



[Book Review] *Teaching the History of the Book*, edited by Matteo Pangallo and Emily B. Todd

KEYWORDS

book history, history of the book

In *Teaching the History of the Book*, editors Matteo Pangallo and Emily B. Todd bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners to deliver a comprehensive and engaging volume. The volume includes a broad range of chapters on a variety of topics, including conceptual overviews of book history, lesson plans, activity ideas, and full course outlines, among others. As this work is the first on teaching book history, it serves both as an introduction to this field for readers and as a call for more research and investigation into teaching in this discipline. A broader SoTL audience, even those without a background in book history, will gain new ideas and strategies for use in their own classrooms. The book covers themes of interdisciplinary collaboration, online teaching, making history relevant to contemporary students, and disrupting the Western, White, male-centered canon, all of which are extremely relevant to SoTL at large.

The volume is organized into four parts along with an introduction and an afterword. The first section, “Conceptualizing the Teaching of Book History,” includes broader conceptual chapters that will be helpful to anyone new to the field of book history in particular. In part two, “Teaching Book History as a Course,” most chapters discuss specific assignments, choices in syllabi, and curricular choices surrounding standalone courses on book history. Part three, “Using Book History in Other Courses,” discusses book history as an element in other courses. The book’s final section, “Resources for Teaching Book History,” deals with individual resources as well as resource sets for teaching within this discipline.

One major theme in this work is collaboration, especially across disciplinary borders. For example, Horrocks (2023) details the process of an interdisciplinary team of faculty creating a course on book history. There are similar chapters that detail collaborations between librarians and professors to create book history courses (Mueller and Nixon 2023; Newman and Van Peteghem 2023).

Many of the chapters contained in this volume, as outlined in the introduction, were written before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even with that caveat, authors discuss the challenges and opportunities of taking a discipline such as book history to the online teaching space. Vitale (2023), for example, discusses the Folger Shakespeare Library’s Virtual Printing House, a tool used to teach early modern printing in the digital environment. Woo (2023) discusses community-based learning which incorporates digital tools in a course surrounding Toni Morrison. Benedict (2023) offers a particularly interesting take on this, discussing the physicality of digital resources and the interplay between the physical and digital. Throughout the work, it was clear that these authors were thinking creatively about the digital teaching environment, and it left me wondering how they navigated the increasing necessity of online education during the pandemic.

Another major theme in this volume is the relationship between history and the present, and in particular, many authors discuss how they make history feel relevant to their students. For example, Hand (2023) tackles broadside ballads from early modern England through comparisons to memes. The author discusses specific class activities that support students making this connection to contemporary memes, an approach shared by Barta (2023) writing about iPhone rhetoric and the ephemerality of popular books. Scholars of various fields, including but not limited to book history, will be able to utilize the ideas presented within this theme.

The final theme of this work is disrupting the Western, White, male-dominated canon of book history. Many authors, even in chapters not specifically focusing on this, articulate a desire to move beyond the confines of that paradigm. A sequence of chapters focusing on feminist, Black, and international book history all set the stage for this work (Fielder and Senchyne 2023; Nesta 2023; Ozment 2023). Fagan (2023), in a standout chapter in this work, outlines an approach to teaching about race and its relationship to publishing in the United States. The author includes specific activity ideas about deconstructing authority and helping students discover their own agency, which are relevant in many contexts beyond book history.

Many of these chapters include specific activity ideas, assignment language, and more curriculum ideas to support others in teaching book history. Hamill (2023) discusses how to teach editing in courses on Chaucer and Shakespeare, comparing assignments between the two versions of this course. Estill's chapter (2023) about the value of a text, which uses Harry Potter as an example, showcases a sequence of classes that dissect not only the Harry Potter books themselves, but also the life they have taken on afterward through J. K. Rowling's Twitter messages and the books' cultural impact. As a final example, Maruca (2023) deals with the relationship between students' bodies and labor with the coursework and effectively outlines this course with examples of active and experiential learning throughout.

A final chapter to highlight is Howsam's (2023) introductory chapter on book history. Howsam effectively outlines the history of this discipline, showcasing the many ways that the history of the book has been taught in a variety of contexts. It works well to set the tone, and for any readers who are new to book history, it will serve as an excellent introduction to this discipline.

For those who teach or are interested in teaching book history, this volume is essential. Pulling together authors from many diverse backgrounds and experiences, the book serves as a crucial component to anyone who is planning a lesson, activity, or full curriculum. For those outside this discipline, this volume contains many creative ideas behind teaching in the humanities, from digital versions of manuscripts to specific activity ideas that center students' agency.

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