Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Howard, Nicole. Loath to Print: The Reluctant Scientific Author, 1500–1750

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Volume 45, numéro 3, été 2022

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1099756ar DOI : https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i3.40459

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Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé) 2293-7374 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Phares, D. (2022). Compte rendu de [Howard, Nicole. Loath to Print: The Reluctant Scientific Author, 1500–1750]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 45(3), 325–327. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i3.40459



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Howard, Nicole.

Loath to Print: The Reluctant Scientific Author, 1500-1750.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022. Pp. x, 218. ISBN 978-1-4214-4368-3 (hardcover) US\$55.

When new technologies appear on the scene, there are always zealous early adopters who whole-heartedly embrace innovation. But there are also people who are decidedly more circumspect, who are dubious about change and the trade-offs associated with abandoning a time-tested tool or practice in favour of an untried one. In the Digital Age, people have had to weigh the benefits of rapid communication and expanded access to information against the deficits associated with a loss of privacy and the surge in mis- and disinformation. Though it is increasingly difficult to accomplish, people do "opt out" of aspects of digital culture-choosing landlines over smartphones, broadsheets over tweets, and social gatherings over social media. And while few in the twenty-first century would consider movable-type-printing dangerous and socially disruptive, the Printing Revolution caused a great deal of consternation, even among the most forward-looking scholars of the day. In Loath to Print: The Reluctant Scientific Author, 1500-1750, Nicole Howard explores why and how many eminent astronomers, mathematicians, and natural philosophers-thinkers who relied on intellectual exchange and invited critiques of their work-either eschewed print or developed strategies to mitigate the perceived perils associated with mechanical reproduction. Absorbing and astute, Howard's book expands upon and complicates preceding studies focused on the history of print (including her own The Book: The Life Story of a Technology [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005]) and the history of science, demonstrating not only how the broader "world of print was messy and complex" but also how it was especially problematic for scientific authors whose reputations, livelihoods, and, potentially, even their lives depended upon not being misattributed or misapprehended (6). Howard argues that while print promised the promulgation of new ideas, for some scientists, that promise came with an attendant fear of losing control of one's intellectual property, which could only be assuaged once authors "found alternative ways to bend print to meet their needs," strategies that also included bending readers' access to and perceptions of what they read (175).

The introduction to *Loath to Print* declares that the "book is as much a history of communication in the early modern scientific community as it

is a history of attitudes toward print technology"—an assertion borne out by Howard's liberal use of diaries, letters, and manuscripts, as well as printed books from the period that both demonstrate scientific information being conveyed to trusted individuals, coteries, and newly formed learned societies *and* reveal the development of novel strategies for conveying that information, whether textually or graphically (13). These sources show a continuum of responses to print as a medium for sharing knowledge while also clearly displaying that the circulation of manuscripts continued as an essential channel for imparting and soliciting information—though as Howard points out, often in the form of ciphers and anagrams that conceal as much as they communicate.

Chapter 1 outlines what Howard refers to as a "catalog of concern" that fuelled a reluctance to publish among respected intellectuals such as Robert Boyle, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton; fear of censorship, worries over judgments made by unskilled and unprepared readers, and unease about the profusion of printed material are recorded as primary concerns, but anxieties about accuracy and quality control, piracy, and securing proper credit for scientific discoveries also pepper contemporary documents. Chapter 2 delves into how some early modern editors and authors crafted prefaces that acted as gatekeepers-using language that "erects a wall, hoping to keep some readers out while inviting others inside" (88). Going beyond the tropes of servility or selfdeprecation commonly accompanying the literary output of the period, Howard offers examples of scientific introductions designed to be impenetrable to the lay reader, as well as prefaces that range from the dismissive to the downright hostile, such as Johannes Kepler's "Advice for Idiots" in his 1609 publication Astronomia Nova (61). Chapters 3 and 4 examine how authors exerted physical control over their intellectual property, either through carefully regulated distribution to a well-chosen and well-disposed audience of fellow scientists or through direct involvement in the printing process-either as the owner and operator of a press, such as astronomer Tycho Brahe, or as an avid inventor, such as architect and mathematician, Christopher Wren. In chapter 5, the attention moves away from scientific authors to the editors who served as "silent midwives," ensuring the safe delivery of William Harvey's De Generatione Animalium (1651) and Newton's Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica (1687), and who solicited, collected, curated, and printed the letters, translations, and articles that filled the pages of the scientific journals emerging in the late seventeenth century. While Loath to Print provides cogent and compelling arguments bolstered by strong documentary evidence throughout, this chapter is particularly noteworthy since it delves into the ways that informal networks and relationships began to metamorphose into more formal collaborative roles by the middle of the eighteenth century. It also reinforces a notion obliquely alluded to throughout the book: neither scientific inquiry nor scientific publishing is a solitary practice. The treatment of editors in this volume shines a much-needed light on the people and practices that buttressed scientific printed works in the early modern period and foregrounds the importance of the author–editor relationship rarely acknowledged beyond the literary realms, inviting the reader to think of Frans van Schooten's collaboration with Descartes and Christiaan Huygens as being on par with Ezra Pound's relationship to T.S. Eliot.

The conclusion, "Reluctance Overcome," pithily sums up the ideas discussed in the preceding chapters—though perhaps a bit too pithily. The fascinating story of how revolutionary scientists moved from print sceptics to print converts might benefit from a fuller culminating discussion of why the desire to leave "lasting monuments" overtook authorial reluctance to see their work on the printed page (173). But this is a minor shortcoming that does little to undermine this perceptive and persuasive study that illuminates both the history of science and the history of print culture, providing an intriguing vista into the past that elucidates current debates about openness in science.

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