

medieval Russian images and their role in current Russian politics underscores the volume's interdisciplinary nature and the overlapping interactions between historical epochs.

Cristiano Casalini, *Boston College, USA*
doi:[10.1017/rqx.2024.341](https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2024.341)

Aldus Manutius: The Invention of the Publisher. Oren Margolis.
Renaissance Lives. London: Reaktion Books, 2023. 208 pp. \$25.

Aldo Manuzio (1449/50–1515, name Latinized to Aldus Manutius) has been a perennial favorite of scholars of the Renaissance, who chant his name (along with that of Vespasiano da Bisticci) as a savior of classical literature, or, to understand their more commercial sensibilities, as a purveyor of humanism. Part of the fervor over Aldus has long been driven by bibliophiles, who strive to amass the *libelli portatiles*. These are among the most prolific, and comparatively affordable, objects of Renaissance material culture available today: specimens of Francesco Griffo's italic and Greek types, significant editions of humanist texts, special copies printed on vellum (or blue or large paper), and copies still in their original bindings. The books embody the commercialization of classical and humanist texts, as well as several centuries of preservation through scholarly and bibliophilic libraries. Aldus provided a lot of fodder for collectors in his own day and up to the present: Jean Grolier (ca. 1489/90–1565) and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1503/04–75) (see Anthony Hobson, *Renaissance Book Collecting* [1999]), Antoine-Augustin Renouard (1765–1853), George Spencer, Second Earl of Spencer (1758–1834), J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), and, most recently, the collection of T. Kimbell Brooker, bibliophile and philanthropist, whose library of about 1,300 Renaissance books began hitting the auction block at Sotheby's New York in October 2023, with further sales in the US and Europe expected for several years to come.

Exhibitions devoted to Aldus rarely focus on Aldus. Commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of Aldus's death in 2015 was *Aldus Manutius: A Legacy More Lasting than Bronze* at the Grolier Club of New York, an institution devoted to book collectors, where, unsurprisingly, the books took center stage. The following year, the Gallerie dell'Accademia's *Aldo Manuzio: Il Rinascimento di Venezia*, to which I was fortunate enough to deliver two of the Morgan's Aldine editions, highlighted the vibrant artistic world in which Aldus's press resided. Libraries rather than art museums have long taken the fore in Aldine

exhibitions, where Aldus is almost exclusively defined by a humanist text printed in small format with italic type with a dolphin and anchor printer's mark on the title page.

For all the attention on the books from the Aldine press—and there are a lot of them—Aldus himself often gets lost behind the italic font and enigmatic *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Margolis's life of Aldus, *Aldus Manutius: The Invention of the Publisher*, one of the latest in Reaktion Books's Renaissance Lives series, helps to turn the spotlight back to the man behind the imprint, and, as the title suggests, argues for Aldus's role as nascent publisher. For early modern printed books, our modern concept of publishers is not always a clear fit: did the publisher just provide financial backing for the entire printing enterprise, or were books commissioned title by title? Was the publisher the business manager, sitting in the front office, or hawking books but likely not shoulder-to-shoulder with those doing the physical labor of actual printing? Was the publisher an editor, taking a very active role in the pre-printing of the text? Like his predecessor William Caxton, the first English printer—or publisher, following Margolis—Aldus sprinkled bits of autobiography through the prefaces and prologues of his editions, which are mined to understand the intellectual impetus behind the output of the press. Like the fresco by Bernardino Loschi in the Capella di Palazzo dei Pio in Carpi (fig. 8), Margolis crafts a vibrant and detailed portrait of Aldus, charting the intellectual development that bore the fruit of printed books.

The five chapters are not restricted to simple chronology, which makes them a bit more interesting to read, but Margolis keeps the theme of Aldus's educational program at the center: what he would have brought to his role as tutor to the Pio family and how that impacted his later publishing program. Individual texts and authors abound, but Margolis strikes home through the discussion of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, printed in 1499, and the first evidence of Aldus's interest in the classical emblem that would come to be his trademark: the dolphin and anchor with the Latin motto *festina lente*. Margolis also spends significant time contextualizing the edition of Catherine of Siena's *Epistolae* of 1500, which includes the first printing of the famous italic type—generally speaking, the only reason this work is ever cited. Margolis's corrective does more to understand Aldus's publishing program through the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and *Epistolae* as integral productions of the press rather than as the isolated one-offs that they are usually considered to be.

In defining Aldus as a publisher, I wish more time had been spent on the Aldine notion of copyright. Griffo's italic font and the *libelli portatiles* hit a significant market, and editions were quickly reproduced by printers across Europe. Our modern definition of copyright, much like that of the publisher, is certainly not that of the sixteenth century, and this subject would have benefited

from a deeper discussion on the concept of intellectual or bibliographic property. Aldus fought—with very limited success—against other printers reprinting his material. One would think this very idea of copyright would be endemic to what a publisher is, and yet the discussion of it is so minimal in the text that it does not even warrant an entry in the index (which is almost exclusively limited to proper names).

In the end, Margolis provides an exceedingly readable and informative biography of Aldus, which wonderfully augments Lowry's *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (1979). These two biographies of Aldus's career and a more book-focused publication, such as the 2015 Grolier Club catalogue for a closer examination of the Aldine imprints, will lead any researcher toward the question: Did Aldus make the books or did the books make Aldus? Margolis definitely seems to argue for the former.

John T. McQuillen, *The Morgan Library & Museum, USA*
doi:[10.1017/rqx.2024.230](https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2024.230)

Provenance and Possession: Acquisitions from the Portuguese Empire in Renaissance Italy. K. J. P. Lowe.

E. H. Gombrich Lecture Series. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024. xxi + 346 pp. \$45.

In *Provenance and Possession*, K. J. P. Lowe, an associate fellow at the Warburg Institute, offers another fascinating excursion into the multiple intersections between two dynamic areas of early modern Europe: Renaissance Italy and Portugal during the age of discoveries. Lowe focuses on the material connections between them, using those connections to illuminate two ideas: provenance and possession. She argues that, in that period, possession of a commodity was the essential fact, and there was virtually no conception of provenance (12). Lowe is candid about her approach to the material—“this study is concerned with explanation and context rather than with theory” (xiv). The book is “an exercise in context enhancement: in minute focusing on the documents and objects in order to extract as much as possible from them about the known context in period-appropriate fashion” (1–2).

The core of the work is Lowe's microhistorical examination of three sources. The best known of the sources—records from the Ospedale degli Innocenti—is the basis for chapter 3. Lowe focuses on the African and mixed-race children found in late fifteenth-century records—all of whom