

# Introduction to the Symposium

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The papers in the symposium that follow derive from a meeting at the Wharton School in October 2017, intended initially as a sort of pre-conference before the meetings of the World Economic History Congress (WEHC) the following summer. In the event, planning for the WEHC sessions went off in a somewhat different direction. But the meeting did well as a conference standing on its own.

The titular subject was “Multiple Futures for Business History.” Funding from Wharton’s Mack Institute and the Seminar on the Evolution of Organizations and Industries was and is again here gratefully acknowledged. The participants were Marcelo Bucheli (University of Illinois), Lou Galambos (Johns Hopkins), Valeria Giacomini (Harvard Business School Newcomen Fellow), Herbert Hovencamp (University of Pennsylvania Law School), Matthias Kipping (York University), Ken Lipartito (Florida International University), Christina Lubinski (Copenhagen Business School), Peter Miskell (Henley Business School), Andrew Popp (Liverpool University), Philip Scranton (Rutgers University), Sebastian Teupe (Bayreuth University), Dan Wadhvani (University of the Pacific), Joanne Yates (MIT), Sidney Winter (The Wharton School), and me. The discussions were active (and indeed intense) and productive. Hana Yen (Wharton ’19) facilitated, in part by taking almost stenographic notes of what was said. I would be happy to make these available, along with the program listing paper titles and author contact information, to anyone who is interested.

The papers about these envisaged multiple futures fell into two rough groups. The larger set focused on possible future paths for research and writing on specific topics or areas (institutional arrangements and property rights in business history and moral economy in the evolution of firms and markets being two examples among several of the first sort, and business history and the strategy literature and business history and the law being two among several of the second). The

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smaller group focused somewhat more tightly on fundamental concepts in business history. This symposium presents heavily revised versions of two of the papers from the latter group and a third that seemed to its author to fill out a triptych better than its conference predecessor.<sup>1</sup>

Since one of the authors was the editor of *Enterprise & Society*, it was agreed that we would ask the previous editor, Philip Scranton, to exercise the usual editorial discretion and also to do the usual editorial work on the accepted texts. He cheerfully agreed to do both (for which the authors are very grateful, since his editorial comments and suggestions at all stages were searching and very helpful) and has written some reflections on the papers and their implications, which appear below, to round out the symposium.

<sup>1</sup> We had hoped to publish revised versions of the first set as a special issue of another journal. The journal was amenable, but unfortunately not enough of the authors wanted to pursue this and the project had to be dropped.