

A comment on Brian Dooley's Article

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There is so much that is useful and valuable about Brian Dooley's article on "Printing and Entrepreneurialism in Seventeenth-Century Italy" (*The Journal of European Economic History*, XXV [Winter 1996]), that I am hesitant to take issue with any one point lest I appear ungrateful. May I, instead, ask him to consider this simply a "friendly amendment" to one thing that he has said. I prefer to think of this addition as lending support to the larger theme that he develops: printers were most inventive in employing a variety of activities to keep themselves in business.

There is a certain literature out there that argues that newspapers, albeit specialized business newspapers, made their appearance in Italy well before the 1639 date that Dooley suggests (p. 589). I confess to being the author of some of this work but I am in good company. Indeed two of the people whom Dooley cites (pp. 589-590) have argued essentially the same thing: sixteenth-century Italian publishers were among the first and may indeed have been the first purveyors of business newspapers¹. There are extant copies of a quarterly exchange rate current from Piacenza dated 1581 and after and a weekly commodity price current from Venice dated 1585 and after. Florence saw the publication of a weekly commodity price current from 1598 on. Many, many more followed in the next century². Moreover I have contended that Italy is likely to have been the model of the Antwerp

¹ See Maria Augusta Morelli [Timpanaro], 'Gli inizi della stampa periodica a Firenze nella prima metà del XVII secolo', *Critica Storica: Bollettino dell'Associazione degli Storici Europei*, VI (May 1968), 288-323. Compare Maria Augusta Morelli [Timpanaro], *Delle prime gazette fiorentine* (Florence, [1963]), to which her article is, in part, a correction. See also Ugo Bellocchi, *Storia del Giornalismo Italiano*, 8 vols., (Bologna, 1974-1980), esp. II, 37-40, 118, 126.

² See John J. McCusker and Cora Gravesteijn, 'The Beginnings of Commercial and Financial Journalism: The Commodity Price Currents, Exchange Rate Currents, and Money Currents of Early Modern Europe', *Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief*, ser. III, no. 11 (Amsterdam, 1991); and McCusker, 'The Italian Business Press in Early Modern Europe', in McCusker, *Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic World*, (London 1997), pp. 116-144, which is a correction and revision of a paper originally published in *Produzione e Commercio della Carta e del Libro*, secc. XIII-XVIII, ed. Simonetta Cavacciocchi, Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F. Datini," Pubblicazioni, Serie II, no. 23 (Prato, 1992), pp. 797-841.

commodity price current that I date to as early as 1540³. If true, this would push back the beginnings of Italian journalism a full century before the introduction of the general purpose newspaper that Dooley recognizes.

None of this will strike anyone as strange given all that Dooley writes about the entrepreneurial nature of Italian printing and publishing.

Brian Dooley replies:

I can only thank John McCusker for his helpful addition to my data, by indicating that the roots of the seventeenth-century political newspapers also lay in sixteenth-century commercial sheets that he has studied. Entrepreneurialism in the smaller genres during the earlier period is surely a subject that deserves much more attention than it has hitherto received.

³ See John J. McCusker, 'The Role of Antwerp in the Emergence of Commercial and Financial Newspapers in Early Modern Europe', in *La ville et la transmission des valeurs culturelles au bas Moyen Age et aux temps modernes – Die Stadt und die Übertragung von kulturelles Werten im Spätmittelalter und in die Neuzeit-Cities and the Transmission of Cultural Values in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, Gemeentekrediet van België/Crédit Communal de Belgique, Collection Histoire, no. 96 (Brussels, 1996), pp. 303-332.