

CALL FOR PAPERS

# JOURNAL OF EARLY MODERN STUDIES

N.14 | 2025



# Journal

**Journal of Early Modern Studies (JEMS)** is an open access peer-reviewed international journal that promotes interdisciplinary research and discussion on issues concerning all aspects of early modern European culture.

It provides a platform for international scholarly debate through the publication of outstanding work over a wide disciplinary spectrum: literature, language, art, history, politics, sociology, religion and cultural studies.

JEMS is open to a range of research perspectives and methodological orientations and encourages studies that develop understanding of the major problematic areas relating to the European Renaissance.

**Editors: Donatella Pallotti**, University of Florence

**Paola Pugliatti**, University of Florence

# The Politics of Book History: Then and Now

*edited by Zachary Lesser and Georgina Wilson*

Volume 14 of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* intervenes at a crucial moment when book historians are increasingly alert to the political structures which have shaped the emergence of our field. As with any field of study, the initial focuses of book history reflected the priorities of scholars at a given moment, and generated intellectual models with specific assumptions and hierarchies built into their scope. Recent work from feminist, critical race, postcolonial, and queer perspectives has critiqued the history of the discipline for its emphasis on canonical authors, its Anglo- or Euro-centric geography, and its implied beliefs about the book trade, readership, and literacy, among other things. This recent work has created a sense of our responsibility to interrogate the history of book history and has made clear the generative possibilities of doing so.

Like modern scholars, early modern writers, book collectors, librarians and stationers had their own political agendas, either as contributors to the making of editions, or as they sought to curate their own book histories. Debates over the invention of printing, or the superiority of various national literatures; the practice and rhetoric surrounding imported paper, texts, and book workers; assessments of literacy and of the reading habits of different groups; models for gathering and reusing textual matter; ideas about how to build the ideal library; manuals describing the ideal printer – all of these were early modern book histories, imagined in the period itself and shaped by its politics. The social, cultural, religious and institutional politics of the early modern world shape the materiality of its texts, even as those texts articulate or resist these power structures, hierarchies, and communities.

Contributions to this issue of JEMS will fuse these two approaches – the politics of book history then and now – to consider ways in which those politics collide, converse, and clash. We particularly seek essays which, rather than juxtaposing two distinct approaches, are alert to the ways in which the generative and restrictive structures of book history have their roots in the very subjects of its enquiry. How has the archive we use to construct our book histories already been shaped by the politics of early modern (and later) collecting, bookselling, and librarianship? Thus while the focus of this issue remains the global early modern, the conversations that emerge will be inherently cross-period in nature. By foregrounding the politics of book history through time, this issue also hopes to invite reflection on the broader affordances of the discipline, and on the always-political choices we have to make about the directions in which book history goes next.

Topics may include, but are certainly not limited to:

- The place of books in early modern religious, political, and national conflict
- Literary hierarchies and canons
- The shifting geographical centres of book production in the early modern world and as reflected in the scholarly imagination
- The role of material texts in colonial encounters
- The role of material texts, book history, and bibliography in the construction of race
- Queer or feminist book histories of and in the early modern period
- The place of the codex in relation to other forms of material texts, including scrolls, monuments, broadsides, and non-European writing surfaces
- The role of the library or the collection as a site of power
- The intersection of scientific or knowledge-making texts with political structures
- The ecological entanglements of books
- The politics of writing and publication for early moderns and/or current scholars

As this non-exhaustive list makes clear, we welcome articles which engage with ‘politics’ broadly conceived. We invite contributors to engage with the ‘then and now’ by reflecting on the connections between their own mode of book history and that of their early modern subjects.

## **Main deadlines**

### **16 January 2023**

Please send proposals (ca 300 words) and working title to [zlessner@english.upenn.edu](mailto:zlessner@english.upenn.edu) and [gemw2@cam.ac.uk](mailto:gemw2@cam.ac.uk)

### **6 February 2023**

Notification of proposal acceptance.

### **25 September 2023**

Submission of articles to the guest editors.

Please note that articles must comply with the editorial norms and must not exceed 12,000 words, including footnotes and bibliography. Articles may include up to 10 images (for publication they need to be submitted in 600 dpi resolution and with publication permit). All articles are published in English.