Sarton Medalist Jim Bennett at the HSS Virtual Forum

Editor’s note: One of the highlights of our 2020 virtual forum—an event with many highs—was the Sarton Medal Plenary session honoring the 2020 recipient, Jim Bennett. This year’s plenary took the form of a fascinating and engaging conversation between the medalist and a distinguished panel of historians of science, assembled by the organizing committee—Karen Rader, Sarah Qidwai, and Jean-François Gauvin (with a little help from the Newsletter). Paola Bertucci anchored the session and introduced the interlocutors—Jahnavi Phalkey, Erich Weidenhammer, Anna Toledano, Tim Boon and Jean-François—and Robert Bud offered closing remarks. Both for those HSS members who missed the session or for those who wish to revisit it, here is an edited version of the session.

Introduction by Paola Bertucci, Yale University:

It is my great honor and pleasure to chair this plenary session, and introduce the 2020 Sarton Medalist, Jim Bennett. Jim is a pioneer of the so-called material turn in the history of science and technology. In his roles as a scholar, curator, and teacher, he has taught us to look beyond texts to recognize the often invisible labor, both intellectual and manual, that is constitutive of the human activities we call science and technology. His work has bridged the worlds of the museum and the academy, bringing the most current historiographical debates to general audiences.

I was lucky to be among the first cohort of graduate students, when Jim launched a Master of Science degree at the University of Oxford in history of science. The program was physically based in the History of Science Museum at Oxford, where he was the director. That one year of study, literally, changed my intellectual trajectory. And I know, I’m not speaking just for myself.

Jim used to come into the classroom, de facto the museum’s basement, a seventeenth-century alchemical laboratory, with instruments in his hands. The objects at first looked indecipherable. As he began disassembling them, explaining the various functions, emphasizing the high level of craftsmanship, the various hands from makers to owner and users, the instruments went through over time, it became clear that by studying the history of science, through artifacts, we were focusing on historical actors’ practices and ways of knowing that are often invisible in textual accounts. It is this approach, which centers on instruments and moves outward to address deep questions about the nature of scientific knowledge and practice, that distinguishes Jim’s contributions to our discipline.

I could list the many highlights from Jim’s distinguished career from his curatorships at Greenwich, Cambridge, Oxford, London; numerous collaborations with other museums of the history of science across Europe;
his many publications. I could discuss how his instrument-focused scholarship reshaped conversations about the Scientific Revolution. But most of all, I wish to emphasize the fact that he has trained generations of students who have then moved on to become professors or curators around the world. And who keep practicing what he has taught us: thinking with scientific instruments.

Jim’s scholarship and museum work demonstrate that excellence in our discipline doesn’t manifest itself exclusively through publications. Historians of science are not necessarily desk-bound scholars. Excellence in the history of science can be and is found, in museum curatorships, collaborative exhibitions and catalogs, digital projects, and inspiring teaching. Museums have enormous potential for reaching broad audiences, and sparking and informing conversations about current issues surrounding science, medicine, and technology. As this virtual forum demonstrates, younger generations of historians of science are eager to participate in such debates. The recognition of Jim Bennett’s work through the Sarton Medal is an encouraging message to many graduate students who are considering jobs, beyond or along academia. It shows them that their expertise can be used in different contexts, and to much effect.

Jahnavi Phalkey (Founding Director, Science Gallery, Bengaluru, India):

Jim, it’s a pleasure and a privilege to participate in the celebration of your work. There are some of us trying to walk in your footsteps and trying to learn what it might be like in the twenty-first century to work across public spaces and see what we can actually make of it. My question for you is, what is the one most important thing, to your mind, that is lost to the history of science when scholars do not engage with objects/instruments and continue instead with textual sources and oral history?

JB: It is difficult to choose one thing. My first thought was that it’s difficult to imagine a scholar now who would determine not to engage with objects and instruments as a matter of principle. So I must be careful not to fight old battles or continue outdated debates.

An idealist position of that sort was still possible when I first became involved in the late 1960s, when there was a strand of opinion that science in its finest expression was essentially and admirably cerebral, an activity of the intellect. Once science reached that level, the idea was that whatever means had been used to get there, could be regarded as contingent and incidental, of interest to antiquarians but not intellectual historians. Odd as it may seem, this was quite a liberating impulse at the time, as it released historians of science from the confined narrative Continued on Page 3
of empirical discovery and, being too narrow and unrealistic in itself, in time opened the door to consideration of other currents of thought and activity—social, political, technological, commercial, and so on.

Paradoxically, becoming a museum curator meant that an idealist philosophy survived a bit longer in my world, gaining new vigor in aspects of the science-center movement. I recall the challenge that collections of objects were all very well for antiquarians but that “the science” was not to be found there. The science lay elsewhere, in a realm whose register was called, innocuously enough, “understanding,” a realm of concepts and of theories, and science museums should be reformed accordingly.

Where neglect of material and instrumental work occurs today among historians is not a matter of principle but of inclination, partiality, and even practicality and accessibility. I have usually had collections conveniently to hand, but not everyone has that kind of access. So I think that’s fair enough. You know, we all have our preferences and our partialities, and, of course, that’s what makes up the tapestry of our subject.

As historians today we take it as part of the historic practice of science to design and make devices and experiments, to learn manipulative techniques, to manufacture instruments, to sell, maintain, adapt and repair them, to measure with them, to teach through them, to train others in their use, and so on, and therefore all this falls to our concern. This recognition brings knowledge of different areas into our toolkit—of the manufacturing culture, of contemporary fabricating skills and specialisms, their gathering into clusters and traditions, the available material resources in the period, and so on.

Perhaps I have to admit that I cannot name “the one most important thing” we lose by not engaging with the material, because what we then miss is a general sensibility, an openness to a whole aspect of scientific practice. Also, I don’t want to say that this sensibility is enhanced only through objects and instruments in their original physical form. Historians of instruments obviously need texts, and photographs and drawings and prints and so on. The objects and instruments don’t exist in a separate evidential world but should be integrated into all the resources we have. Their inclusion can profoundly affect the integrated account, but I don’t really want to accept a demarcation here.

As an example, we can take an area where the idealist account seemed to have one of its strongest successes—astronomy in the 16th century. When instruments come into the story, and not only for measurement of planetary positions, it takes on a different aspect. Johann Schöner was an astronomer, teaching mathematics in Nuremberg in the early 16th century, best known in the traditional account as the person to whom Rheticus addressed the Narratio Prima, the first published account of the Copernican system, published before De Revolutionibus. Schöner had a printing press and was a maker of globes, including the first matching pairs of celestial and terrestrial globes, characteristic of the contemporary discipline of cosmography—a discipline largely astronomical that had a much more active hold on 16th-century practice than planetary theory. In the Oxford museum I had the care, remarkably, of a celestial globe from the Royal Astronomical Society’s collection, which was made in Schöner’s workshop. It was one of only two extant examples of the earliest surviving printed celestial globe, from a business that once spanned Europe.
It was because the Antwerp publisher Roeland Bollaert could not obtain enough Schöner globes for his customers that he persuaded Gemma Frisius in Louvain to take up their manufacture. Gemma was a university professor but you can see him here in a very hands-on engagement with the globe that he’s making.

Once you let instruments and the disciplines they represent into the story, it can be transformed, not by overthrowing what we know from our textual sources but by placing these in a different light and a more rounded narrative, not offering a retreat into antiquarianism but, on the contrary, offering a much richer history.

Perhaps I can offer singularity by taking an example of one instrument that was important to me. I was cataloguing the pre-1600 instrument collection in Oxford (we all as ordinary curators have to spend time cataloguing the collection in our care) when the next in line was a rectangular wooden portable sundial dated 1558.

There were instruments on both faces: a complex instrument of cosmography known as the Regiomontanus dial, and a much more straightforward horary quadrant for telling time in Italian hours. What was significant about this object is that I was able to decipher the abbreviated signature for the first time.

The sundial was made by a man called Miniato Pitti, an Olivetan monk and sometime Abbot of the monastery of San Miniato al Monte in Florence. He was a noted cosmographer and was active with the cosmographer Egnatio Danti in the design and arrangement of the maps in the geographical room of the Palazzo Vecchio for Grand Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici. This was a significant identification because around the time of the cataloguing work it was doubted whether socially elevated people, and Miniato was a member of the prominent Pitti family in Florence, would really have indulged in mechanical practices, such as making instruments bearing their names. Soon after I finished my cataloguing, Mark Rosen found an archival source, which showed Danti after Pitti’s death, negotiating with the Olivetan monastery to buy Pitti’s tools. We realized that the prejudice against mechanical work had been ours, not that of the Florentine cosmographers. Their notion of what mathematical practice was included this kind of work and that was important in changing
our attitude to the kind of mathematics that they did. That’s a nice example of the kind of complementarity of archival work and object work and so I don’t want to demarcate.

I’ll stop there. I’ve failed to answer your question about the one most important thing. Perhaps I’ve shown why it’s difficult to answer.

Erich Weidenhammer (Curator, University of Toronto Scientific Instruments Collection & Adjunct Curator, Ingenium, Canada Science and Technology Museum):

What type of scientific artifacts do you wish you were able to study that are not represented, or very poorly represented, in early modern instrument collections?

JB: We all know of famous things that are lost, for example the Dondi “astrarium” or Tycho Brahe’s celestial globe. These examples are documented, and we regret their loss. But we can be sure that there were lots of very ordinary things alongside the fine scientific artefacts. The latter are well represented, even over-represented in our collections, while the more everyday devices were used, worn out in use, discarded, replaced, and certainly not collected or preserved.

We might say that in our world at least, museum collections are highly misleading. They do not show us what was used in the past, they show what was not used in the past. I’m exaggerating a bit to try to keep your attention, but there is a reasonable amount of truth in that.

Think about astrolabes. There are basically two types: the astronomer’s astrolabe and the mariner’s astrolabe.

We have some numbers for another navigational instrument from around the same period, the cross-staff, made of wood. So whereas a mariner’s astrolabe could at least be preserved, sort of, by being lost at sea, that could not happen to a cross-staff. We happen to know that one firm, van Keulen of Amsterdam, supplied one customer, the Dutch East India Company, with 1,148 cross-staves between 1731 and 1748: one maker, one corporate customer, 17 years. The total number of surviving historic cross-staves from all makers for all periods is now fewer than 100. So the attrition rate is just extraordinary.

On the other hand, there is something like the great armillary sphere by Antonio Santucci in the Museo Galileo in Florence. Wonderful survival, recently restored, fantastic thing. And there is one other example, a bit smaller, made by Santucci for Philip II, in El Escorial, near Madrid. We think there were only 2, but that’s a 100 percent survival rate.
Think also of the variety of fine artillery instruments. These were supposed to be used in battle but they lived in the cabinet of the duke, or the prince. Think about how few of them look fit for use in battle. Dumped at the back and buried. This came to light in the redevelopment of the building around 2000, and we found lots of chemical crucibles from the 17th and 18th centuries. Extraordinary stuff that survived by being dumped.

I wanted to end with a couple of interesting instances of where things might have survived and might yet be found. Take for example this genre painting from 1855 by Eduard Ender, a Viennese artist.

Some of you will know of his more famous painting of Alexander von Humboldt in South America, similarly festooned with instruments—that was what Ender did. He painted this one depicting Tycho Brahe demonstrating an instrument to Emperor Rudolph II in Prague. The instruments in the Tycho painting must have been modelled on objects surviving and available in 1855—they must have been, Ender couldn’t have made them up—and some are known even today. But we do not know anything about the main sphere that Tycho is demonstrating. Now, it is known that Rudolph had a particularly fabulous mechanical globe by Joost Bürgi, now lost, which displayed the motions of the planets as well as the celestial sphere. Could this be it? The sphere might well survive somewhere, and it would be lovely to find it.

Do I have time for one last story, just to keep your attention? This one is about a Borda circle, a totally French instrument made by Jecker in Paris. The mid 19th-century Victorian astronomer Sir James South wanted to have one of these and bought one while in Paris. But he did not want to pay the import duty on it, so he got Jecker’s workshop to engrave “Troughton London” on the scale, and brought it home with him without paying duty. Somehow word got out, not that South was one to mind—he had shown it to Troughton, who was impressed by the signature. There was a bit of a scandal at the Royal Society and it was all gleefully reported in the Mechanics’ Magazine. So, somewhere there may be a Jecker Borda circle signed “Troughton London.” Seeing it won’t tell us much, but it would be a thrill to find that relic of the old rascal.
Anna Toledano (PhD candidate, Stanford University & museum educator, Computer History Museum, Mountain View, CA):

As a historian of science eager to also continue my work as a museum professional, I want to ask how you navigated keeping one foot in the academic world and the other in the museum world. What advice would you give to an early career scholar on how to maintain both of those parts of your career in a robust and fulfilling way?

JB: I’m delighted to hear that—brilliant! You are absolutely right and you are definitely needed. Don’t let on to everyone, or they’ll all be wanting to do it, but it’s a brilliant and fulfilling combination of work—and never dull.

I’d like to help, but I didn’t have a plan. Because it’s not very usual as a career, I don’t think there is a career path. So I’ll have to offer tips or hints, not a life plan, I’m afraid. I just kept finding ways to do what I wanted to do—along, of course, with all the boring, routine admin stuff, but still, you have to be prepared to do that. But things opened up and happened.

I spent nearly all my career working in museums, apart from a year at the start as a temporary university lecturer in the history of science and then two years as an archivist, setting up a working archive in London, to be managed thereafter by the resident librarian. That happened, and after that I went to the National Maritime Museum. I began to work in museums. And you might wonder how did that happen? This guy doesn’t sound like he’s got any museum qualifications and I’m afraid that was true. I had a PhD, the content of which had a fair amount of mechanical and material culture and instruments on account of its subject, Christopher Wren, for whom material culture was important on a large scale.

More particularly, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich was trying to take an academic turn by moving away from hiring seamen, particularly naval commanders for senior posts. They thought they would try young academics instead. So I happened to come along at the right time. These old naval commanders were very good by the way, but they weren’t qualified for museum work either, so it was fine. We were all learning on the job and my lack of qualification wasn’t particularly noticed.

So I was lucky, not just to have worked in two national museums—at the start at the National Maritime Museum and the Science Museum at the end—but in between and for the greater part of my career, in university museums of the history of science: in Cambridge at the Whipple and then in Oxford.

National and university museums are the places where it will be much easier to take up academic opportunities—publication in the first place, but later positions in scholarly organizations, and so on. Comparable curatorial posts exist in learned societies, but it would be difficult to follow such a pattern in municipal or other local authority museums.

I also think it’s easier to be based in a museum and to do academic things in addition—it’s easier than the other way round. If it’s a university museum, you can expect encouragement to publish and time and hopefully freedom for research. Of course you have to do collections and exhibition work but you can probably align that to some extent with research and publication. You will probably find opportunities for teaching within the museum, depending on the local departmental and course structures. Publication is still approved of in national museums. Opportunities for teaching may not come so easily but you can look out for them. You’ve got to go out and find them—forge relationships with local university departments, teach extramural classes (I’ve done that as well) and so on. There are things out there if you think about it.

Having a museum experience to offer to the students is a great advantage, which must be cashed in, because departments should see the
attraction of being able to offer students visits—not just gallery visits, but privileged, “behind the scenes” visits—which can lead to other things like work experience placements, volunteering time—which will be needed for admission to museum studies graduate courses—final-year projects…you’ve got a lot to offer a university.

If it were the other way round, that is, if you are a mainstream academic moonlighting in the museum world, there are possibilities, such as joint supervision of graduate students, or being a guest curator of an exhibition, but I don’t think it’s as easy. It’s not such a natural transition. Trying to be a guest curator, you are dependent on the collections staff in the Museum. Your ideas can’t grow so organically and freely from your own knowledge of the collection. And the staff control your access and they have their own work to do. It can work with the right person—we did it with some artists, for example, at Oxford—and oddly enough, it worked better, because of the significant disciplinary distance between the collaborators. If you are too close, you can clash with each other’s plans and ideas.

What other tips? I’d say it helps you to build your connections with mainstream academia if you choose a research topic or character straddling these worlds—the mechanical, material and instrumental world, and the conceptual. And who has, even better, interesting things to say about the relationships involved. That will make you relevant to both sides. In my case an abiding interest in Robert Hooke, did exactly that. It was very useful as was my interest in Christopher Wren. William Herschel was another nice example.

That kind of mediating agenda means that you become relevant to a symposium they are putting on, or as the “instrument person” in an essay collection or edited volume. I got into a few very nice volumes about Robert Hooke for instance, by writing the instrument chapter.

I’d also say don’t be shy about accepting a broader range of interests than a mainstream academic—your museum work will almost certainly require that, so let it inform your research and publication on the material culture aspects of topics. My experience is that we can get away with greater flexibility, can transgress more boundaries, because, I suppose, there are continuing strands running through them in the parallel tale of practical skill and manufacturing tradition.

Finally, going back to being welcomed in mainstream academia, I want to end with a recent example of a project on which I collaborated with the historian of science Michael Hunter. He was writing a book whose subject was a single well-known image—a single engraved print, used as the frontispiece in a number of copies of Thomas Sprat’s History of the Royal Society of 1667.

There are lots of instruments in the background of the picture and he needed help with identifying them. I found that I could identify most of them and that there was actually quite a lot to say about them. My part of the book just grew and grew and in the end became a whole chapter which occupied one third of the entire text. Michael was very generous and put me on the title-page. And that was just because the opportunity came, and I grabbed it.
This print has been very well known and a thoroughly worked-on topic but nobody had actually bothered to look at all these instruments and identify them. Doing that, asking questions about when they could have been available to Wenceslas Hollar the engraver and so on, told us a lot about the print and its manufacturer and its purpose, and the self-presentation of the Royal Society. So that was a lovely example of Michael and I getting together and sharing our skills and producing something which neither of us could have done on our own.

**Tim Boon** (Head of research and public history, The Science Museum, London):

I wanted to ask about your exhibition practice because first at the Whipple and at the Oxford Museum, temporary exhibitions were a notable aspect of your curatorial practice. Very often these exhibits departed markedly from both the museums’ and your own recognized areas of expertise. Could you tell us a little about what you see as the role of temporary shows in the cultural economies of science museums, and perhaps speculate on some that you’d like to see created?

**JB:** Thank you, I’m glad you noticed that. I did give prominence to temporary exhibitions. It wasn’t something the Whipple had done before, so there was no tradition there to build on and my experience at the National Maritime Museum wasn’t very relevant. As you know very well, a temporary or special exhibition in a national museum is an expensive and prolonged undertaking, involving layers of management and specialist teams that are just not available in a small museum. One initiating influence of the program at the Whipple, which probably isn’t known, was the coming of Olivia Brown to the staff. Unusually for my museum colleagues, Olivia actually had a good museum qualification. She came from a background in more general museums, hired to provide regular displays in the new Clinical School in Cambridge, but with time to spare for the Whipple. She showed me the kind of thing that would be possible in the Whipple’s physical and financial setting, and we were able to separate off a gallery for temporary exhibitions.

In the context of short planning times, no need to refer up to management, no parallel interests to square in other departments of a large museum (conservation, design, education, interpretation, press, fabrication services, and so on)—and given the setting of a university department, a special exhibition could be seen as the museum equivalent of a journal article, or sometimes even a small monograph. It could be that kind of creative product adapted to a gallery presentation. It could open up a topic in its material dimension, or could tackle a particular question across subjects.

At the Whipple, I’m thinking of exhibitions such as “Science at the Great Exhibition” in 1983, or “Science and Profit in 18th-Century London” in 1985. What was lacking in financial and material resources was more than compensated for, given the “cultural economy” you referred to, in intellectual resources that were generously shared. The publication for the 18th-century exhibition, for example, in spite of its modest production values, was partly written by Roy Porter and Simon Schaffer. The exhibition was about seeing the development of experimental philosophy in its commercial setting, particularly in London. A more focused exhibition in 1986, “Le Citoyen Lenoir,” presented the maker Etienne Lenoir, probably not very well known to historians of science outside France and a key player, with others, in the revival of French instrument production within the context of the Revolutionary reforms. As well as producing an exhibition catalogue, we were able to publish a monograph on Lenoir by Anthony Turner. Simon’s involvement—bringing with him a team of collaborators—was also central to two ambitious later exhibitions; both in two galleries, “Empires of Physics” in 1993 and “1900: The New Age” in 1994, and both with strong historiographical agendas. So, you get the general
idea of the nature of the Whipple exhibitions, which were probably only possible in the context of a university department.

In Oxford there wasn't a department. But the museum was larger and more public, and a redevelopment of the building included a dedicated special exhibition gallery, allowing two exhibitions per year. The setting was different, so the exhibition culture was different. We had more control over the space and over access to the building, so could be bolder and more ambitious in what we could put on—topics, mixing art and science, for example, with the Steampunk exhibition, and the Blackboards exhibition and one about micrographs, i.e. micrographic images rather than microbiological content. We could also have a much more ambitious program of associated events for the general public and for schools, and these were often shaped by the exhibitions.

Such exhibitions could be controversial in a way, because they weren't sufficiently science-based or were focused on aspects of science that some people thought were superficial. Perhaps the scientists who came didn't want to see this kind of aesthetic veneer of science that the steampunk enthusiasts were keen on. But of course we wanted to see what it was about that movement that created this sort of quasi-scientific enthusiasm. By the way, the steampunk exhibition turned out to be easily our most popular, by miles. We couldn't keep people out—it was extraordinary. They would come dressed up in their steampunk gear and many people came just as much to see them as the content!

But to return to your question about the role of temporary shows. Yes, there had to be variety, so a willingness to go beyond the obvious subjects for the collection or for me. I know I'm stating the obvious but we needed to give different people reasons to come, and then for them to come back. Also the program of events was to a fair extent driven by the exhibitions and that had to have variety and regular renewal.

One other benefit of temporary exhibitions to the cultural economy of the museum is to acquisitions. This mainly applies only where there is a decent acquisition budget, which there was at the Whipple, thanks to bequests from Robert Whipple. A succession of exhibitions, at the planning stages, was really valuable in shaping and informing acquisitions policy, and keeping it moving along, instead of getting trapped by the preferences and the developing connoisseurship of the curator. I think the Whipple's collection really did benefit from this driver.

Finally, you invited me to speculate on exhibitions I would like to see. Unfortunately, perhaps instructively, I’m going to duck that part of the question. I have tried to think about it, but I haven’t come up with any ideas that I am convinced by or excited by myself. I was worried about this and went to my CV and counted 35 exhibition titles there, where I played a leading role. I'm sure they weren't all brilliant but I wasn't short of ideas. So why can’t I come up with a couple more? Two explanations come to mind. One is that I’m declining into old age. Er, what’s the other explanation? I’ve been retired for 6 years or so. Decent ideas for exhibitions emerge by working in a museum, in discussions with your colleagues there, and in particular from working with collections. So, I like to think that’s...
the problem. On the one hand, experience makes you critical, teaches you what will work as an exhibition, but on the other, without the creative environment of a museum, you can’t think of any that satisfy that developed critical judgment—well at least, I can’t.

Jean-François Gauvin (Associate Professor, History of Science, Laval University, Quebec City):

My question has to do with some of my own struggles. What social, ethical, and cultural role do science museums have in today’s world? Should they limit themselves to providing a general scientific education or should they actively engage in current critical and controversial issues, such as diversity, race, and gender in the sciences? How can science museums embrace a broader—I would like to say a more generous—notion of what is science?

JB: That nexus of social, ethical and cultural that you have brought together in the question is a complex entity in any museum activity. The museum will have its own relevant ethic—commitments to truthfulness, openness, fairness, diversity and so on, but also its cultural mission—in the case of the exhibition work that we have just been considering, a commitment to give the visitor the best cultural and educational experience it can muster, from a professional dedication to creativity, as well as expertise. The material being exhibited and the stories it tells will entail different, perhaps alien, social, ethical and cultural issues, which need to be acknowledged and explained—in accordance with the museum’s ethic of truthfulness and openness. The visitors bring their own sets of expectations and values, which the museum’s ethic will expect the curator to respect. On top of all this, you may well be obliged to follow the policies of university vice-chancellors or pro-vice-chancellors, or ministers of culture, ministers of science, or whoever is ultimately in charge of policy-making for your institution. They may have no interest in whether you follow your instincts as a creative curator, so long as you present their current concerns. Don’t worry, in spite of all this, curators make great exhibitions and visitors enjoy them, but it is complicated from an ethical point of view.

I like your suggestion that we embrace a broader, more generous notion of what is science. When you suggest that museums should not be limited to providing a general scientific education, I’m inclined to go further and say that they should avoid providing that. That should be already provided in traditional and formal educational settings—schools and colleges. When you go to a museum, you should be offered a different appreciation of science, based on some encounter between science and the general culture.

It’s true that some understanding of technical aspects of the relevant science can be necessary for an appreciation of other cultural dimensions and so will probably be gained through the museum experience. But it still seems to me that having “general scientific education” as the primary aim is a waste of the potential for the, as you say, broader view of science that a museum can offer, while other institutions will make a better job of regular science education.

You suggest that, instead of providing a general scientific education, science museums might actively engage in current critical and controversial issues. I think that will work best if it is achieved through the broader cultural scope, which is the museum’s natural province.

If you adopt your more generous notion of what is science, forms of controversy will follow. For example, I’m thinking of the blackboards exhibition in Oxford, marking Einstein 1905 and referencing in particular the famous Einstein blackboard, there was political content from Tony Benn on challenging the powerful, Glenda Jackson on feminism and suffrage, and John Snow on climate change 15 years ago. These exhibits sat alongside science from Martin Rees and Bob May, radical experimental art from Cornelia Parker and Richard Wentworth, music from Brian Eno and Joanna MacGregor. And how could England’s corner kick strategy
in the 1990 World Cup, explained by their manager Bobbie Robson, be anything but deeply controversial?

So I think it is more effective when controversy arises from within a good exhibition, rather than molding the exhibition round a university or government policy. The public surely engage more warmly with discovering issues for themselves in an exhibition. “Science in American Life” in the Museum of American History was the classic example we always took as a case-study in the museum-based course in Oxford. Adopting your “more generous notion of science” will generate some, much less spectacular, controversy, because visitors may want to have their expectations fulfilled: the Steampunk exhibition was not “real science,” micrographs should not be presented merely as images and transferred to wallpaper and curtains, and so on.

I can’t claim to have engaged very directly with the issues you mention in my exhibitions, though some of them have been treated in the accompanying programs. One relatively small instance was “Astrolabes of Africa” in 2005, built around ten astrolabes—which is quite a strong showing for these very special objects—from Egypt and the Maghreb, dating from the 13th to the 19th century. These would normally be referred to as “Islamic.” It was an easy but somehow telling shift for once, not to classify them by religion but by geography and ethnicity and people were struck by that.

Thinking back to the Whipple, one gallery in “The New Age” exhibition was an active anthropometrical laboratory, an imaginative recreation of the “Salle Bertillon” contained within the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900. I should mention the great team we had of Bob Brain, Richard Staley, Otto Sibum and Simon Schaffer. Visitors participated by taking a personal record card to different stations where records were added of the results of a range of tests and measurements—height, weight, strength, head shape and measurements, photograph, eye color, reaction times, and so on. Their record was added to a census and posted on to them with an overall report. This activity was meant to be experienced as a sinister exercise in classifying people. In practice visitors seemed to be enjoying themselves far too much doing all the tests. One rather chilling revelation to the in-character attendants, in their white coats, was how compliant visitors could be. There was an X-ray booth, which of course was always out of order on the day and record cards were stamped accordingly. Some visitors asked whether it might be working if they called in tomorrow!

The most profound and moving occasions in the museum life, for visitors and staff, are surely moments of personal engagement, nothing to do with policy. I want to end with two of mine, one where I think the exhibition gave something special to a visitor, the other where a visitor’s reaction was powerful for me. In Oxford we had special themed Saturdays of events—10/10 days they were called from their 12-hour duration—often programmed around special exhibitions, with talks, music, activities, films, theatre, and so on. The theme on this occasion was “work” and one feature was a digital jukebox, in the entrance gallery, where visitors could select from a list of tunes that were all about work. I noticed a white male, late middle age, who turned out to be a visiting American. He had selected Paul Robeson singing “Joe Hill,” a song I don’t need to tell you about workers’ rights, brutality, and racism—at least it was about racism when Robeson sang it. The visitor had moved a bit away from the jukebox and was looking into a showcase, but I could see that he was only pretending to look—he was really listening intently to the song. He listened to the end and I said something like, “Wasn’t that terrific?” And he was obviously moved and he said “Yes, you know, I’ve never heard that before.” I thought that was a simple but special thing, that he had come to the museum and found this moving experience from his own world at home.

And finally, I offer one other example from the Whipple in Cambridge, in the “New Age”
exhibition. We took the print of each visitor's thumb and index finger. The Cambridge police had kindly trained the attendants and lent us the kit—copper plate, ink roller, and so on. I was helping an elderly Dutch man, showing him how to roll his finger over the card. As he did so, he said, “You know the last time I had to do this was during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.” My turn to be affected by a personal encounter in the museum.

Jim and I have been colleagues for more decades than either of us wants to remember, and I wanted to use the short time I have to put his career in context. We have structured this conversation in terms of objects, profession and exhibits. To make sense of what he has been talking about and to highlight his achievement in integrating these themes, I want to refer to what he called an “old battle.”

In an article written a quarter of a century ago published in 1995 while still at Cambridge, Jim posed the question: “Can science museums take history seriously?” There he reflected not only on the hugely widening scope of the historiography of science, but also on the contemporary reduction at that time, by museums in their displays of instruments. The article was written at a time when there was on one hand the new museology and on the other, the great attack and challenge to the role of objects in museums entirely. In Britain in 1990 a major conference at the Royal Society of Arts was described by the Science Museum director Neil Cossons as a “show-trial.” The leading museology professor in Britain, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill argued that museums were being transformed from static storehouses to learning environments. And the case had to be made that historical object-based museums could do that.

Well, at Oxford Jim demonstrated success. He urged us to be creative in the stories we tell about instruments as they applied to those attacks. In his article he referred to two of his exhibits at Cambridge's Whipple Museum, which he also mentioned today. The first was “Empires of Physics,” where he dealt with science as it was practiced in private and as it was presented in public during the late nineteenth century. This Rashomon-like approach—two very different views on the same era—was both intriguing and radical, and showed the power of narrative combined with objects. It was a demonstration of artistry, where the curator was in a proper sense an artist.

The other great exhibit was “1900: The New Age,” which dealt with scientism in the 1900s, exemplified in the Great Exhibition in Paris, and the “Salle Bertillon” with the visitors themselves being measured.

Many of Jim’s articles reflected the challenge of the time in the world to present objects as educational. And this Sarton Award seems to me to celebrate the success of his response to the debates of the 1990s. In sum, through his career Jim has shown how we can transcend the dichotomies that once seemed so daunting. And we have to thank him for that.
Editor’s note: The 2020 Derek Price/Rod Webster Prize recognizing excellence in the scholarship published in Isis was awarded to Michael Gordin, Rosengarten Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Princeton University, for his article “Lysenko Unemployed: Soviet Genetics After the Aftermath,” v. 109, no. 1 (2018). Here, Michael shares some of the backstory of how he came to writing about this topic, as well as the implications of his findings for future scholarship.

I first heard about Trofim Lysenko in my second semester of college, and it has proven very hard to get him out of my head. A good many historians of science, not just Soviet specialists, can rattle off his story pretty easily: after years of wrangling between classical geneticists and those who supported Lysenko’s theory of heredity that adapted notions of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, in 1948 Joseph Stalin backed Lysenko and genetics was forced underground in the USSR until 1965, when Lysenko fell from grace. I was gripped, especially by 1948: Why would a state almost annihilate a science? My fixation with 1948 was broadly shared, not least by pundits who cry “Lysenkoism” anytime a government tries to act on a scientific finding they do not especially care for (e.g., imposing a carbon tax to counteract anthropogenic climate change). Interest in Stalin’s intervention in 1948 has shaped most of the rich literature—surely the best studied episode in the history of Russian science—which has filled in the complex history that led to Stalin’s fateful decision. A much smaller body of work explores 1965, although that question is equally fascinating: once a state has made the catastrophic decision of backing a fraudulent/incorrect/incoherent (pick your adjective) doctrine, why does it reverse course? That decision marked an important step on physicist Andrei Sakharov’s path to becoming one of the most powerful voices for human rights within the USSR.

About eight years ago—Lysenko still rattling around my brain pan—I began to wonder about that periodization of 1948–1965. Historians regarded the narrative as over when Lysenko lost the directorship of the Institute of Genetics of the Academy of Sciences, freeing Mendelian genetics from its last remaining fetters. That was the end of the story if you are a Western geneticist, decrying the Soviet travesty from across an ocean, and perhaps even if you were a Soviet geneticist, coming in from the cold and working to rebuild your science after it has lost several generations of young acolytes. But it wasn’t the end for Lysenko, and that’s the story of my article.

Lysenko died in 1976, eleven years after his story was supposedly “ended” by the dethroning of his doctrines as Soviet orthodoxy. What happened next? I knew a few things already. I knew he was never kicked out of the Academy of Sciences—that was important for Sakharov, since the precedent of never defrocking an academician despite political disapproval held for him too. I knew that one of my advisors, Loren Graham, had once lunched with Lysenko in the early 1970s. (It’s a terrific anecdote: you can read about it in his Moscow Stories.) And I knew that Lysenko had a personnel file in the Archives of the Academy of Sciences, but that nobody (including myself) had really bothered with the final years of it. So I bothered.

The details are in the article, but there are two points that speak to our present moment (and not just 1948 or 1965). The first seems really obvious in retrospect: it takes time for things to end. Lysenko lost the positions that effectively made him the despot of Soviet biology, but—despite Western caricatures of the Soviet Union—this wasn’t about just one person. Dozens of Lysenko’s backers continued to occupy very powerful posts, and thousands of trained agronomists had been raised on his doctrines. A few (quite old) geneticists were brought out of retirement or the physics...
institutes where they had been laying low, but the material (human, laboratory, pedagogical) they had to work with were necessarily products of the Lysenko era. It took time to retrain and reorient biology, just as it always takes time to rebuild after a catastrophe. Aspects of Lysenko’s doctrines persisted, and it still has advocates in today’s Russia, fifty-five years after the “Lysenko Affair” ostensibly ended. Their survival surprised historians of Russian science, but they shouldn’t have. The Lysenko crowd never left; they were just hard to see.

Why they were hard to see is the second point, about writing the history of the contemporary. Historians of science often like to ply their trade when the events being chronicled are safely distant, when it seems easy to determine the “end” of the story. But we do not get to enjoy that illusion (the clarity of an ending is often illusory) when compelled to write the history of something contemporary. Many events fall in this category: the atomic bomb, quantum theory, recombinant DNA... their historiographies began immediately.

The same was true for Lysenko. The cornerstones of the historiography of Soviet genetics were created in that interim period between Lysenko’s fall in 1965 and his death in 1976. (One of them, David Joravsky’s *The Lysenko Affair*, won the Society’s Pfizer Prize in 1971.) Those of us working within this scholarly tradition inadvertently inherited the mistaken assumption that nothing essential to understanding the Lysenko story was underway in the 1970s. There is a caution there for the many of us who increasingly turn our attention to historicizing the present and recent past: of necessity you must select a concluding moment for your narrative, and the next generation of scholars is bound to think you picked wrong. They’ll be right.
Editor’s note: Next to writing and defending one’s dissertation, writing and publishing books is likely one of the most intense intellectual activities in the career of many historians of science, regardless of whether one is in academia or outside of it. The HSS Newsletter is therefore excited to present this interview with an editor from one of the academic presses specializing in publishing books in our discipline. Abby Collier, Senior Acquisitions Editor at the University of Pittsburgh Press, demystifies the publishing process and offers tips on how to get a book published.

What was your personal pathway to becoming an acquisitions editor at an academic publishing house? How did you come to specialize or focus on the history & philosophy of science?

It definitely wasn’t a linear path for me. As a student I focused on African American literature from the Harlem Renaissance, like The Living Is Easy by Dorothy West, which was reprinted by The Feminist Press in the 1980s. I loved that the press was amplifying the work of Black women writers by reissuing out-of-print fiction for course use. I ended up interning for a summer in New York City with the editors at The Feminist Press, which was an incredible experience. Then I moved to Boston, where I earned an MA in Editorial Studies and interned at Beacon Press.

From then on I was determined to work full time for a mission-driven press.

Eventually I interviewed with Susan Bielstein, executive editor for art, design, and ancient studies at the University of Chicago Press, and she introduced me to Christie Henry, executive editor for sciences and social sciences at the time, who was also looking for an editorial assistant. Christie hired me, and the rest is history. I just wanted to work in the company of talented people who were advancing good scholarship. I won the lottery with a mentor like Christie and colleagues like Karen Darling, their acquisitions editor for science studies. I went to academic conferences every year, including HSS, and was eventually promoted to assistant editor, acquiring books in geography and cartography. The connections I made during those five years played a key role in my move to Pittsburgh, where I’ve been building a list in the history and philosophy of science, technology, and medicine since 2013.
Take us through the process of “making a book” from inception to the book exhibit table at an HSS annual meeting.

This is a great question, because acquisitions editors should help to demystify the whole publishing process. A new book project might land on my desk for any number of reasons: networking or word-of-mouth, a conversation at a conference, a recommendation by another scholar or editor—we might compete for projects, but editors do talk and are friendly with each other—or my own list-building efforts. Whether it’s a proposal or a complete manuscript, I have a hand in its development before and after peer review, which hopefully leads to a contract. We have an internal editorial committee that evaluates the merit of a project and its fit for the press before we offer a contract, as well as a faculty board that eventually endorses the work. After vetting, revisions, and acceptance, which can take months or years, depending on the readiness of a manuscript and the time an author can devote to it, a manuscript enters production, a process that usually takes 10–12 months.

After “transmittal,” when a final manuscript makes its way to other departments, we copyedit it—today, proofreading and indexing are the author’s responsibility, but you can hire freelancers to help with this—and the author reviews those edits before the text is cleaned up, designed, and typeset, and then we send page proofs to the author for review. In the meantime, the Press is hard at work creating a marketing campaign, writing descriptive copy, securing endorsements, and developing a cover design for the seasonal catalog. The printer sends us blueline proofs and cover/jacket mechanicals, and once those are approved internally, final files go to press and books are shipped to the distributor. But the work doesn’t end there: We send out review copies and award submissions; manage author events, advertising, and publicity; make sales calls; and attend conferences and related events throughout the year, when we finally get a chance to celebrate with an author in person and promote their book among their peers.

What particular advice do you have for someone trying to write their first academic book in the field?

First, books often develop out of dissertations, but the dissertation and the book have different audiences and expectations. Dissertations are often heavily edited, revised, and expanded before they can succeed as traditional monographs. There are a lot of good resources out there for first-time authors, and I always recommend William Germano’s *From Dissertation to Book*, now in its second edition, a quick read full of helpful anecdotes. If you’ve set your dissertation aside and want to start from scratch, Germano’s advice still applies: know your audience, write

(intending to pull it off can be challenging. I’ve focused a lot of my efforts on recruiting and shaping new book series for the Press. This requires a long-term commitment from a series editor—a specialist in the field—but it involves editorial work rather than research and writing, unless that editor also publishes a book in the series, which sets the tone for the kind of work we hope to publish in it. A press might publish a notable book that eventually leads to a new series, such as *New Natures*, which inspired our Intersections series, or *Science, Policy, and the Value-Free Ideal*, which led to *Science, Values, and the Public*, our newest series edited by Heather Douglas.

While most academic books begin from the authors’ end—that is, with them writing to propose or inquire about the viability of an idea—I was wondering if things ever worked in the reverse direction, with you seeking authors for a particular project? If yes, can you tell us about a recent example?

Editors can definitely pitch book ideas to potential authors when they see a need, especially for regional trade, but finding a writer not only with the right background but with the resources

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accessibly, skip that literature review, avoid discursive notes and quotations, be mindful of the length, and most importantly, trust yourself and your argument.

And if a historian of science wants to explore a career in publishing, what tips do you have?

These are tips I would offer to anyone looking to work in publishing: take an editing class, study the Chicago Manual of Style, do freelance editing and writing, enroll in a publishing certificate program or work toward an advanced degree in the field—Emerson, NYU, and others offer master degree programs in publishing—read books about publishing culture (I can’t list them all here, but What Editors Do, The Subversive Copyeditor, and Permissions, a Survival Guide are great places to start), intern at presses you admire, if you can, and look for job openings that complement your expertise. As an acquiring editor, it’s certainly an advantage to have formal training in a particular discipline, but it’s not required. At the same time, I know presses might invest in training the right candidate with an academic background who doesn’t bring years of book publishing experience to the table.

If you had to warn a prospective author against a cardinal sin in the process of writing and publishing a book, what would it be?

Every press has detailed guidelines that outline how to prepare all your files and ensure a smooth hand-off to editorial and production. Not following these before submitting a final manuscript to your editor can delay a project considerably and lead to headaches down the road. Your publisher may also have forms for you to fill out about marketing needs and your cover design. An author’s input at this early stage is essential; we value it, and the time you spend putting your ideas and preferences to paper will only benefit the book. Prioritize these questionnaires and be as thorough as possible so we can manage your expectations at the outset. And don’t forget about your illustrations—the earlier you can secure hi-res images and permissions, the better.

How has the pandemic crisis affected the University of Pittsburgh Press and indeed, the publishing industry more broadly, and what impact, in turn, will that have on academic authors?

I can only speak for the Press, since this is uncharted territory, but even then, we have yet to see how the pandemic will affect our business long-term. We lost revenue with the cancellation of major book events and conferences this past spring, especially this year’s Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) meeting, where our poetry books are front and center. Despite setbacks like these, I’m confident we can weather the storm. Everyone will need to make changes going forward to accommodate budget shortfalls and new ways of being, but we’re a nonprofit university press that has stood the test of time. We’re still operating without major delays and releasing books on schedule, although working remotely, and still actively considering new work. I have a wonderful group of coworkers at Pittsburgh to thank for that. It’s not business as usual, because so much about the life we knew before may never be the same, but our purpose is constant. Now more than ever, it’s apparent how much the world needs books that educate, enlighten, and inspire positive change. We’re fortunate to have the support of the university as we navigate these new waters, and we’ll adapt to a new normal as it comes.
Digital Projects in History
by Jim Fleming & Ben Steib

Editor’s note: While the current pandemic crisis has really driven home the importance of digital scholarship and pedagogy, the digital humanities have a much longer history in the academy, and conscientious teachers have been integrating them into courses for some time now. One such case in point is the innovative “Digital Projects in History” seminar that Jim Fleming designed and taught to undergraduate history and STS students of Colby College in 2019, which he remembers as “the halcyon days when in-person meetings were still possible.” This article is adapted from Jim’s presentation at the HSS/SHOT joint roundtable in the future of digital humanities at the 2020 Virtual Forum, for which he also invited Ben Steib (class of 2021), a former student from his class and his current research assistant, to share his insights and final project.

Jim Fleming, Charles A. Dana Professor of Science, Technology, and Society, Colby College:

I first became involved in digital humanities in 1982 as a graduate student at Princeton University. One day in Gerry Geison’s Darwin seminar, we passed around a copy of A Concordance to Darwin’s Origin of Species: First Edition, by Barrett, Weinshank, and Gottleber (1981) and, as Michael Ruse predicted in his review, we had “a few minutes of fun” with it. It was then that I realized I could create, on the university’s IBM 3081 mainframe computer, concordances to Darwin’s Sketch of 1842 and Essay of 1844 and use them to reveal changes in his understanding of evolution and his writing strategies in the intervening years. Two questions motivated my research: First, how could one make quantitative and meaningful comparisons between Darwin’s earlier works on evolution and the Origin of Species? and second, were the intervening years a period of delay or development for Darwin? Sparing further technical details, the effort was a notable success, and I was fêted, ever so briefly, as an up-and-coming scholar in the early years of the digital humanities. I have remained somewhat involved ever since, attending productive seminars and symposia, publishing a digital archive of the Papers of Guy Stewart Callendar, the scientist who established the carbon dioxide theory of climate change, and actively participating in the HSS’s THATCamp efforts to promote digital history.

The 2019 course was a project-based seminar that introduced best digital practices in historical research. Students learned how to evaluate digital projects and approaches and were encouraged to follow their passions to design their own final projects. The goal was to empower them in a humanities “laboratory” setting in which they could:

- practice historical research through engagement with digital resources,
- learn from scholars at other institutions working at the cutting edge of their fields,
- explore digital tools to create and share their own work online,
- think critically about the power and the potential limitations of the available techniques,
- and look to the future of digital history and its “e-carnations.”

The seminar benefitted from the expertise of the academic information technology team at Colby: Jason Parkhill, Mark Wardecker, and Tim Stonesifer. Librarian Erin Rhodes in our Special Collections and Archives department facilitated connections among paper, photographic, and digital materials.

In addition to in-class deliberations, we profited from virtual visits to various digital projects such as Darwin Online, Nuclear Secrecy, and the Navigli Project on Milan’s Waterways. A highlight for many students was an outing to view “They Shall Not Grow Old,” the Peter Jackson film about restoring original World War I footage, including Jackson’s epilogue about his suite of techniques and his passion for the project.

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One problem that this project aimed to solve was how students might identify and live their passion—creating both author and audience engagement for digital delivery. The final projects were built around topics as diverse as family members, the college experience, and personal interests. Detailed information about the may be found via this link: http://web.colby.edu/st235a/.

“Digital Projects in History” provided students with the chance to choose a topic and design a project that really interested them. It was driven and fueled by their passions. Students were encouraged and empowered to take deeper dives into their topics than they might have done otherwise. History matters. Increasingly, digital media have become its vehicle.

Ben Steib, former student in the course and author of the History of Colby’s Buildings:

“Digital Projects in History” was a very open, project-based course that allowed us to come up with our own idea and decide how to add a digital element to the history that we were trying to tell. I thought about the history of Colby and how all the buildings that we live in and take classes in got to be there, and how they’ve changed and adapted to meet the needs of the college over the decades. After doing some searching online, I found that there was very little material about the history of the buildings on Colby’s campus. As I dug deeper, I found the resources were there, but were not compiled in one place where it would be convenient for members of the community to find.

I began by building a simple WordPress website with pages for each of the buildings I intended to study. I also worked on more visual aspects of the website such as a campus map where visitors could just click on the building they wanted to learn more about and then retrieve all the information on one page. I worked with Colby’s Special Collections and Archives department seeking articles, images, video and other media. I then summarized this information on each page to make it easy to find and understand. I managed to include most of the academic and residential buildings on campus, but I was unable to finish to the extent that I would have liked.

Thankfully, I was able to continue my research and develop the website during an independent study in the spring of 2020. The project is still evolving with the opening of the new athletic center this year and new construction on a performing arts center. It has received over 1,000 views to date, and I hope others may be inspired by my initial efforts to maintain the project and update it as the campus evolves.

I learned so much about Colby by doing this project. By seeing photos, drawings, and notes from the people who built these buildings you can accurately get a sense of what the priorities were at the time. Colby has come a long way, and I think its history is well represented in its buildings and in the priorities for each one. This course combined my interest in learning how to build a website and represent a story visually with an added benefit to the community: providing the history of our campus in a medium that works for the twenty-first century.
Member News

Pnina G. Abir-Am (Brandeis University) published “The Women Who Discovered RNA Splicing,” in the September-October 2020 issue of American Scientist (Vol. 108, no. 6), which was identified by the editor-in-chief of the journal as the issue’s top article. The next issue of the HSS Newsletter will feature a piece by the author on the ramifications of the magazine’s decision not to feature a collective portrait of these women scientists on the cover of the issue.

Warwick Anderson (University of Sydney) and M. Susan Lindee (University of Pennsylvania) co-edited “Pacific Biologies: How Humans Become Genetic,” a special issue of Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences (Vol. 50, issue 5) with the following contributions:

- “From Racial Types to Aboriginal Clines: The Illustrative Career of Joseph B. Birdsell,” by Warwick Anderson
- “Normalization and the Search for Variation in the Human Genome,” by Soraya de Chaderavian

A video introducing the topic is available via Twitter.

Peter Anker (New York University) published The Power of the Periphery: How Norway Became an Environmental Pioneer for the World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), which is an Open Access Book.

Peder Bowler’s (Queen’s University, Belfast) book Progress Unchained: Ideas on Evolution, Human History and the Future is currently in press with Cambridge University Press. It uses developments in evolution theory as a model for understanding changes in the wider ideas of progress, charting the transition from a linear “chain of being” model to a more open-ended “Darwinian” view in which the future is unpredictable.

History of Science Society Newsletter

Member News, cont.

Anne Fausto-Sterling (Brown University) was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Bern, at a virtual ceremony on December 5th, 2020.


After several years of health problems and then reaching the 70-year age limit, Robert Marc Friedman retired from his professorship at University of Oslo. He continues to work full-time on a number of projects combining new research with public outreach. These include a screenplay for a full-length animation film about Lise Meitner (initial funding from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation) and a play about Victor Moritz Goldschmidt (initial funding Norwegian Research Council). His 2002 play “Remembering Miss Meitner” has now been translated into Spanish and will be staged at the Rialto Theatre in Valencia in March, preceded by a workshop on physics and gender. The play will be published with historical background in the Johns Hopkins University Press Introduction to History of Science series. His play about Einstein, Planck and the politics of science, “Banned in Berlin” is getting readied for development towards a production in London.

Steven Gullberg (University of Oklahoma) published Astronomy of the Inca Empire: Use and Significance of the Sun and the Night Sky (Springer Nature, August 2020). It is the first major book on Incan astronomy in over 20 years.

Hans Haubold (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs), Arak Mathai (McGill University), and Lewis Pyenson (Western Michigan University) published an article “Space Science and Technology Education, Teaching, Research” in Space Policy 53 (Aug.2020):101384.

Roberto Lalli (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science) contributed toward two chapters in the recently published The Renaissance of General Relativity in Context (Birkhäuser Basel, 2020) of which he was also an editor: “The Renaissance of General Relativity in Context: A Historiographical Review” (pp. 1-14) and “The Socio-Epistemic Networks of General Relativity, 1925-1970” (pp. 15-84).

Steven J. Livesey (University of Oklahoma) published Science in the Monastery: Texts, Manuscripts and Learning at Saint-Bertin (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020) this past summer.

Adrienne Mayor (Stanford University) published the following articles:

- “The Real Amazons,” *National Geographic Magazine* (May-June 2020), and translations of the same in *National Geographic* France, Spain, and Italy.

She has also taught four online courses in “Myth and Science,” 92nd Street Y, New York, and led a workshop on “Ancient Science Fictions: Imagining and Building Automatons in Classical Antiquity” for AlphabetX (GoogleX) Moonshot Division, Everyday Robots Project.

Agustí Nieto-Galan (Institut d’Història de la Ciència (IHC), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) published Tòxicos Invisibles: La construcción de la ignorancia ambiental (Barcelona: Icaria 2020).

Naomi Oreskes’s (Harvard University) book *Science on a Mission: How Military Funding Shaped What We Do and Don’t Know about the Ocean* is forthcoming in March 2021 from the University of Chicago Press.


Neeraja Sankaran (Editor, HSS Newsletter) was the organizing editor of “Diversifying the historiography of bacteriophages,” a special issue of Notes and Records: the Royal Society Journal of the History of Science (Vol. 74, no. 4) containing the following original articles and commentary:

- “The forgotten typers: The rise and fall of Weimar bacteriophage-typing (1921–1935),” by Claas Kirchhelle
- “Vladimir Sertić: forgotten pioneer of virology and bacteriophage therapy,” by Zdravko Lacković and Karlo Toljan
- “Creature features: The lively narratives of bacteriophages in Soviet biology and medicine,” by Dmitriy Myelnikov
- “From obstacle to lynchpin: the evolution of the role of bacteriophage lysogeny in defining and understanding viruses,” by Gladys Kostyrka and Neeraja Sankaran
- “The virus in the rivers: histories and antibiotic afterlives of the bacteriophage at the sangam in Allahabad,” by Rijul Kochhar
- “Afterword: Phage, history and historiography,” by William C. Summers


Dominik Wujastyk (University of Alberta) was awarded a four-year Insight Grant by the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to investigate the history of medicine in early South Asia. The project revolves around the Compendium of Suśruta Samhita (सुश्रुतसंहिता), a foundational treatise on classical Indian medicine written in Sanskrit about two thousand years ago, comparable to the Hippocratic Corpus or the Huangdi Neijing. Full details of the project are available on the website http://sushrutaproject.org.

James Secord (University of Cambridge, Dept. of History and Philosophy of Science) has been elected as a Fellow of the British Academy.

Just earned your PhD in the history of science? Congratulations! Here’s a free e-membership to HSS.

Leaving the student world can present challenges.

The HSS would like to recognize your signal achievement by providing a free electronic membership (one year) to those who graduated in 2019 or in 2020.

Please go to https://subfill.uchicago.edu/JournalPUBS/HSSpromotion.aspx for details.
The Society Coordinator’s Greatest Hits

by Ryan Feigenbaum

Editor’s note: As readers know from our previous issue, we have had to bid farewell to Ryan, who ably filled the role of Society Coordinator for the past three years. We asked him to offer a round-up as a parting gift and here ’tis, in a list of what he called his greatest hits.

I was HSS Coordinator for just over three years, seeing the Society through three in-person meetings in three different countries (Toronto, Canada; Seattle, United States; Utrecht, The Netherlands) and one Virtual Forum. During my time, I was often behind the scenes, ensuring that the website didn’t succumb to hackers, that bills were paid, and that the printed program got to the publisher on time. In these endeavors, I improved and economized the day-to-day operations of HSS as much as possible by cutting costs, updating infrastructure, and ensuring the Society followed best practices in its administrative responsibilities.

These changes were essential to improving the health of the HSS (and will continue to contribute to it for the foreseeable future); however, as they were generally internal, they lacked the fanfare associated with more visible changes, made before the discerning eye of the history-of-science public. Here, too, however, I staked my claim, introducing innovations to improve the experience of HSS members. It is some of these innovations that I’d like to share now.

Isis Books Received List

Each quarter, the Isis Editorial Office provides a list of the books it has received for review. The HSS publishes this list to inform members about the latest titles in the history of science, technology, and medicine.

Initially, the list was published as just that: a list. Though it seems simple, its creation actually required a great deal of time and labor. In its stead, I developed a visual gallery of books, which allows visitors to browse titles by cover, as if they were in a bookstore or exhibit hall. I also created an app that automatically generated the gallery based on the data provided by the Editorial Office.

The tradeoff here is a loss of information (e.g., publication year), and some visitors may have
preferred access to this information over access to a visual gallery. The solution was to offer both views (gallery and list) as an option, which was on the development roadmap, along with the grander idea of creating a recommendation engine for resources in the history of science. This engine would provide visitors the ability to find books, podcasts, and other resources on various topics in the history of science, as well as submit their own. While development on these projects has now ceased with my departure, I hope someone will resume developing them in the future.

Twitterdex
The HSS Twitterdex, a portmanteau of “Twitter” and “index” (like “Rolodex”), is a crowd-sourced directory of historians of science active on Twitter. Each day, I generate a randomly ordered gallery of these Twitterstorians that contains their profile image, name, and Twitter handle. Clicking on any historian will show their affiliation, bio, and latest Tweet, and provide a link to follow them. All of this information is filterable via search. Querying “biology,” e.g., yields 24 results. This project is looking for a maintainer.

The source code for the Twitterdex is freely available on the HSS GitHub page, so, with some minor modifications, you could create your own!

HSS Prize Book Gallery
Each year, the HSS bestows prizes on the best books and articles in the history of science. While these works were all listed on the HSS website under their respective prize pages, no archive existed that listed these works together, in one place.

I designed the HSS Prize Book Gallery to showcase the prize books of the HSS. It presents a sortable, searchable gallery of all 127 prize books, dating back to 1958. The mobile friendly, simple page has become one of hssonline.org’s most frequently visited, earning praises from members who enjoy the opportunity to review these prize-winning books in such an engaging format.

The site uses data from surveys to represent highlights from the meeting as well as areas that need improvement. It also shares memories from main events, recognizes prize winners, and presents another opportunity for the HSS to recognize its supporters and sponsors.

State of the Meeting Report: A Data-Driven Record
The History of Science Society’s main event is its annual conference, which draws scholars and enthusiasts from around the world. Yet, the meeting’s once-a-year occurrence means that engagement sharply decreases once the event is over. This inspired me to create the State of the Meeting Report as a way for the HSS to continue its meeting engagement even after the conclusion of the event.
The State of the Meeting Report has fulfilled its goal of being a touchpoint for present and future attendees, as well as contributing to the Society’s mission of fostering interest in the history of science.

Since our virtual meeting software did not offer any solution to display authors’ pitches or publishers’ books, I needed to invent one. I created an app that would take data (like the publisher name, video URL, book title, etc.) and render a web page that could be easily incorporated into the meeting platform. The results are the Authors’ Pitch and Book Gallery pages. The source code is freely available for anyone looking to build their own.
The Future of HSS

The work I highlighted above is all digital. I did this in part because my expertise lies in web design and development (for non-HSS examples, see my digital exhibit, Poetic Botany, and title capitalization tool), but I also did it because I believe the future of HSS is digital. The HSS website will increasingly be the first introduction interested scholars have to the history of science and the Society. Treating the organization’s website(s) as its keystone will not only improve the experience of HSS members by expanding access to resources, but will also be essential for the continuation of the Society as such.

Find me on Twitter (@theroyalfig), GitHub, or via my website, https://ryanfeigenbaum.com.

Harold Burstyn: Nine Decades of Life, Scholarship, Law, and Woods Hole

An HSS@Work Career Profile
by Jamie Brannon

Harold Burstyn didn’t have to travel far from his 1930 Boston birthplace to find two locations that would play outsized influence on his career: Harvard and Woods Hole. He came to the former in 1947 expecting to “concentrate” (aka, major) in chemistry, yet the subject’s rigid focus left him wishing for a tutorial-based education—“the best feature of a Harvard education”—that he found in History and Science. The familiar History of Science department had yet to materialize in 1940s Cambridge. So taking classes from I. B. Cohen in a post-George Sarton era, Harold graduated A.B magna cum laude in 1951. Upon graduation he spent a year as a Fulbright Scholar at the Municipal University of Amsterdam. After fulfilling a three-year commitment to the Navy (his Harvard “patron”), Harold was in La Jolla, CA, for a two-year Master’s program in Oceanography at the Scripps Institution, where he can still remember “Friday afternoons drinking beer on the hill above the Scripps Pier while looking for the ‘green flash’ at sunset.”

Harold moved to England in 1957 intending to pursue a PhD at University College London, but a conflict between the Veterans Administration funding source and University requirements foiled that plan. But while in London, he met Joan Jacobs and they were married in 1958.

Harold then returned to Harvard for his PhD in the History of Science. He received his degree under I. B. Cohen and John Murdoch in 1964 with a dissertation on “the history of the earth’s rotation on meteorology and oceanography.” He thus became the first person with both undergraduate and PhD degrees from Harvard in the History of Science, and only the sixteenth PhD at Harvard in that subject area (Aydin Sayili was number one in 1941, I. B. Cohen was second in 1947; both under Sarton). In addition to receiving NSF money during his graduate years, Harold supported himself as an instructor in the History Department at the neighboring Brandeis University.

Yet the sea still beckoned, enticing him to travel south from Cambridge. In the summer of 1961 Harold arrived at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) in Woods Hole, MA, a beloved village where he and Joan would live every summer for the next fifty-eight years. At WHOI, with the assistance of Columbus Iselin, a past director, he set to work on the history of physical oceanography. During his second summer there, “fed up with talking to
myself… I put up a sign announcing a seminar in the history of science.” That informal event garnered attention, attracting speakers both local, such as James Franck, and visiting, such as Ed Manier and Silvan Schweber. That informal seminar lasted into the mid-1980s.

In 1965, after receiving his PhD, Harold returned to London for an NSF postdoc at Imperial College. The British historian of science A. R. Hall “was nominally my supervisor… I recall seeing almost nothing of him, spending most of my time at the British Museum, where the British Library was before it got its own quarters.”

The years 1966 to 1976 were Harold’s full-time professional academic years, with faculty positions first at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (later Carnegie-Mellon U.) in Pittsburgh. He then was professor and Dean of the Graduate School at William Paterson College (now University) in New Jersey. In 1976 as the United States Geological Survey was approaching its Centennial (1979), Harold was recruited as USGS Historian and served until that position was abolished in 1982. While there Burstyn wrote an influential report on Grove Karl Gilbert, the famed explorer and scientist who was the USGS’s first Chief Geologist in the late 1880s as well as confidant to the equally famous John Wesley Powell. Harold remained in the Place Names Group in the National Mapping Division at USGS until 1984.

At that point, finding that the historical databases of place names lacked dates, Harold saw no future for historical research. What to do? Attempt to return to academia, or pursue another field? He entered Rutgers Law School in Newark, and after obtaining his JD in 1987, and passing bar exams in New York and Florida, spent 30 years practicing, mostly patent and trademark law.

In the mid-1990s, living in Syracuse, NY, where his wife was Dean of the School of Education at Syracuse University, Harold became Adjunct Professor, teaching the history of science and technology briefly, and law to engineering students (1995-2017). In 1996 Harold took his last full-time job as Patent Attorney at the US Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome, NY, “the best job I ever had because of the people I worked with.”

Harold and Joan continued their annual summers in Woods Hole. With Harold’s retirement, they moved in 2018 to Madison, Wisconsin. Unfortunately, this year’s pandemic has kept them from traveling. Yet The Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in previous years had made Harold a Corporation (now Society) member, and issued an educational video in which Harold recounts his years at MBL and Woods Hole.

When I asked Harold what gave him the largest sense of accomplishment in his lifelong pursuit of the history of science, he named three publications that came to mind. The first was his HSS Schuman (now Reingold) Prize-winning paper as a graduate student: “Galileo’s Attempt to Prove That the Earth Moves,” which appeared in Isis in 1962. The second was his 1975 paper, “If Darwin wasn’t the Beagle's naturalist, why was he on board?” This paper provided an answer to the obvious question raised in an earlier paper “Who was the Beagle's Naturalist?”, in which the anthropologist Jacob Gruber had argued that Robert McCormick, not Darwin, was the appointed natural historian. Third, Harold mentioned his response to the “Two Cultures” controversy started by C. P. Snow, which was published as “Tradition and Understanding,” in School and Society in 1969. Snow cited Harold in an article titled “The Case of Leavis and the Serious Case,” which was Snow’s rebuttal to F. R. Leavis, with whom he was embroiled in a bitter fight over the “Two Cultures” in the 1960s.

One of my last questions to Harold is relevant for today: What advice can you provide to young scholars facing a challenging job market? He said for the academically inclined, “pick a mentor who has good contacts and knows how to leverage those contacts.” In the job-finding game, who you know is just as important as what you know. For others not pursuing the ivory tower, “find something to do that supports you adequately, if you can’t continue getting support for the history
HSS News, cont.

of science. It can always be an avocation if you can’t find support for it as a vocation.”

**Forum for the History of Health, Medicine, and the Life Sciences Awards 2020 Graduate Prize**

The Forum for the History of Health, Medicine, and the Life Sciences is pleased to announce Elizabeth Evens as the winner of their 2020 Graduate Prize for her essay, “Footprint all Babies, Fingerprint all Mothers. Policewoman Mary Hamilton’s Campaign for Universal Fingerprinting in the Maternity Suite in the Early-twentieth-century United States.”

Evens is a final year doctoral student at the Institute of the Americas at University College London. Her PhD thesis, “Regulating Women” investigates how women entered the professions of medicine and law enforcement in the United States. Central for the professional advancement of these women, her research shows, was their increased policing, surveillance and control of other women, in particular, their reproduction and sexuality.

This dynamic forms the basis of the essay submission, which analyses the career of Mary Hamilton, who introduced fingerprinting of mothers and newborn babies as an innovation in reproductive surveillance. The committee was impressed with the careful research, grounded argumentation, and communicative writing style. The author demonstrated excellent command of the historiographical literature and the originality of this contribution emerges clearly. We found this to be a fascinating exploration of forensic science and technology tied to medical innovation and viewed through the lens of gender. We heartily congratulate Lizzie Evens for the outstanding essay and what is certain to be an excellent dissertation.

The FHHMLS thanks all graduate students who submitted essays to the competition. We are delighted to have had such a strong pool of submissions and are impressed by the high quality of the work being done by graduate students in the histories of science, technology and medicine.

We also thank the Cambridge University Press for their continuing sponsorship of our award.

**Invitation from Committee on Education and Engagement**

The Committee on Education and Engagement (CoEE) invites HSS members to share information to be included in a proposed website intended to serve as a general guide and resource to help middle and high school students for their National History Day (NHD) projects. The theme for the 2020-2021 cycle is Communication in History—the Key to Understanding.

Our aim in creating this website is to encourage students to make the material culture of science an integral type of primary source in their projects. The history of science has changed tremendously over the past 20 years and we want to make sure our website illustrates this important transformation, going beyond the conventional Plato to NATO narrative to emphasize diversity and inclusivity.

The website would do two things:
1. gather and organize what is already easily available on the web, curated by scholars in the field (podcasts, open source documents; videos; films, exhibitions, etc.);
2. engage with new source materials by inviting individual scholars and institution to share documents and short videos about their material collections (books, objects, archives, etc.).

**Complete guidelines** on how and what to submit, including NHD recommendations and examples may be found online on the HSS website. Please e-mail your completed form, references and video projects to Jean-François Gauvin (jean-francois.gauvin@hst.ulaval.ca) and/or Marissa Petrou (marissa.petrou@louisiana.edu). While the plan is to maintain this website over the long term, we request that you submit materials pertaining to this cycle’s theme by March 10, 2021.
History of Science Society Newsletter

Notes from our Bibliographer

Editor’s note: The Isis Current Bibliography is a constant work-in-progress, and for this installment of the column, HSS Bibliographer Stephen Weldon invited two of his graduate assistants to explain the workings of a cool new feature of the online bibliography: the addition of maps for visualizing the geographical areas related to the subject matter of the citations in IsisCB Explore. This addition will expand the scholarly value of the Isis-CB, not only as a growing resource of secondary scholarship but also as a dynamic research tool.

Mapping Bibliographies

by Paul Vieth & Kraig Bartel

In this age of networked data, the biggest asset of the IsisCB is perhaps not the bibliographic records it contains, but the metadata relationships we have carefully constructed between those records. In order to make sense of those relationships, we maintain a parallel database of authorities: concepts, events, people, time periods, institutions, publications, and places. In order to make these authority relationships more accessible and actionable to researchers, we have now added a map on each authority page. This visualization will assist researchers to make sense of the geographic distribution of the history of science, technology and medicine.

This map serves two purposes. First, as the IsisCB is a paratextual companion to secondary literature in the history of science technology and medicine, the map allows users to interactively explore records organized geographically, “diving down” through the map to the citations it visualizes. Second, as the IsisCB also functions as a primary text, the map shows the geographic contours of the scholarly landscape of every authority contained in the database. In this way, the maps reveal for each topic both the well-trodden ground and the terra incognita, and generate questions about scholarly trends and lacuna in need of attention.

Designing and implementing this geographic data visualization involved theoretical, practical, methodological, and technological hurdles. Given the nature of cartographic demarcation and the fact that this is a database of historical information, we had to contend with the tensions and incommensurabilities between the ever-influx boundaries of political divisions and the rigid fixity of static two-dimensional representations of Earth. For example, how do we plot scholarship that takes place in the Roman Republic versus the Roman Empire of 40 AD versus the Roman Empire of the 4th century AD? What was Italy before 1861? By what boundary was the Korean peninsula circumscribed at the turn of the century? Under Japanese occupation? During the Cold War? In the end, we decided to elide these distinctions and present the map not as...
an ontologically authentic representation of the data in all its incommensurate messiness, but as a research heuristic meant to facilitate the playful interactions of researchers, texts, and metadata. Like those scholars who identify as historians of Warring States “China” or Medieval “Italy,” this map operates under the same presentist logics of significatory convenience.

For any given institution, publication, person, place, or concept we generate a map of related places connected to all of the citations connected to it. In creating the map, we have been constrained by the types of mapping software currently in use and by existing geotagging standards. The software we chose to use was a choropleth map, i.e., a map that colors areas based on the number of “hits”: the more hits, the greater the saturation of the color. Current open-source choropleth software requires the use of standard two-letter country codes (ISO 639-1), so all mappable geographic entities are linked to this code. In addition, we have associated all of our geographic entities—even those that cannot be given a country code—to a corresponding authority in the comprehensive GeoNames database. What this means in practice is that cities are placed in their current country, as well as geographic regions such as “South Asia,” associated with several countries, in this case: India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

We faced many accessibility and usability challenges in implementing this map, and discussed the theoretical and practical concerns involved for several months prior to production. These maps appear on the Authority pages and add to the wealth of other data about each authority and its relationships to other authorities. We designed the map, and redesigned the page structure, to accommodate space constraints. We also considered aspects of cartographic justice—and accessibility. We chose a Winkel tripel projection that minimized the relative spatial distortions across the globe but still provides a familiar equatorial orientation. We’ve also worked on the color scale and how to portray the discrete color quanta so as to optimize its legibility for the most users.

We hope that this map enriches the IsisCB as both a paratextual accompaniment to its bibliographic data and as a text itself. We also hope that this map helps users navigate our database more efficiently and creatively and enables users to find and to create meaning in the data.

Paul Vieth is a PhD student & Kraig Bartel is a PhD candidate in the Department of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of Oklahoma.
**WOMEN IN BOTANY**

WOMEN IN BOTANY is a new interactive database with bio- and bibliographical information on more than 10,000 women active in all fields of botany: [https://womeninbotany.ur.de/](https://womeninbotany.ur.de/). It was created by, and will be hosted at, the University of Regensburg, Germany. In addition to biographical data, educational profiles, professional careers and information on particular fields of activity, the entries refer to select publications and source references. The database is freely accessible and interactive: users are invited to correct entries or to suggest new ones. Input from researchers in the field will be greatly appreciated.

**Milestone in UNESCO’s Development of a Global Recommendation on Open Science**

On 30 September, 2020, following an extensive global consultation, UNESCO submitted a draft recommendation on Open Science to its 193 member states, a major step in facilitating international cooperation and universal access to scientific knowledge. A detailed overview of this recommendation may be found on the following online brochure. For more information, please email their media contact at c.o-hagan@unesco.org.

**JHB Topical Collections**

Marsha Richmond and Karen Rader, Co-editors in chief of the Journal of the History of Biology are pleased to announce a new initiative called “Topical Collections” in the hope of stimulating new scholarship in areas that deserve greater attention. We actively encourage submissions to these collections, each of which will be overseen by collection editors, specialists in the field, who have developed individual calls for papers laying out the intellectual terrain they envision for their collection. Please visit the JHB “Journal Updates” and “Instructions for Authors” website pages.

**Hagley History Hangout—New Episodes Available!**


Recorded on Zoom and available anywhere once they are released, History Hangouts include interviews with authors of books and other researchers who have used the Hagley collections, and members of Hagley staff with their special knowledge of what we have in our stacks. Please see the schedule for past and upcoming episodes.
**The Columbia History of Science Group meeting is now going virtual in 2021!**

CSHG has long been a welcoming venue for graduate students to present their work and we would like to continue that tradition. Since getting together in Friday Harbor is not possible for the time being, we are moving to the digital world. We are hosting our first online meeting on Friday, March 5, 2021. The proposal deadline is **Friday, January 15**. Find the [call for proposals](#) on the CSHG website. Graduate student papers will be given priority this year, nonetheless, proposals from all scholars presenting on relevant topics will be welcome. Only individuals who [register for the meeting](#) will be granted access. Please register by **February 12**. Connection information will be mailed to registered attendees.

**BiPOC/BAME HSTM Group**

A group of Black, Indigenous, People of Color/Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic scholars in the history of science/technology/medicine got together during the British Society for the History of Science 2020 digital festival to share and discuss topics both professional and scholarly. They welcome anyone who identifies in this way to join them. Please email Dr. Mirjam Brusius for details of the group and future Zoom meetings: mbrusius@cantab.net.

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**Announcing the TransAsiaSTS Network**

The TransAsiaSTS network seeks to promote scholarly exchanges and collaborations in the field of Science & Technology Studies (STS) across Asia. The network aspires to connect existing STS institutions, societies, and networks in South, East, and Southeast Asia, Australasia, and the Pacific, and draw in scholars and organizations working beyond already existing STS infrastructures.

The TransAsiaSTS working group hosts monthly virtual meetings to promote regional exchange and communication in the region. Information about TransAsiaSTS will be updated on an ongoing basis on the [STS Infrastructures platform](#). We welcome all interested to join! Questions? Contact transasiastsnetwork@gmail.com.

**Learning from Premodern Plagues: News and the Novel**

The Newberry Library’s Center for Renaissance Studies is pleased to announce the release of *News and the Novel: Daniel Defoe’s “Journal of the Plague Year,”* the latest episode of “Learning from Premodern Plagues,” a video series exploring peoples’ experiences of plagues from the sixth through the eighteenth century. Jill Gage, Custodian of the John M. Wing Foundation on the History of Printing and Bibliographer for British Literature and History at the Newberry Library, discusses how the 1665 London plague helped shape the emerging genres of newspapers and novels. If you have any questions about the videos or how to use them in classes, please send an email to renaissance@newberry.org.

**Teaching the COVID-19 Archive**

Educators from various backgrounds gathered this past November to discuss the advantages, challenges, and methods of using “Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive” (JOTPY) in the classroom. Historian of education, Victoria Cain and Boston Public School teacher Claire Tratnyek have developed instructional materials and tutorials for educators wishing to use JOTPY to enrich their students’ learning experiences, providing an opportunity for instructors, at both the University level and K-12, to learn how to incorporate community collecting into their syllabi and lesson plans.
Planned Sale of Books by the Royal College of Physicians

The Royal College of Physicians in London has announced that it plans to sell part of its historic rare book collection. The planned sale includes works that the Marquess of Dorchester bequeathed to the College in 1680, following the loss of its original library in the Great Fire of London. The collection includes one of a dozen first editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, the first English-language book printed on the Continent, as well as books that belonged to the magus John Dee.

Scholars from various quarters have written to express their distress over this news: Christina J. Faraday, a research fellow at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and an AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinker published a commentary on this proposed sale and its implications for scholarship in the art magazine *Apollo* on October 28, 2020 and the Historic Libraries Forum has issued an open letter to the Royal College of Physicians voicing its concerns.

ACLS Invites Proposals to Post 2021 Leading Edge Fellows

The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) has launched the third competition of the Leading Edge Fellowship program, which places talented, socially engaged humanities PhDs with a range of national and community-based nonprofit organizations to advance projects promoting justice and equity in society. The competition is made possible by the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

ACLS is now accepting applications from prospective host organizations for the next cycle of the program, with proposals due by January 18, 2021. Successful proposals will center anti-racist approaches to prototyping a more just, equitable, and sustainable future.

The roster of current Leading Edge partnering organizations and projects, which support communities hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, is available.

For more information about the program, contact leadingedge@acls.org.

2021 Neu-Whitrow Prize Announced

The Commission on Bibliography and Documentation (CBD) of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology/Division of History of Science and Technology (IUHPST/DHST) invites submissions for its third Neu-Whitrow Prize, awarded every four years to an individual or team for creating the most innovative research tool for managing, documenting and analyzing sources within the history of science and technology. The prize includes a cash award of $500, a certificate, and an invitation to be a member of the Advisory Board of the CBD.

The award will be announced at a ceremony to be held at the 26th International Congress of History of Science and Technology to be held, virtually, in July 2021.

The deadline for submissions is April 15, 2021. Contact the president of the Commission on Bibliography and Documentation via email at cbd.dhst@gmail.com if you have questions.