

[AAS 2016 Summer Seminar in the History of the Book: "Subscription Publishing in America"](#)

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Type:

Summer Program

Date:

March 15, 2016

Location:

Massachusetts, United States

Subject Fields:

American History / Studies, African American History / Studies, Business History / Studies, Library and Information Science, Literature

This seminar will explore the variety of publishing practices in the American colonies and United States that, from the 18th to the present century, are generally known as "subscription publishing" and served as an alternative to what has come to be termed "trade publishing." The most important of these are:

- 1) Publication of works by pre-publication subscription, as practiced in eighteenth-century America.
- 2) Publication of works, usually illustrated, in parts.
- 3) Publication of works that were sold by canvassers, as practiced in nineteenth-century America.
- 4) Publication of multi-volume sets, usually collected editions or encyclopedias, as practiced at the turn of the twentieth century.
- 5) Publication of works by book clubs, exemplified by the Book of the Month Club.

The seminar will also address the relationship of these schemes to the publication of newspapers and periodicals, including the "mammoth weeklies" of the 1830s and 1840s, and books in numbered series, especially the cheap "libraries" of the 1870s and 1880s that broke down the resistance to international copyright.

The seminar will be of interest to graduate students, librarians, curators, and college and university faculty interested in the fields of book history and print culture, literary history, the book trades, and the economics of publishing. The seminar will be led by Michael Winship, Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin.

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