at Harvard. His topic will be “Visible Cities: Canton, Nagasaki, and Batavia and the Arrival of the Americans (1780–1800).”

The first lecture, held on Wednesday 19 April 2006, will be “Three Windows of Opportunity: The Limitations of Institutional Control.” The discussant will be Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, Tufts University. The lecture will be followed by a reception sponsored by the Fairbank Center.

The second lecture, on Thursday 20 April, will be “The Performance of Rituals of Cross-Cultural Trade: Theory and Practice,” and the discussant will be Eric Tagliacozzo, Cornell University.

The third lecture, on Friday 21 April, will be “Face to Face: Toward a Global Interaction of Culture, Science, and Technology,” and the discussant will be Dani Bottsman, Harvard University. This will be followed by a reception outside the lecture room sponsored by the Erasmus Committee.

*Major Tibet Conference Held*

From 3 to 6 February 2006, a conference titled “The Socio-economic and Environmental Situation in Contemporary Tibet” was held at the Fairbank Center. The purpose of the academic conference was to promote substantive and forthright discussion among scholars to create a positive atmosphere and bridge understanding, especially among Tibetan and Chinese scholars. Attending the meetings were eminent individuals from Lhasa, Beijing, Dharamsala, Canada, and the United States. Participants discussed wide-ranging issues on contemporary Tibet such as the urban and rural economies, autonomy in decision making, the environment, education, and literature.

The conference was part of ongoing efforts in this area, and it was the fifth of its kind since 2002 to be held at Harvard. In September 2003, a meeting was held between thirty-five Chinese scholars and His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The February 2006 conference was co-sponsored by the Fairbank Center, the Harvard University Asia Center, and the East Asian Legal Studies Program.

*Chinese Language Discussion Group Forms*

The *Zhongguo wenti xueshu yanjiuhui*, China Study Seminar, was organized in November 2005 by Fairbank Center Visiting Scholars Wang Weibin, Xu Baoyou, and Gao Shenpeng, along with Harvard-Yenching Visiting Scholar Liu Ping. It meets every few weeks, usually from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in Seminar Room S153 at the Fairbank Center. Topics of current interest concern emerging China are selected as themes, and scholars are invited to make presentations. Many of the meetings are followed by an informal reception. Among the non-Chinese scholars who have attended these seminars are Fairbank Center Visiting Scholars Takahara Akio and Lee Jongchul, and Professor Emeritus Ezra Vogel. The meetings are open to the public.

*Public Culture in Contemporary East Asia: Global Flows, Cultural Intimacy, and the Nation-State*

Organized by Taiwan Studies Post-Doctoral Fellow Paul Festa, the workshop will be held on 22 April 2006 in Room S050 of the CGIS South Building. It will be sponsored by the Fairbank Center and the Asia Center.

The workshop will examine the new forms of public culture emerging at the intersection of global flows, local practices,
and nationalist ideologies in Taiwan, Japan, and China. It will look critically at how public phenomena are embedded in diverse public spheres of cultural intimacy. In particular, areas examined will include the intimacies that have coalesced around sports, religion, the military, friendship, sexual (sub)cultures, pop music, environmental discourses, and mobile communications. Among the questions to be addressed are: How are cultural intimacies formed through the appropriation and subversion of official or global discourses? In what ways are these intimacies integral to new forms of public culture? How might a focus on intimacy and mediation enhance our understanding of the ways in which different often competing identifications—ethnic, religious, gender/sexual and class—achieve recognition through public culture?

**Reconfiguring Forms, Genres, and Social Space in Modern Chinese Literature**

Organized by An Wang Post-doctoral Fellows Song Mingwei and Wu Shengqing, this workshop will be held on 28 and 29 April 2006 in Room S050 of the CGIS South Building. It will be sponsored by the Fairbank Center and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation.

The workshop will take on the issues of form and genre as productive critical categories with which to approach Chinese literature during the Qing and early Republican eras, focusing on classical-style poetry and traditional performing and narrative styles. It will cover issues such as the experimentalism of archaic prose, transformation of the narrative genres, and reconfiguring social space—from literati to wenhuaren (cultured person). Using new empirical methods, the participants hope to shed light on the issue of alternative conceptions of Chinese literary modernities and to reinvigorate a historically informed formalist criticism of the field of modern Chinese literatures.

**Reconfiguring the Party-State: The Shifting Locus of Power in Reform-Era China**

Organized by An Wang Post-doctoral Fellows Calvin Chen, Chen Xi, and Martin Dimitrov, the workshop will be held 19 and 20 May 2006 in Room S050 of the CGIS South Building. It will be sponsored by the Fairbank Center.

Where is the locus of power in China? This question has occupied China scholars for most of the post-1949 period. Until recently, most scholarship on Chinese politics was centered on trying to assess the relative weight of the central party-state vis-à-vis the localities. Few attempts were made to disaggregate the horizontal layers of power and identify institutions at each level from the center down to the township where power may reside. Among the questions to be explored at this workshop are: What is a fruitful agenda for studying central-local relations today? What nonexecutive institutions at what horizontal layers are becoming more powerful? Which civic and mass organizations have assumed a more activist role in their interactions with the state? How has the ability of the state to maintain order evolved during the Reform Era? A meta-question that the conference will address both in individual panels and in the concluding discussion is the changing role of the communist party in this process of the evolution of power.

**From Eternity to Modernity: An International Symposium on Daoist Tradition and Transformation in Modern China**

Organized by Liu Xun of Rutgers University and David Palmer from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the symposium will be held from 13 to 15 June 2006, in Room S050 of the CGIS South Building. The conference is funded by the Fairbank Center, the École française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Paris, with additional funding from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. A planning meeting for this conference was held at the Fairbank Center in March 2005.

For too long our understanding of Daoism has been affected by two equally ahistorical, yet doggedly persistent views. One held that Daoism is a timeless system of philosophical and ethical teachings which has remained little changed since its inception from time immemorial. The other viewed Daoism as a religious tradition which entered an irreversible decline in terms of political power and cultural relevance after the Song era. Until recently these views hindered our understanding of the historical development of Daoism during China’s late imperial and, especially, her modern period. We know little about how Daoist religious institutions, ritual specialists, and traditions of self-cultivation practice have fared in the past two centuries. We are only beginning to see how Daoist monasteries, lineages, clergymen, practitioners, techniques, and traditions have interacted with modern ideologies and processes such as nationalism, scientism, gender revolutions, and so forth.

In the past two decades or so, scholars from various disciplines in the West and China have begun to focus on these gaps through their scholarship. This conference will bring together scholars from around the world, and give them a chance to present their current work and further their discussion with colleagues from the fields of modern China and Daoist studies.
International Conference to Commemorate the Late Benjamin Schwartz’s Ninetieth Birthday

The conference will be held 16 to 18 December 2006 at East China Normal University in Shanghai. The principal organizers on the China side are Zhu Zhenghui and Xu Jilin. On the Harvard side they are Elizabeth Perry and Merle Goldman. The conference is supported in part by the Fairbank Center.

Benjamin Schwartz (1916–1999) was a beloved member of the Fairbank Center from 1955 until his death. He became the grandfather figure to many younger scholars and visiting academics because of his thoughtful wisdom and joy in engaging in scholarly debates with graduate students and fellow faculty members. He was an intellectual and a philosopher of wide learning, drawing easily on examples from European or Asian sources to illustrate his points. He was regularly to be found at the “Fairbank Center table” in the cafeteria of Coolidge Hall, both stimulating and guiding the conversation of those present.

Translations of his writings in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean have helped Asian scholars appreciate his learned observations. The organizers of the conference on the Chinese side spent time visiting Harvard and conducting research here. Many Harvard faculty who knew Schwartz well will be attending the conference.

Traditional Chinese Women Through a Modern Lens

Organized by Grace Fong, McGill University, and Ellen Widmer, Wesleyan University, the conference will be held from 16 to 18 June 2006 in Room S050 of the CGIS South Building. It is sponsored by the Harvard-Yenching Institute, the Academia Sinica, the Fairbank Center, and a private donor.

Chinese women’s writings allow us to approach women’s experiences through their own voices. They also provide a gendered perspective on Chinese culture and society. In a tangible way, these women wrote their own versions of history, in which they complicate the official and orthodox perspectives that have been inscribed by historians, officials, and other male writers. This conference will focus on the resources provided by a project undertaken between McGill and Harvard-Yenching to digitalize over ninety individual collections, anthologies, and other works by women writers held in the Harvard-Yenching Library. The planning meeting for this conference was held in Montreal in May 2005 and was funded by ACLS.

This conference comes at a critical stage in research on Ming-Qing women. It represents both the culmination of work of the past two decades and the beginning of innovative possibilities involving new materials and new technologies. A very large number of papers will be presented, and the organizers plan to publish selected papers.

Forward Planning for Fairbank Center Activities

Dismantling “Socialist Feudalism”: The Rural-Urban Cleavage in Contemporary China

This conference, organized by Harvard Professor Martin Whyte, will be held in October 2006. It will be sponsored by the Fairbank Center.

Much of the discourse and debate about social inequality trends in the PRC today concern the causes and extent of the replacement of social egalitarianism of the Mao era by the increasing inequalities unleashed by today’s market reforms and China’s integration into the world economy. Although some dimensions of the rural-urban divide, such as income gaps, appear to be growing in recent years, this primary social cleavage has its roots in policies and trends of the socialist era. Today, many scholars see China as a society in which market competition has displaced bureaucratic allocation as the primary distributive mechanism and generator of social inequality.

Among the questions to be explored at the conference are: What has been the nature of policy debates within China about the hukou (household registration) system and how might it be modified or phased out? How are the rights and treatment of migrants discussed within China? How do emerging debates about the notions of citizenship relate to policy decisions affecting the rural-urban cleavage? To what extent have market forces and competition helped to undermine inequalities between urbanites and rural residents, and why hasn’t the role of the market as a social leveler been more effective? How does the urban-rural cleavage look in China’s towns and small cities?
First Impressions: The Cultural History of Print in Imperial China (Eighth to Fourteenth Centuries)

Organized by Hilde De Weerdt of the University of Tennessee (a former Fairbank postdoctoral fellow in 2004–2005) and Lucille Chia from the University of California at Riverside, the conference will be held in June 2007. The conference will be sponsored by the ACLS and by the Fairbank Center. This is a continuation of a workshop titled “The Early Development of Print Culture in China,” held at the Fairbank Center in April 2005.

The development of print culture in China goes back to the seventeenth century. In recent years strides have been made in academic research on Chinese print culture from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries, but the millennium preceding invites comparative research on the interaction between manuscript and print circulation and, more broadly, the relationship between print culture and social, political, economic, and religious change.

Among the critical topics this conference will explore in depth are the circulation of literature and literary change, the circulation of administrative literature, the differences between region-wide and empire-wide distribution, and the effects of print culture on language change. This is a recently developing field of study among English speaking scholars and it holds the promise of revealing a heretofore unappreciated aspect of life in imperial China.