

# Editor's Introduction

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For only the second time in its history, the Business History Conference met outside North America. The Business History Conference is the largest organization of business historians in the world. Between June 17 and 19, 2004, 232 participants from around the world converged on the town of Le Creusot, France, for a memorable meeting hosted by the Académie François Bourdon. Special thanks go to Ivan Kharaba and his assistant Adeline de Albuquerque for making the conference a success. Richard Sylla was chosen as president-elect. The 2005 conference will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 19–21.

Highlights of the conference this year included a number of distinguished awards for scholarship in the field.

Mira Wilkins, Florida International University, received the Conference's highest honor, the Lifetime Achievement Award. The Harold Williamson Prize for achievement by a mid-career scholar went to Steven Usselman of Georgia Institute of Technology. Jennifer Klein, Yale University, received the Hagley Prize for the best book in business history for her work, *For All These Rights: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America's Public-Private Welfare State* (Princeton University Press, 2003). The Herman E. Krooss Prize for the best dissertation in business history was awarded to Tiffany Gill, University of Texas at Austin, for "Civic Beauty: Beauty Culturists and the Politics of African American Female Entrepreneurship, 1900–1965" (Rutgers University, 2003). This year's Newcomen Prize for the Best Paper in the 2003 volume of *Enterprise & Society* went to John Smail, "The Culture of Credit in Eighteenth-Century Commerce: The English Textile Industry," *Enterprise & Society* 4 (June 2003): 299–325. Two young scholars shared the K. Austin Kerr Prize for the best first paper presented to a Business History Conference meeting: Hyungsub Choi, Johns Hopkins University, "Between Research and Production: Making Transistors at RCA, 1948–1960," and Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, San Jose State University, "The Ties That Buy: Shopping Networks of the Atlantic World."

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As these awards indicate, the scope of our discipline is expanding in innovative and fruitful ways. The same can be seen in the contributions to this issue. In his Presidential Address, Patrick Fridenson challenges us to move out of our comfort zone with growth and success and give greater attention to the question of failure in business history. He also uses this discussion of failure to bring to light some fascinating new topics and institutions that business historians could address, confirming once again that the scope of the field is far larger than one might suspect from the name of our organization.

The interpenetration of business with many other aspects of the human experience is also made clear in the four dissertation summaries from this year's conference. Two use business to explore race and gender, one deals with the impact of financial institutions on the everyday life of working and middle-class citizens, and another brings together the study of business activity and consumer society. Each shows how other fields of history can benefit from greater attention to business institutions, while helping to redefine the scope of the field to include activities not traditionally placed under the category "business."

A similar pattern is evident in the two articles in this issue. Emanuela Scarpellini brings the study of consumer culture into a transatlantic framework by showing how a multinational venture created the first grocery stores in post-World War II Italy. She also shows, however, that the strategy of the firm, International Basic Economy Corporation, had to change in light of local conditions, though the supermarket also changed Italian consumption habits. The second article, by Astrid Baker, takes us to New Zealand, in an examination of the state and private capital in the development of that country's pulp and paper industry. Her work contributes to a growing body of literature on the developmental state. Particularly in industries consuming natural resources, the state has in many contexts of capitalism been a key contributor to business growth, a conclusion that is significantly revising the old assumptions about the inherent antagonism between business interests and government intervention.

This issue marks the end of my first year as editor of *Enterprise & Society*. The year saw publication of the range of articles that I hope to attract to the journal. We have had an in-depth discussion of key theoretical concepts of the field, our first special issue devoted to Latin America, works that address the cultural significance of business, articles on business and the state, studies of business in a wide variety of nations, and articles on central topics of the field, such as multinationals. I would like to thank my coworkers at the journal, without whom, I can assure you, this publication would not be possible. Elisabeth O'Kane has repeatedly gone beyond the call of duty in editing

and putting together the manuscripts for publication. Cynthia Busch, our student assistant, has handled the complexities of digital communications and manuscript formatting with breathtaking ease. My thanks to both of them, and to the associate editors of the journal, our editorial board, and to all of you who have generously given your time to review manuscripts and contribute book reviews. Finally, I am pleased to report that Oxford University Press has renewed the contract to publish the journal for another five years. I look forward to continuing our excellent relationship with Oxford University Press and the growing success of the journal.