



Interview on my intellectual trajectory

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Author's final manuscript for the interview on my intellectual trajectory in *Thinking in the Past Tense: Eight Conversations*, ed. Alexander Bevilacqua and Frederic Clark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 15-39.

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What were your early intellectual interests?

In retrospect, a life might seem to follow a pattern, but at each moment along the way, you just go forward with what seems like the best decision. In other words, I never had a grand plan. I arrived at Harvard as a freshman in 1980, with two suitcases, from Switzerland. Within the first week, I decided I should take sophomore standing, based on my thirteenth year of school typical of the Swiss system, and in order to do that, I had to choose a concentration. I chose History and Science, partly because it was a hedge against having to make a decision. The concentration called for courses in history, the science of one's choice, and history of science. My science was math, and I thought of my history as medieval. My goal as an undergraduate was to read about all the schools of thought that I didn't know much about. I perceived, rightly or wrongly, that the History Department at that time wasn't very oriented toward the study of ideas. Therefore, history of science appealed to me as a way of approaching intellectual history. So, I had an orientation toward intellectual history from early on.

One factor that influenced my interest in an earlier period of history was surely that I grew up in Geneva, where the Reformation was always perceived as an especially exciting period. During a number of summers, I worked as an official tour guide of the city of Geneva—my languages were French, German, and English. I would climb on a bus of people taking an organized tour that included Geneva, and we'd drive around the city for a couple of hours while I'd rattle off the sights, and then I'd get off that tour bus and onto another one [*laughs*]. I think growing up in Geneva pulled me naturally toward the sixteenth century.

What was it about intellectual history? Were there particular questions or themes that interested you?

Because I was studying the history of science, science became a theme. I've never been particularly keen on political thought, which has dominated intellectual history. Other than that, as an undergraduate I didn't think of myself as focused on particular themes but rather on an encyclopedic desire to understand the sweep of intellectual history. Naturally I had in mind the European tradition, though I also took Donald Fleming's course on American intellectual history. But global perspectives were not prominent then. Even so, I enjoyed and pursued a lot of variety. I wrote my senior thesis on the French anti-Aristotelian Petrus Ramus, a sixteenth-century pedagogue who got flak in his time for turning every problem into a dichotomous diagram. That was my first introduction to reading early modern Latin treatises and to the sense of responsibility—both frightening and exhilarating—that comes from reading a text that has not been translated or commented on before.

Within the Harvard years, I also spent one year at the University of Geneva in 1981–82.

That year was an important one, because at Geneva you chose one field as your principal focus along with two minor fields. I chose history, then philosophy of science, and in third place Sanskrit, from which I'm sorry to say I haven't managed to retain anything! Focusing on history at the University of Geneva (or elsewhere in Europe, I suspect) was to join a discipline with a strong sense of identity. The way students were introduced to history generated a real esprit de corps around the phrase "we historians!" By contrast, my experience at Harvard didn't have rousing moments of disciplinary identity formation.

After graduating I went to Cambridge, England, for a one-year MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science. That was my first introduction to the "strong programme" in the social history of science. I became especially interested in the principle of symmetry—of attending to the "failed" developments in science on the same terms as the ones that had a longer legacy. I took a bit of philosophy of science (with Mary Hesse no less) and concluded that I would stick with history! I was called a "keen American" for attending more lectures than was the norm. I wrote my MPhil thesis with Simon Schaffer, on Isaac Barrow. It was a wonderful year, living like an undergraduate and working like a graduate student. But the crucial formative phase for me was graduate school at Princeton.

What are some key intellectual moments that stand out?

I realized only in retrospect that the late 1980s were an exceptionally good time for early modern European history at Princeton, with five terrific faculty members in the History Department and John H. Elliott at the Institute for Advanced Study. We also had a large cohort of grad students in early modern Europe, many of whom focused on France. Natalie Z. Davis's seminar on France in the sixteenth century was delightfully memorable. She would combine readings, primary and secondary, that seemed puzzling when they were assigned but then came together brilliantly in the discussion. We sometimes met at her house. At one such meeting she printed out copies of a handout for all ten of us on her printer, bypassing the photocopier—in the era of the dot-matrix printer this was a first! Robert Darnton was finishing up *Forbidden Bestsellers of Revolutionary France* at the time, and his seminar introduced us to some of his research and sources for that project among many other topics, which was great fun.¹

Ted Rabb offered an excellent wide-ranging seminar for which I wrote a paper on historiography in 17th-century France. I remember coming up with a real argument only as I was writing the conclusion just hours before the paper was due and then frantically revising. I am still grateful today for hard deadlines because they concentrate the mind; I find oral presentations—lectures or conference papers—useful in that way, in addition to the pleasure of getting immediate feedback. I also took a seminar with Lawrence Stone on the causes of the English Civil War and experienced vividly the point that coursework in graduate school is often about historiography more than history. I did not know much about what happened in the English Civil War, and we were plunging right into complex layers of historiographic debate. At some point—embarrassingly far into the semester—it dawned on me that it might help if I read a nice encyclopedia article on the Civil War [*laughs*]! It was a good seminar in which we were encouraged to argue back and forth across different interpretive positions. Tony Grafton offered a graduate seminar on the Holy Roman Empire only when I was in my fifth year, but I attended

¹ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Revolutionary France* (New York, 1995).

for the fun of encountering a remarkable reading list full of primary sources I had never read.

After generals I taught for a semester in Bill Jordan's medieval history course. I had not taken a single medieval history course at Princeton, and I was very grateful for the existence of the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, which sadly wasn't complete at the time. It only went to letter *P* or so. So, my challenge was to prepare for teaching based only on looking up terms that occurred before *P* in the alphabet [*laughs*]!

Your first book was on the French Renaissance philosopher Jean Bodin's treatise *Universae naturae theatrum* (1596).² How did you choose Bodin's natural philosophy as your topic of research?

Bodin's *Theatrum* was Tony Grafton's suggestion. I had various practical criteria in mind: I wanted a French topic because I hoped to be in Paris for my research, and I was very interested in encyclopedism in the sixteenth century. I don't know whether Tony got the idea from noticing a copy of Bodin's book for sale, but in any case he suggested the topic just as a copy of Bodin's *Universae naturae theatrum* (the 1597 second edition) was available from William Poole in London. I bought it, though it seemed shocking at the time to spend 250 pounds on a book! The opportunity to buy the book was a wonderful stroke of luck. For the following ten years until *The Theater of Nature* came out that, book traveled with me wherever I went for any length of time, complete with a velvet cover that I sewed for it (putting to use the skills that girls acquired in sewing class in Swiss primary school and which I have hardly ever exercised since).

It seemed like a providential moment, soon followed by another. Bodin's *Theatrum*, an octavo book of 630 pages in Latin, was printed in three editions, but the French translation appeared in just one edition of 1597, so it is harder to find. Princeton did not have a copy, and it was not easy to sustain day trips to study the copy held at Columbia. While visiting my soon-to-be in-laws in San Francisco that summer, I went to Stanford and out of curiosity checked their library catalog, which claimed that the stacks held a copy of Bodin's 1597 French *Théâtre*. This seemed hard to believe, but I went to look. In the stacks was a bound set of photocopies of the 1597 French translation. So, I got myself a copy card and photocopied the photocopy [*laughs*]! As a result I had my main corpus easily at hand: the Latin in rare book form and the French through two layers of photocopying. At the time this was a rare privilege, though now almost all of Bodin's works are available in PDF format.³

Did some intellectual inclination of your own lead you to the *Theatrum*? Many historians are interested in the first this, or the first that. Were you more interested in the persistence and longevity of certain traditions?

² Ann Blair, *The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science* (Princeton, 1997).

³ For a portal to primary and secondary sources relating to Bodin see <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/bodinproject/home>.

I've mostly been interested in the long persistence of ideas and practices rather than the firsts—firsts are hard to ascertain, though they get so much more attention. How about looking into “lasts” instead? Bodin's *Theatrum* was more innovative than I realized initially, but I was especially interested in using it to learn more about what I called “ordinary” science—the lesser-known works that hadn't been hailed as forward-looking, even if they weren't “normal” in Thomas Kuhn's sense of being widely accepted. I got a little pushback from some people about this choice of dissertation topic: why would I write on an obscure book of natural philosophy by someone who's famous for being a political philosopher—what was going to be of interest in this? My reaction was, well, I'm a historian, and my job is to make it interesting. I suppose my naïve assumption was I could make anything interesting!

I had no idea then of the surprising things that I ended up learning about, such as the German popularization of the text or the work's strong reception among German university philosophers. The work's anti-Aristotelianism was also not clear to me until well into the research. On that point I deeply benefited from studying annotated copies. In first reading the text I was struck by how Aristotelian Bodin seemed—for instance in his discussions of causes, matter and form, passive and agent intellects. What first alerted me to the fact that Bodin was hostile to Aristotle on many specific points was a heavily annotated copy that I was able to study in Paris. One of the most common annotations in that copy was the marginal note “Aristotle criticized” (*Aristoteles reprehensus*), which appeared 160 times in the 630 pages.⁴ These annotations made me pay closer attention to the many places where Bodin was indeed critical of Aristotle and offered a new causal explanation or (in another specialty of his) a “confession of ignorance.” The latter occurred when Bodin rejected Aristotle's explanation but did not suggest an alternative, concluding that it was better to acknowledge the mystery of nature. Another annotator flagged some of those confessions of ignorance with the note “Bodin's piety.” I realized from these annotations that historians can learn a great deal from the assessments of contemporary readers, who are better placed than we are to appreciate what was striking about a text at the time it was written. For scholars who study texts, contemporary responses help to develop what Michael Baxandall called the “period eye” for art historians.⁵

How did you track down that privately owned annotated copy of Bodin's *Theatrum*?

When I headed for Paris in my fourth year of graduate school, Natalie Davis gave me a number of names of people to contact. One was Jean Céard, a tremendous scholar of sixteenth-century French literature who had published a massive *thèse d'état* on monsters.⁶ I wrote to Céard before traveling to Paris but didn't hear back. Once in Paris, I wrote again and again didn't hear back. But then, I met with someone else from Natalie Davis's list who invited me to dinner with Jean Céard. At the dinner, when I described my dissertation topic Jean said, “Oh, I think I might have a copy of that book. You should come to my house, and we'll look at it.” When I went to his

⁴ A transcription of these annotations is available from Ann Blair's Harvard website under Publications at <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/ablair/publications-0>

⁵ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1972).

⁶ Jean Céard, *La nature et les prodiges: l'insolite au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 1977). For a bibliography of Céard's wide-ranging publications to 2008, see Jean Dupèbe, Franco Giaccone, Emmanuel Naya, and Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, eds., *Esculape et Dionysos: Mélanges en l'honneur de Jean Céard* (Geneva, 2008).

house soon after I realized why he hadn't answered my letters: his house was full of stacks of mail—on every surface, both opened and unopened [*laughs*]! There were books everywhere, but the piles of mail were especially remarkable. Obviously, he was in incredibly high demand, and massively overworked.

But he was also extremely generous. I went to his home once a week for a number of months that year, and while he went off to teach, I would make progress through the heavily annotated copy of Bodin's *Theatrum* that he had bought years before. I transcribed and translated every note, keying it to the text. At the end of the day, when Céard came home, I would have a long list of questions for him about the notes and also the text itself. He could answer many of them, recognizing allusions from memory, which was an incredibly valuable skill in the days before Google. But, in a more transferable fashion, he taught me how to find answers in early modern reference works. In his home he owned essential reference tools like Ambrogio Calepino's dictionary, where I could find not only definitions of words but also their sixteenth-century cultural connotations, which helped make sense of statements by Bodin and his annotator. For example, Calepino reported the ancient view that cabbage had an antipathy to the vine, citing Cicero, which explained Bodin's claim that cabbage juice dispelled drunkenness!⁸ Or when the annotator glossed Bodin's term *larus* [seabird or mew] saying, "this is Greek for the Latin *fulicae*, [which are] aquatic birds,"⁹ I could see that that definition was available in Calepino and therefore not unusual at the time, even though both terms were new to me. Céard also introduced me to Caelius Rhodiginus's *Lectiones antiquae*, a wonderfully rich collection of ancient lore miscellaneously ordered, so that you have to use the alphabetical index to find things. The annotator (whom we never identified) cited Rhodiginus explicitly to gloss the term *Taraxippos* in Bodin's text and even did so accurately, so that reference was not hard to find.¹⁰ But other times the entry in the index was wrong, so Jean would try to reconstruct the error involved (which digit of the page number might be different, for example) to track down a passage that was clearly in there somewhere. It was a thrill to find it finally, although sometimes we had to give up too.

I learned a tremendous amount from Céard, not only about Bodin and this annotator, but especially about the value of using resources from the period as guides to understanding a Renaissance text—including near-contemporary annotations and reference works and classical texts that were available at the time rather than modern ones. It's also true that in the libraries of Paris like the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN, now Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF) it was actually easier to call up a sixteenth-century edition of Aristotle than a twentieth-century one, which might be already in use or not even available in the collection. And I think the experience of looking for answers to my questions in Rhodiginus's *Lectiones antiquae* and other reference books from the Renaissance first seeded my interest in reference books, which is evident in my book *Too Much to Know*.

⁸ See Jean Bodin, *Universae naturae theatrum* (Frankfurt, 1597), 294; and Ambrogio Calepino, *Dictionarium septem linguarum* (Basel, 1570), 174.

⁹ "Graece dicuntur, quae Latine fulicae, aves aquaticae," annotations in the copy of Bodin, *Theatrum* (1597), owned by Jean Céard, 115, line 27, keyed to "laros." Cf. Calepino, *Dictionarium*, 832.

¹⁰ At "Taraxippe": "de quo vide Caelium l.13.c.17," in the copy of Bodin's *Theatrum* owned by Jean Céard, 407, line 4. Cf. Caelius Rhodiginus, *Lectionum antiquarum libri xxx* (Basel, 1550), book 13, chapter 17, p. 485, on the Olympic games: "In propinquo tumulus visebatur Ischeni gigantis Mercurio et Hieria geniti. Eum nuncupabant Taraxippum, quod illuc adventantes equi ratione occulta mire exterrerentur."

At this point, in what format were you taking your notes?

At Harvard in 1984, I was cutting edge. My father, who has always been a gadget person, lent me what was called a portable (later “luggable”) Kaypro computer, which weighed twenty-nine pounds and had a tiny green screen and two drives for 5¼-inch floppy disks: one for the software, the other for the text you were writing. I wrote my senior thesis on that computer and continued to use it in graduate school, but only for writing papers, never for taking notes. I started composing at the computer at that point. Before then I had written my papers in longhand and then typed them up. But I wrote my senior thesis on the Kaypro and printed it out; I must have had a printer too because there was no common computer infrastructure. When I was done I lent my computer to someone in my House who reported that he had not yet started writing his thesis and managed to write it in the space of a weekend, thanks to word processing [*laughs*]! I also took the Kaypro to England for the following year and was stopped at customs and asked if I had any commercial goods. The customs officers were clearly eyeing my strange computer, but I said, “No commercial goods,” and they let the Kaypro in and then out again when I came back to the United States.

By the time I went to Paris in 1988–89, I had a Toshiba laptop with 500K of RAM. It therefore needed only one 3.5-inch floppy disk drive to store one’s texts, because the RAM could contain the software. At the old BN, the key thing was to find access to electricity, because my Toshiba did not have much battery life (about ninety minutes as I recall) [*laughs*]. A section at the back of the main reading room called the *Hémicycle* was used for semirare printed items such as pamphlets or unbound materials, and for some reason it had plugs at many of the seats. I made a point of always having something on hold at the *Hémicycle*, whether or not that’s what I was actually reading, in order to be able to plug in.

How did your time in Paris inform your intellectual growth?

That time in Paris was crucial. I attended Roger Chartier’s seminar in book history at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. I went back to it in subsequent years when I was in Paris, and each time it was an anchor for one of my communities there. Céard was another strong influence, and through him I met other intellectual historians trained in French literature, one of whom was Isabelle Pantin, a historian of astronomy who, along with Annie Charon of the École des Chartes, the French institution that trains archivist-paleographers, gave me the idea and coached me through the process of running a mail survey of surviving copies of the *Theatrum*.

It was a real boon that Jean Bodin was such a famous author. The Séminaire de Bibliographie Historique of the University of Mons, in Belgium, had devoted a multiyear project to him, involving a gigantic worldwide survey of the locations of surviving copies of all Bodin’s works.¹¹ In Mons, I learned of the existence of the German popularization of Bodin, which I might never have known about otherwise, since most editions of it were printed with the *Problemata Aristotelis* and often not cataloged separately, so the work, which was rare in any case, showed up in just a few library catalogs. At Mons, I was generously allowed to use a

¹¹ See Crahay, Lenger, and Isaac, *Bibliographie historique de Jean Bodin* (Brussels, 1992). Available online from the Bodin Project at Harvard: <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/bodinproject/bibliography>.

machine—at the time very special—which made paper copies from the Mons microfilm of the *Problemata Bodini*. I came away with a printout of that rare German work, in addition to a list of the libraries throughout the world that had reported that they owned a copy of the *Theatrum*. Whereas the *Séminaire de Bibliographie Historique* had contacted about 900 libraries, they had whittled the list down for me to about 250 that reported a copy of the *Theatrum*.

I wrote to those libraries with a questionnaire, which asked whether they had any copies of the *Theatrum* and requested details about them—which edition and which issue of the first edition (which appeared both with and without the dedication) and any copy-specific features, such as annotations, ex libris markings, and works bound with Bodin's. I did not contact the major libraries that I visited myself but received very generous results from libraries all over Europe. My questionnaire also turned up other annotated copies, though none as thoroughly annotated as Céard's. Still, I traveled to see a number of interesting copies, including some censored ones.

In some cases, I never saw the copies themselves, notably those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, which were very difficult to access in 1988–89. I was especially grateful for the answers I received from librarians in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Even if I couldn't see those particular copies, the answers I got about which texts were bound with Bodin's *Theatrum* turned out to be sufficient, because I was able to find a copy of those titles in Paris.

The books with which Bodin's *Theatrum* was bound introduced me to a number of texts I wouldn't have thought to study and in which I found multiple printed references to Bodin's *Theatrum*. I was interested in the reception of the *Theatrum*, but looking for citations of the book in French works of natural philosophy was like looking for a needle in a haystack, especially since there were almost no needles to be found: French authors of the seventeenth century generally ignored the *Theatrum*. Instead, its greatest uptake was in German natural philosophical academic books, and I was led to those titles by the books with which owners in the German academic world had bound their copy of the *Theatrum*. Again, the period eye proved crucial: the owners who made the decision to bind the *Theatrum* with something else were careful to do so thoughtfully, placing the *Theatrum* with another text that belonged with it thematically. Their judgment was so sound that those “bound-with” texts often mentioned Bodin's natural philosophy explicitly. By and large, bound-with texts proved valuable to my ability to track Bodin's reception, even though I had no inkling of that result when I started the mail survey.

At what point did you realize you were writing a “total history” of the *Theatrum*? Where did that concept come from?

That concept came out of Annales School readings that I had done for my field with Natalie Davis. I was very impressed by Pierre Goubert's *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis*, a two-volume *histoire totale* of a city and its region, starting from the climate, the geography, the demographics, and moving on to the social and the economic conditions.¹² I was quite taken with the Annales idea that history comprises multiple strands of change that run concurrently at different rhythms: from the slow pace of geographic change to the moderate speed of economic change, to the fast pace of political events. The job of the historian is to try to keep in view the

¹² Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730: Contribution à l'histoire sociale de la France du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1960).

whole bundle (*faisceau*) of different strands even while focusing on a particular one. I took that to mean that intellectual historians should also think of themselves as historians tout court, who have knowledge about and interest in the broader context of the texts they study. Natalie Davis practiced that approach from the other point of departure, as a social historian who also studied texts, and Robert Darnton wrote explicitly on connecting social and intellectual history through the social history of ideas. I'm sure I absorbed those principles from them. But more broadly I liked the ideal of an *histoire totale* that tries to bring all the strands together, even though it's impossible to carry out.

The other model underpinning *The Theater of Nature* is the idea of following the life cycle of book, from birth to death. The book is born in the authoring of it and the author's methods of reading and composition; then it is printed and circulated and read and received. I suppose that death would be the end of the active use of the book, although books often have a rich afterlife, through survival down to the present in libraries and the antiquarian book trade. I only later learned about the chart in which Thomas Adams and Nicolas Barker map out the stages of a book's existence, which I use regularly now in my teaching.¹³

The argument that frames *The Theater of Nature* is that traditional natural philosophy has a longer afterlife than we think. To what extent did you seek to correct the triumphalist narrative of the emergence of the new sciences in the seventeenth century?

That was definitely my main message at the time. I didn't become aware of the book-historical aspect of my work until later, once I started teaching book history. Instead I couched my work on Bodin in terms of my experience in the history of science and of the principle of symmetry: that it was just as important to look at the lesser-known, "ordinary" thinkers as it was to study the figures who have been canonized as "great men." In doing so you tend to find more continuity than revolution, but continuity with variations and transformations. For example, Bodin introduced anti-Aristotelianism into his traditional natural philosophy, but it was not the anti-Aristotelianism that led to Descartes or to Bacon, on which so much modern work had been focused. My main intervention was to show the long persistence and creativity of traditional natural philosophy.

For my second book project, my plan was to study traditional natural philosophy as it continued into the first half of the seventeenth century, at the University of Paris. I spent the first year after finishing my dissertation in Paris again, on an NSF-NATO fellowship. During that year I read a lot of textbooks by authors more obscure than Bodin—French university philosophers. I worked especially on Jean Cécile Frey, who, although he was explicitly Aristotelian, often strayed from Aristotle's positions. Comparing him to Bodin made me realize

¹³ Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, "A New Model for the Study of the Book," in *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. Nicolas Barker (London, 1993), 5–43, here 14. For some discussion of this chart as compared to his own earlier one that inspired it, see Robert Darnton, "What Is the History of Books?" Revisited," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 3 (2007): 495–508, esp. 502–5.

how the ways these authors portrayed themselves (as Aristotelian or anti-Aristotelian) had less to do with their actual positions than with the impact they wished to have on their contemporaries.¹⁴ But, much as I enjoyed that foray into Frey, I realized that others were better qualified and more interested than I was in examining the precise mixture of philosophical sources and new positions in each of those traditional natural philosophers.¹⁵

When did you first begin to consider yourself a historian of the book?

My early teaching was on the scientific revolution, on encyclopedias from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, on science and religion, and early modern France. I first taught book history in spring 1998. I had just been hired in the History Department at Harvard as an assistant professor. Attending Harvard's seminar in book history (which still exists today, now at the Mahindra Humanities Center) helped me identify with book history as a distinct subfield. Some invitations to speak did too.

I was offering two lecture courses at Harvard and felt I needed a third, so I developed a course called History of the Book and of Reading. Originally, I arranged the course chronologically, in a long sequence from antiquity to the present, with a bulge around the early modern period. But I am very pleased with how I have recently restructured it. I start with a five-week sequence that provides a chronology of technologies from the scroll to the mechanization of printing. The following six weeks are arranged thematically, with one week each on publication, authorship, regulations (censorship and licensing), distribution and trade, reception and reading, libraries and survival. I wrap up in the last two or three weeks by considering the impact of digital techniques on these themes. This way students have time during the first few weeks to select a book to study for their final paper. In each of the thematic weeks I ask them to investigate how that week's theme applies to the source they have chosen. The relevant secondary literature has also exploded in the years between each iteration, so I constantly need to update the course, which is a great pleasure.

How did you first begin to explore the topics of information overload and information management, which would lead you, eventually, to *Too Much to Know*?

It happened slowly, that's for sure! My first book came out in 1997, and *Too Much to Know* in 2010.¹⁶ That's a long time. Along the way I wrote a lot of articles, often completely unrelated to the second book project. But these proved helpful to broadening my knowledge and understanding, particularly articles I was asked to contribute to handbooks—for example, on

¹⁴ Ann M. Blair, "The Teaching of Natural Philosophy in Early Seventeenth-Century Paris: The Case of Jean Cécile Frey," *History of Universities* 12 (1993): 95–158 and "Tradition and Innovation in Early Modern Natural Philosophy: Jean Bodin and Jean Cécile Frey," *Perspectives on Science, Historical, Philosophical, Social* 2 no. 4 (1994): 428–54.

¹⁵ See, for example, the work of Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, including Roger Ariew, *Descartes and the First Cartesians* (Oxford, 2014) and, more generally, Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers with the assistance of Roger Ariew and Alan Gabbey, eds., *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1998).

¹⁶ Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2010).

natural philosophy for the *Cambridge History of Early Modern Science*; on science and religion for the *Cambridge History of Christianity*; on the organization of knowledge for the *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*.¹⁷ Writing those helped me focus on the bigger picture and introduce some of my teaching experience into my scholarly writing.

Remember that my original interest in Bodin's *Theatrum* had been to study its encyclopedic character. But I found that in studying one encyclopedia of natural philosophy, I could not talk effectively about encyclopedism more broadly. Although I discussed Bodin's principles of organization (and the chain of being, for example), I didn't feel I had learned much that was new about encyclopedism as a broader phenomenon.

In redefining my second book project away from traditional natural philosophy, I set out to understand Renaissance encyclopedism more broadly. I enjoyed, for example, tracking down all the works that Johann Heinrich Alsted hailed as models for his *Encyclopaedia* of 1630—seventeen of them, including one, by Joannis Colle, which also named twenty-three of his predecessors. I tracked a corpus of about three dozen books (given a few overlaps between the two lists) that these two contemporaries felt were encyclopedic and which ranged widely from the thin and diagrammatic to the large and disorganized.¹⁸ It wasn't easy to find all those books—some of them stayed for years on a “to find” list that I would try to whittle down in each new library I visited. That research didn't lead to any publication directly, but I learned a lot from it and returned to some of that material much later.¹⁹ But I got frustrated with the concept of “encyclopedia.” A turning point came when after a talk I had given someone asked, “Are you going to include Don Quixote, because it's an encyclopedic novel?” I just thought, Oh, no [*laughs*!] I can't be responsible for every single work. I have to abandon this term, which can be applied so broadly that I cannot set any reasonable boundaries on the category.

That's when I decided to define my topic around books that invited a certain way of reading—reference reading or reading for consultation. Even though one could, of course, read a reference book from cover to cover, some books were designed to be consulted rather than read through, given the presence of finding devices and even explicit advice to that effect (offered by Conrad Gessner for example).²⁰ I also remember how useful I had found early modern reference works in studying the annotations in Bodin's *Theatrum* with Céard. I still haven't written that paean to the utility of early modern reference books for historical research that I have in mind—maybe I'll get to it someday! But using early modern reference books is part of my larger commitment to use not only the mental categories but also the books and editions that were available at the time as I work through a text, its sources, and its context. So, I abandoned encyclopedias and moved on to reference books.

The concept of information overload came from a comment Dan Rosenberg made at the History of Science Society meeting in 2000. Rosenberg offered a powerful point that has stuck

¹⁷ Ann Blair, “Natural Philosophy,” in *Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3, *Early Modern Science*, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge, 2006), 365–405; “Science and Religion,” in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 6, *Reform and Expansion, 1500–1660*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 427–45; “Organizations of Knowledge,” in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, 2007), 287–303.

¹⁸ Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Encyclopaedia*, 4 vols. (Herborn, 1630; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1989) and Joannes Colle, *De idea, et theatro imitatricium et imitabilium ad omnes intellectus, facultates, scientias et artes* (Pesaro, 1618).

¹⁹ Ann Blair, “Revisiting Renaissance Encyclopaedism,” in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge, 2013), 377–97.

²⁰ Conrad Gessner, *Bibliotheca universalis* (Zurich, 1545).

with me ever since: information overload is a feeling that you can have regardless of the scale of the overload; it's quite widespread, but like all feelings it is experienced as if it were new time and time again. That whole session ended up being a set of articles in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.²¹

In writing *Too Much to Know*, I had a false start when I wrote a chapter on the Swiss polymath Theodor Zwinger, who is indeed a major player in the book. But the chapter didn't break out of the pattern I had followed in *The Theater of Nature*—of taking one work and unpacking it, trying to be encyclopedic about it. I realized, this is dull, and I've done this kind of thing before. So, I started over and made a conscious effort to incorporate the broader themes that I had been broaching in my various oral presentations of my work, in which I emphasized parallels with current digital tools and concerns. Realizing that I could use those themes to shape my book was a breakthrough.

Managing the notes for *Too Much to Know* was the biggest challenge. I spent a whole summer just going over my notes and trying to figure out what would fit where, and what I was going to use and not use. The other big challenge, as I was working through that material that I'd laid out for myself, was to stop constantly questioning my plan all over again and saying, "Oh, I should rearrange everything." [laughs] I was deeply tempted many times to do that! At some point, though, you have to realize that you could revise your work indefinitely. There are many perfectly good ways of presenting a complex body of material, so ultimately you just have to carry on with the one that you started with, because you do need to finish.

How do you manage your own information?

I ran into my Geneva professor Bronislaw Baczko many years later in the Paris archives and asked what he was working on. He said, "Vous savez, on ne travaille jamais que sur soi-même" (You know, you only ever work on yourself). In other words, you only ever work on your own problems. And, in a way, my interest in note-taking, in organization, I think, is a sign of my own sense of inadequacy in tackling this problem.

I do have a system, but it's far from perfect. The notes from classes I took and from my reading for general exams were all in ink on paper, and I hardly ever consult them. I'm envious of today's graduate students to whom I recommend taking notes on computer right away. It's a great privilege to create your professional stock from the beginning, in a medium that's searchable and portable, among other valuable features. In Paris I started taking notes on computer, but I also used notebooks to keep track of my research plans and tasks and because there were times when I couldn't use the computer. I was told I couldn't use a nearby plug at the Bodleian in 1991, until a more senior American scholar also using a laptop offered to pay them for the electricity with the equivalent of a sarcasm emoticon, and they relented. I was also told that my computer was making too much noise at the library of the University of Geneva, on a day when the reading room was almost empty. The reader, I suspect, objected to what was a new way of working at the time; I was told to turn off my computer, and I did, so I was grateful that I had a notebook with me too.

²¹ See the following articles in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 no. 1 (2003): Daniel Rosenberg, "Early Modern Information Overload," 1–9; Ann Blair, "Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload ca. 1550–1700," 11–28; Brian Ogilvie, "The Many Books of Nature: Renaissance Naturalists and Information Overload," 29–40; Jonathan Sheehan, "From Philology to Fossils: The Biblical Encyclopedia in Early Modern Europe," 41–60; Richard Yeo, "A Solution to the Multitude of Books: Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728) as 'the Best Book in the Universe,'" 61–72.

I still take notes on paper during talks and meetings, although, if I do not transfer them into the computer, I don't expect to consult them again. I find that I have become more careless about keeping track of notes on paper even though they are especially precious, because they exist only in one copy. By contrast my electronic notes seem to me better organized, and I have them backed up in multiple ways. So I'm a fan of electronic note-taking, even though I realize it's not optimal. I mostly take notes in Word documents. At first, I created one file per book or author and now more commonly I use larger files that cluster multiple sources on a given theme. I keep track of my notes in two ways, because I've never had confidence in the functions for searching within files on my computer, and I started my files before such search tools existed. The first is a bibliography of items that I've read that also lists the file and folder in which the relevant notes are stored. The other, inspired by early modern note-taking, is called Places: it's a very large file containing thematic rubrics in which I remind myself briefly of passages or authors of interest on that theme, with a reference to the full notes stored somewhere else. I go through phases of simple accumulation (e.g., during the semester while I'm teaching), interspersed with periodic organizing sprees when I take stock of what I have and improve the rubrics by consolidating some and subdividing others. Some of the headings became too large to be part of the Places file, so I spin them off into separate files on "note-taking," "readers," or "libraries," for example. These files contain cross-references to or excerpts from relevant notes in another file, or I'll just take notes on something directly in that file. It's still vital to enter the items into the bibliography to keep track of where the main corpus of notes on each item is. And the Places file is useful for headings that I don't use very often, where the material doesn't get excessively large.

After I finished *Too Much to Know*, I wrapped up the bibliography and the Places files I had created for those ten years. I closed them and opened new sets of files! I can go back to consult the old ones, but I'm not adding to them anymore. By now the new files are getting unwieldy and messy. So, I need to finish my current book project in order to start all over again.

When it's time to write I like to use the program Scrivener as an intermediate place in which to organize and rearrange material taken from the notes files. Then I draw from the organization I formed in Scrivener when I start to write. But I write in a separate Word file and refer back to the original note files and whenever possible to the sources themselves. One thing I haven't been good at is keeping together different kinds of media, like photos and PDFs. I know there are other software programs that let you cluster these in one place, but I rely on notes to myself to look in my folders of photos or PDFs. I'm also conscious of the risks of using software programs that will not prove durable—it's impossible to tell today which ones will be around tomorrow, let alone in a couple of decades.

What are your thoughts on the connections between the digital transition that we've lived through and the changes that early modern scholars experienced?

One interesting impact of the changes we've all been living through is that they have made us more aware of note-taking. Note-taking was rarely discussed in classes when I was a student. Everyone took notes according to habits they formed whether from a teacher in high school or on their own, but no one talked about it. Now we're all more attentive to our working methods because technology is changing them. There are also studies about the effectiveness of taking notes by handwriting versus on computer, etc. It strikes me that those studies may prove limited

to the experience of a particular point in time or generation and that they might not carry over to another context. I'm not sure that handwriting will always be associated with better retention, as some current studies have argued is the case now—especially since new generations may be less and less comfortable with writing by hand and reading the results (which presents its own challenges).

I see a lot of basic continuities between early modern methods of note-taking and what we do today to select and summarize what we want to retain from our reading. The techniques and tools of note-taking have changed a lot in recent decades, but there were also variations and innovations in the early modern period, foremost among them the gradual rise of the movable slip or index card equivalent. We feel we have lived through a unique transition to digital tools, but change is not unique to our period. However, I'm delighted that our heightened awareness of change in media and ways of reading has generated an increased interest in the history of books and of working methods!

So much of your work has focused on compilation as a practice and as an art. Is compilation also something that could provide an insight or a lesson to us today?

Absolutely. When you do a Google search, what are you doing but using Google to select things from the web in a kind of compilation? Google uses algorithms that it keeps top secret but which are now and then the object of discussion. When we criticize the search function and the software behind it we are paying attention to a process of compiling that was performed for centuries by people copying from books. The compiler has usually been treated as a “little guy” and passed over by historians on the hunt for noteworthy thinkers, but the compiler's decisions and judgment were crucial—just as Google's searching algorithms are today—to the material that was readily available, notably in reference works, which were and still are widely distributed, and read, and used. Reference works and their compilers have in most cases been left out of intellectual history.

The history of compilation offers examples of large projects that were finished just as a new technology appeared that would have made them so much easier. The *Isis Cumulative Bibliography* of secondary sources in the history of science issued its first cumulative indexes in 1965 and 1975, just before computers became commercially available.²² We should realize that we, too, are caught in this difficulty; in any large project we use methods that we know will soon be superseded but, on the other hand, that we have to complete now with the tools we have available.

Too Much to Know begins with a chapter comparing information management in the Islamic world,

²² The *Isis Cumulative Bibliography* is available online with some discussion at <http://cumulative.isiscb.org/about.html>.

Europe, and China. How did you come to that, and what did you learn from that comparison?

In some sense that comparison has roots in the nineteenth-century historiography on encyclopedias, when European scholars started applying the term *encyclopedia* to Arabic and Chinese works. Since I don't read Arabic or Chinese, that European historiography that extends down to the present was my point of departure. But the book-historical approach added new possibilities for me to examine these works, even without understanding the text. I was very fortunate to learn from generous colleagues and graduate students who gave me tutorials in Chinese rare books at Yenching Library and Ottoman manuscripts in Houghton Library. I've tried to make a record of some of that expertise in the module I contributed to the HarvardX course entitled *The Book: Print and Manuscript in Western Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (1450–1650)* (HUM1.3x), featuring Dr. Lianbin Dai on East Asian materials and Dr. Meredith Quinn on Ottoman manuscripts. Conferences were also valuable ways to gain some understanding of these fields. I was invited to a conference at the Aga Khan Institute in London on Islamic encyclopedias in 2003 and learned a tremendous amount.²³ I have engaged with specialists of China on encyclopedias and book history, which is a rapidly growing field among East Asianists.²⁴

These comparisons have helped me reflect on the impact of printing in Europe—an area that has generated much interest and debate, especially since Elizabeth Eisenstein's 1979 *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*.²⁵ A comparative perspective highlights, first, the fact that the single term *printing* is used to describe two different types of technology with distinct constraints and advantages. Xylography or wood block printing, on the one hand, along with its modern counterpart of lithography, enables you to keep and reuse the source of the printed page, offering the potential for a kind of “print on demand.” On the other hand, typography or printing with movable metal type requires you to print a certain number of copies at one time because you will need to reuse the type from the sheet you just printed to compose the next one. As a result of these technical differences East Asian printing did not require as much initial investment or financial speculation as typography, and the distinctions that European bibliographers make between editions, issues, and reprintings do not apply as clearly. In comparing the development of book production in different places like Europe, the Islamic world, and China (among many other interesting comparisons that could be studied), we can appreciate how culture plays an important role in shaping the impact of technology.

These comparisons have helped me appreciate what's unique about the European case: it isn't so much the birth of printing but the specific ways in which printing was applied. And I have focused on Europe not because it's inherently more interesting but just because I'm a

23 Ann Blair, “A Europeanist's Perspective,” in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth-Century Islamic World*, ed. Gerhard Endress (Leiden, 2006), 201–15.

24 “Le florilège latin comme point de comparaison,” in *Qu'était-ce qu'écrire une encyclopédie en Chine? What did it mean to write an encyclopedia in China?* ed. Florence Bretelle-Establet and Karine Chemla, *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident*, hors série (2007), 185–204.

25 Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1979). For two different kinds of critiques see Anthony Grafton, “The Importance of Being Printed,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 no. 2 (Autumn 1980): 265–86 and the forum featuring Elizabeth Eisenstein and Adrian Johns, “How Revolutionary Was the Print Revolution?” *American Historical Review* 107 no.1 (2002): 84–128.

Europeanist, so I focused the comparison in that direction. But the comparison works just as well in the other directions too, and I'm delighted that serious comparative work is appearing in print now.²⁶ Comparative work requires collaboration across the different kinds of linguistic and historical expertise that are needed. I benefit tremendously from working with graduate students with many different specialties (from the manuscripts of Timbuktu to Manchu writing) who have prepared an exam field with me in book history and/or on whose dissertation committee I have served. Wherever there is text, there can be book history—which focuses on the surviving material texts to shed light on a whole range of topics, including authorship and authority, transmission and distribution, reading, commentary and canon formation, and loss and survival.

A theme that runs through a lot of your work concerns attempts at universality or comprehensiveness, to be able to know everything, or to catalog everything. What can we gain from studying that idea of universalism, or the polymathic impulse?

A lot of historians work on very grim topics—violence and abuses of power of many kinds. But I've gravitated toward rather upbeat, optimistic ones. I study dreamers, idealists who had ambitions of bringing all knowledge into harmony, and who often harbored an implicit irenicism, which they strove toward despite the religious and national conflicts they lived through. It's hard not to feel sympathy for them, despite the fact that they did not succeed in their ambitions and that they were embedded in the hierarchical social and political structures of their time. I'm conscious, when I look around at my colleagues who are working on war and slavery, that I have focused on the happy topics of history. Intellectual history may offer more such opportunities than other fields, but it's also a matter of what you look for in your research. A student recently reminded me of an inspiring formulation by Natalie Davis: "I have wanted to be a historian of hope."²⁷

You mentioned earlier your piety toward the little person in intellectual history. What would an intellectual history be like in which all of those anonymous collaborators were given their due?

That's a great question—and I'm trying to answer that "so what?" question in the book I'm writing now on amanuenses or the hidden helpers of intellectual work in early modern Europe.²⁸

²⁶ Joseph R. McDermott and Peter Burke, eds., *The Book Worlds of East Asia and Europe 1450–1850: Connections and Comparisons* (Hong Kong, 2015).

²⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, "How the FBI Turned Me On to Rare Books," NYR Daily, *New York Review of Books*, July 30, 2013, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/07/30/fbi-turned-me-on-to-rare-books/>.

²⁸ Ann Blair, "Hidden Hands: Amanuenses and Authorship in Early Modern Europe," A. S. W. Rosenbach Lectures in Bibliography, University of Pennsylvania, March 2014, and "Early Modern Attitudes toward the Delegation of Copying and Note-Taking," in *Forgetting Machines: Knowledge Management Evolution in Early Modern*

First of all, my purpose is not to debunk the great men but to add to our understanding of how they worked and wrote the texts that made them significant and famous. Helpers of many kinds made much greater contributions than they've been credited for—since they get zero credit at the moment, that's not saying much [*laughs*]! I'm not trying to argue that someone other than Montaigne wrote the *Essays*, for example. But I doubt that many prolific early modern authors worked alone. They had help from people whom they hired—servants with more or less specialized roles—but also from students (who not infrequently boarded in their teacher's house) and family members, typically sons, wives, and daughters. What kind of work these helpers contributed varied a lot. Some of it we might consider mechanical, constrained by very clear guidelines (e.g., alphabetizing, or exact copying or proofreading), and in performing those tasks helpers freed up the author's time. But in other tasks (e.g., making corrections, indexing, taking notes, or arranging material) helpers used their judgment and made an intellectual contribution that played a role in shaping the outcome even though no one acknowledged that at the time. So, I hope my research on this topic will give us a better sense of the communities on which people drew when they composed books in the early modern period. I also hope that the study of the past can make us more aware of our own practices and of the helpers on which we rely, both human and electronic. Early modern helpers are hard to ferret out but are sometimes more visible in especially large books. For example, I've come across a unique “amanuensis to the reader” in a large edition of medieval English manuscripts printed in 1652.²⁹ So it seems that I'm still working with polymathic megabibliomaniacs [*laughs*].

Have the kinds of questions that can be asked, or that are asked, changed since you were a graduate student? What role, if any, has technology played in this change?

The first change I remember noticing was the power of the online library catalog that you can consult in your office and now pretty much anywhere. When I was a student, it was a challenge to try to follow up on a reference that a professor would give you in office hours by mentioning an approximate name, title, and date for a book—what I had scribbled down on a note card from an oral conversation was often hard to find at the next opportunity to consult the card catalog in the library. Now I try to find the book I have in mind in the catalog while the student is with me, so I can fiddle with my memory or other sources until I can email the precise library record. The multiplicity of online library catalogs and the portals that combine them (like the Universal Short Title Catalogue for books printed before 1600) offer searching power that was unthinkable before the web. And just in the last few years the quality and quantity of PDFs available (e.g., on E-rara and the Staatsbibliothek in Munich) has changed my conception of a viable project. For example I just finished a series of articles on the publication strategies of Conrad Gessner, in which I studied the dedications and other paratexts of all sixty-five of Gessner's publications, almost all of which I found in full text online.³⁰ I still make a point of viewing copies of the

Europe, ed. Alberto Cevoloni (Leiden, 2016), 265–85.

²⁹ Roger Twysden, *Historiae Anglicanae scriptores X* (London, 1652), following column 2,768.

³⁰ See, for example, Ann Blair, “Printing and Humanism in the Work of Conrad Gessner,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 no. 1 (2017), 1–43, and Ann Blair, “The Capacious Bibliographical Practice of Conrad Gessner,” *Papers of*

books themselves whenever possible, and in a few cases that direct contact has been crucial to identifying a cancel (visible in the PDF but only once you know to look for it) or a foldout table that was not reproduced in the PDF, whether because it went unnoticed or posed too much complication because of the larger format involved. But some of these books are so rare that no one library owns them all, so digitization makes it possible to bring together in a virtual library books that once were together but are now dispersed. Similarly, comparisons between different editions or between a manuscript and a printed book held in different locations have become easily feasible now when one of the two items has been digitized. The prospect of trying to negotiate comparing a manuscript and a printed book at the BnF was so daunting that I never tried; now those two reading rooms are a few *arrondissements* apart, but digitizations have come to the rescue. I know that I have only scratched the surface of the many new kinds of research that are possible now and which will hopefully become increasingly possible if we continue to make progress with optical character recognition for unusual fonts and ligatures.

Are technologies like Google Books, with its snippet view and keyword searches, changing reading practices and scholarly practices?

I'm sure they are changing our practices. At this point I can barely remember how exactly to consult printed annual bibliographies to find recent articles, and it's hard to mourn that particular ritual. There are of course risks involved in the ease of a Google search: the risk that people looking for a quick fix can just settle for the snippet view, finish their footnote, and be unaware of the larger context of the snippet they used. And it's very sad that Google Books often has weak metadata, so to really understand the text you are using it is valuable to consult a library catalog or the book itself to grasp fully the nature of the digitization. On the other hand, the quick searching at our disposal also makes it easier to contextualize what we read if we choose to do so. For example, it's much easier now to scan book reviews to see if the book we're citing is well regarded. A Google search can also rapidly cast doubt on something we thought we knew. When you look at the attributions of a quotation, for example, you might find one attribution and assume it's correct, but if you search online you'll find multiple different attributions and realize that the problem is more complicated. So, the technology isn't inherently a negative. We need to explain to students and remind ourselves why it's important to be thorough in thinking through our questions and the answers we offer for them, regardless of the technology we use.

What do you think that you have unlearned, as well as learned, in the course of your career? Has what seemed true or significant to you changed over time?

Perhaps not surprisingly given my predilections as a historian I think of my intellectual trajectory in terms of steady accretion and gradual rather than sharp turns. I have never had in mind a grand plan and have thoroughly enjoyed the unexpected directions (which one might call detours) I've taken, which were often born from conversations with and invitations from others. I started out

with a desire to learn about famous thinkers, and I've ended up attending increasingly to the "little guys." But the most unexpected thing I've learned is the importance of attending to one's intellectual community—realizing what a central role it can play as a source of feedback and inspiration and taking the time to contribute to it and perhaps undertaking some initiatives to improve it. I started out with an idea of academic work as rather solitary, and certainly some aspects of it are—the writing process in particular. But we all also operate as members of multiple communities; some, defined intellectually by a discipline and one or more subfields, span the globe, while others are formed locally through institutions and places. Technology has wonderfully facilitated interactions within communities at every level, but we are only extending the practices of a republic of letters that has for centuries relied on scholarly exchange in person and by letter. I hope that this republic will live long into the future too!

**What do you see as the future of intellectual history?
Where is it going, and where would you like it to go?
What role might it play in the wider historical
profession? And in what ways might it continue to
influence other disciplines and enterprises?**

Intellectual history seems to me more visible in the profession and certainly in the Harvard History Department than when I was an undergraduate. Nevertheless, it is far from central to the discipline of history viewed as a whole, in which the dominant emphases are economics, politics, international relations, and empire. But I think it's healthy for intellectual historians to engage with colleagues with these quite different foci, even while they also interact with colleagues in neighboring fields like the literatures, philosophy, or the history of science or of art. I'm delighted that intellectual history now embraces a wider range of themes than political thought, which was long the main focus of study, and that it includes attention to working methods and practices of textual production.³¹ Although the questions that have motivated me are not at the core of intellectual history, I expect that they will continue to generate productive new perspectives on how ideas have been written, interpreted, and disseminated.

³¹ For a recent overview of intellectual history see Peter E. Gordon, "What Is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field," Harvard Colloquium in Intellectual History, March 2012, http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/history/files/what_is_intell_history_pgordon_mar2012.pdf