

Editors' Note

Corporate reputation is a topic of widespread interest these days—amid the U.S. government's bailout of insurance giant AIG in 2008, major automobile recalls by Toyota for “unintended acceleration” in 2009–11, and multibillion-dollar trading losses at JPMorgan Chase in 2012. At the same time, during these years, other firms earned reputations as centers of innovation, such as Google, or as islands of long-term value, like Berkshire Hathaway.

The subject is not new to business historians. In past issues of *Business History Review* alone, several articles have treated the topic. Michael B. Miller explored how global shipping companies maintained their reputations across a vast area through the use of carefully planned personal visits. Edward J. Balleisen described how nineteenth-century antifraud crusaders pushed businesses to focus on their long-term reputations rather than short-term profits for the good of industry as a whole. Matthias Kipping, meanwhile, analyzed how twentieth-century American consulting firms built their overseas reputation by cultivating ties with the elites of host countries.¹

Despite its widespread use, “corporate reputation” is a vague term. This special issue of the *Business History Review* explores the topic in depth, treating corporate reputation as a subject on its own and demonstrating how history, along with other academic disciplines, can help illuminate the key role it plays in our economy and society. The guest editors, Rowena Olegario and Chris McKenna, are members of the Oxford University Centre for Corporate Reputation, Saïd Business School. The Centre was created in 2008 to “understand how the reputations of corporations and institutions are created, sustained, enhanced, destroyed, and rehabilitated.” Professors Olegario and McKenna provide an insightful introduction to this volume. Other contributors to this issue are also linked to the Centre. Susie Pak, James Taylor, and Marcelo Bucheli and Erica Salvaj presented earlier versions of their articles there. Chris Kobrak, author of the Literature Review, and two of the

¹ See Michael B. Miller, “The Business Trip: Maritime Networks in the Twentieth Century” (Spring 2003): 1–32; Edward J. Balleisen, “Private Cops on the Fraud Beat: The Limits of American Business Self-Regulation, 1895–1932” (Spring 2009): 113–60; and Matthias Kipping, “American Management Consulting Companies in Western Europe, 1920 to 1990: Products, Reputation, and Relationships” (Summer 1999): 190–220.

Roundtable contributors, Ed Balleisen and Jonathan Karpoff, are Fellows of the Centre.

The issue also includes an essay by Stephen Mihm on Richard White's *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*—surely an effort to change the reputation of that iconic industry, once seen as a paragon of efficiency. Our special issue on Corporate Reputation begins with a roundtable in which a number of notable authors, from different disciplines, reflect on how the theme of reputation plays out in their research.