

Centro APICE Università degli Studi di Milano
Dipartimento di Studi storici Università degli Studi di Milano
Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori

Third annual seminar for early career researchers

Università degli Studi di Milano, 18-19 May 2020

Call for papers

The other half of publishing: Twentieth-century women professionals in publishing and reading

Frequently, although not invariably, behind the scenes, during the twentieth century women professionals worked in diverse capacities in the publishing trade, from conception through production, mediation, distribution and marketing, to the promotion and popularization of book cultures and reading.

Describing the current situation of women in publishing as early as 1970, Laura Furman spoke of “women kept at home”: the public life of a book depended on the men who took them out into the world, while women “generally worked behind the scenes in publishing houses, in contact with books and manuscripts only”. Furthermore, Furman continued, women “worked hard as assistants to publishing managers and editors occupying posts which gave them less power and lower incomes but similar responsibilities” (Laura Furman, *A House Is Not a Home: Women in Publishing*, in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement*, edited by Robin Morgan, New York, Random House, 1970). While Furman does have a point, it is also true the professions of publishing, like journalism, offered prestigious opportunities for educated women to make use of their talents and leave a significant mark on twentieth-century cultural history through their hard work and creativity.

Therefore, the investigation of women’s presence in the publishing world and their role in the dissemination of knowledge through books outlines sits at the intersection between publishing history, cultural history, literary history, women’s history and the history of

professions. This offers a particularly fertile field to open new ground for research, especially from a methodological point of view. Unlike literary history, the history of publishing still lacks of systematic seminal studies on the subject.

We invite original contributions drawing on documents sourced from personal and/or company archives on women professionals in publishing, which offer new perspectives and insights and illuminate forgotten names and experiences.

Topics of interest may include:

- women publishers;
- women editors and series directors;
- women literary agents;
- women translators;
- women graphic publishing artists;
- women book shop owners;
- women librarians;
- women who contributed to promoting reading in the most varied ways (printed paper to cultural events, TV, blogs and social networks)
- women writers in their relationship with their publishers.

Abstract presentation deadline: 31 January 2020

Notification of acceptance: 14 February 2020

Please submit abstracts in Italian (up to 2,500 characters, spaces included) or English (up to 400 words) accompanied by a short bio in Italian (up to 1,000, characters spaces included) or English (up to 200 words) to:

Prof. Roberta Cesana (roberta.cesana@unimi.it)

Prof. Irene Piazzoni (irene.piazzoni@unimi.it)