

[BLOG: On Trade Books and Global History](#)

Discussion published by Marc-William Palen on Monday, November 30, 2020



Map of Constantinople (Istanbul), the capital of the Byzantine and the Ottoman empires. Printed in 1572 by Braun and Hogenberg in *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*. nicoolay/Getty Images

In this blog post [Professor Maria Fusaro](#) responds to some questions put to her by Professor Richard Toye about trade books and global history.

RT: In the many discussions that are currently going on around ‘decolonising’, one thing I’ve not seen addressed is the role of the publishing industry. Whatever happens in universities, publishers have a big influence on how history is discussed in the public sphere. Are there particular pitfalls surrounding trade publishing (as opposed to academic publishing), do you think?

MF: What a good question! Or I should probably say ‘questions’, as you raise more than one point as ‘trade books’ are an important phenomenon within the Anglosphere.

The first question you raise is about relationship between ‘academic’ and ‘trade’ publishing, and their different (divergent?) goals. Directly descending from this is a separate issue, namely how this affects efforts at decolonising the curriculum. And connected to both is how ‘trade’ and academic publishing need to interact.

Professional historians tend to be based in universities, and their scientific reputations are built through their production of academic essays and volumes. Once upon a time, there was an organic development between academic and trade books. One started to publish within the academic world,

built his (I was going to write 'her' and then realised they were all men) scientific reputation and then, towards the end of his career or in retirement wrote for the general public. As a phenomenon peculiar to the Anglosphere, there was also the non professional historian, who eschewed the academic path and wrote 'histories' for the educated public, the latter type were (and are) usually very gifted writers. [[continue reading at the Imperial & Global Forum](#)]