Blog to Book: The China Beat Moves into the Print World

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This Self-Promotion Saturday will be the first of a series devoted to a book project: *China in 2008: A Year of Great Significance*. Rowman & Littlefield will be publishing it fairly early in 2009 and it will be edited by three people familiar to “China Beat” readers: Kate Merkel-Hess, Ken Pomeranz and Jeff Wasserstrom, all of whom are based at UC Irvine. Some of the content will also be familiar to “China Beat” readers, since the book will include material that first appeared on this site (though in some cases in an updated and expanded form). *China in 2008* will also contain pieces that first appeared in other digital or print publications, as well as completely new things, created just for the book.

Books that evolve out of blogs are still a relative rarity in the American publishing world, though there have been some notable success stories, from *Julie to Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen* to *Stuff White People Like*. But as many followers of the “China Beat” know, they are more common in China, where sometimes several of the top selling books at a particular moment are tied in some way to blogs, sometimes made up of nothing but the posts that appeared on one.

Our taking “China Beat” off-line, while keeping it going on-line, of course, is an experiment, and we’ll be filling you in periodically on how it is going. We’ll probably talk in future about challenges we face, from meeting tight deadlines to maintaining the loose feel of a blog while creating something that can be carried around, assigned in classes, and we hope picked up at the airport by some people who have never visited the site but think *China in 2008* looks like good reading material on their first flight to Beijing, Shanghai or Hong Kong. We’ll also have things to say about how the volume is shaping up, and maybe provide some teasers about the new material.

Our main message for now is simple: stay tuned. And if anyone else out there is thinking that 2008 has been such an eventful year so far that a play on the title of *1587: A Year of No Significance* is in order, we’ve laid a claim to that idea in the subtitle (though we’d be happy to include a tip of the hat in our acknowledgments page to anyone who has beat us to the punch in a web posting or op-ed).