



History's Babel: Scholarship, Professionalization, and the Historical Enterprise in the United States, 1880 - 1940

Robert B. Townsend

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From the late nineteenth century until World War II, competing spheres of professional identity and practice redrew the field of history, establishing fundamental differences between the roles of university historians, archivists, staff at historical societies, history teachers, and others.

In *History's Babel*, Robert B. Townsend takes us from the beginning of this professional shift—when the work of history included not just original research, but also teaching and the gathering of historical materials—to a state of microprofessionalization that continues to define the field today. Drawing on extensive research among the records of the American Historical Association and a multitude of other sources, Townsend traces the slow fragmentation of the field from 1880 to the divisions of the 1940s manifest today in the diverse professions of academia, teaching, and public history. By revealing how the founders of the contemporary historical enterprise envisioned the future of the discipline, he offers insight into our own historical moment and the way the discipline has adapted and changed over time. Townsend's work will be of interest not only to historians but to all who care about how the professions of history emerged, how they might go forward, and the public role they still can play.

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