

“Book Diplomacy” in the Cultural Cold War: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

28-29 April 2022

Institute for History

Leiden University

Keynote Lecture: Greg Barnhisel (Duquesne University)

Books have long been an essential medium for spreading ideas and values, and this was particularly the case during the Cold War. This conference invites researchers from different disciplines and perspectives to further investigate the role and importance of books in the Cold War. Introducing a book-centered, materialist approach creates space for reconsidering the methods and consequences of how publications were sponsored, translated, distributed and received as tools of “soft power.”

While much of the “cultural Cold War” literature has investigated books as a significant tool in propaganda and “influence campaigns,” alternative perspectives from literary studies have balanced this with more attention for the book as the outcome of specific processes of cultural production. Placing the book as the cultural medium at the center of this project enables a multi-layered approach to reconsider the influence of different actors, processes, and outcomes. The conference will build on a growing scholarship that highlights the “cooperation and multilateral development” that took place among public and private institutions and individuals during the Cold War, often as “active participants with motivations and aims of their own” (Mikkonen et al. 2018)¹.

We are particularly interested in interdisciplinary research projects and case studies that go beyond a zero-sum approach to both the cultural Cold War and book diplomacy. Beyond the front organizations and “hidden hands” were multiple networks involving literary agents, translators, authors, editors, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, critics and audiences who each in their own ways played a part. These actors often had numerous, sometimes conflicting affiliations, allegiances and agendas which were not necessarily in line with the key policy of winning “hearts and minds” for East, West, North, or South.

A recent special issue on “Translation and the Cultural Cold War” in *Translation and Interpreting Studies* identified how this field is a rich area for dialogue, collaboration and interdisciplinary research between translation studies, Cold War history and cultural diplomacy scholarship. As the articles there show, the dialogue across these three disciplines opens up multiple ways to critically assess the importance of translation in processes of cultural dissemination.

We intend to use this event to recognize and assess the many forgotten participants and their particular roles in Cold War publishing. In what ways did this diverse array of actors contribute to “book diplomacy” and Cold War book programs? In which ways can we explain and

¹ Mikkonen, Simo, Jari Parkkinen, and Giles Scott-Smith. (eds.) *Entangled East and West: Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War*. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2019

understand their cultural significance, and the cultural messages of the books that they produced and disseminated?

This conference will be accompanied by an exhibition on the history of the Franklin Book Programs, a private network of publishing operations around the globe that ran from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The conference aims to bring together a diverse group of scholars and papers with the intention of compiling a publication after the event. We will therefore be working with pre-circulated draft papers to ensure the most effective use of the conference gathering itself. Draft papers should be no more than 3-4000 words in length. Deadlines for the conference planning are stated below.

The themes addressed include but are not limited to the following:

- Translation and the Cultural Cold War
- Book Diplomacy: The history, legacy and political significance of Cold War book programs
- ‘Book Hunger’: the transformation and development of libraries, the publishing industry and the global book market
- Cold War styles: paperbacks, pocketbooks and bestsellers
- Transnational networks (authors, translators, publishers and editors)
- Copyright and censorship
- Readers, audiences, and critics
- The role of archives and the digitization of Cold War literary products

Abstract:

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words to Esmail Haddadian-Moghaddam at e.haddadian-moghaddam@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Please include a working list of references and archival resources.

Deadlines

Deadline for submissions: 15 December 2021

Notification of acceptance: 15 January 2022

Deadline for final paper submission: 31 March 2022

The conference is part of the research project, “**Cold Books in Hot Lands: Winning and Losing Hearts and Minds in the Middle East**” (Coldbihot) which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement number 845798.

More information about the conference: <https://coldbihot.net/book-diplomacy-conference/>