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978-1-107-11013-7 - Knowledge and the Public Interest, 1575–1725

Vera Keller

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Knowledge and the Public Interest, 1575–1725

Many studies relate modern science to modern political and economic thought. Using one shift in order to explain the other, however, has begged the question of modernity's origins. New scientific and political reasoning emerged simultaneously as controversial forms of probabilistic reasoning. Neither could ground the other. They both rejected logical systems in favor of shifting, incomplete, and human-oriented forms of knowledge that did not meet accepted standards of speculative science. This study follows their shared development by tracing one key political stratagem for linking human desires to the advancement of knowledge: the collaborative wish list. Highly controversial at the beginning of the seventeenth century, charismatic desiderata lists spread across Europe, often deployed against traditional sciences. They did not enter the academy for a century but eventually so shaped the deep structures of research that today this once controversial genre appears to be a musty and even pedantic term of art.

Vera Keller (Ph.D. Princeton) is an assistant professor of history at the Robert D. Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon. She is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including most recently the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of Scholars in Critical Bibliography and the Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies.

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Advance praise for *Knowledge and the Public Interest, 1575–1725*

“This is the mature, highly original, and fascinating book of a still young scholar. It brings together fields of research that have rarely been connected: history of science, economics, and political thought. Keller not only discovers the *desiderata* list as an object of historical research and gives for the first time its history – she also uses this topic to make wide-ranging statements about the so-called scientific revolution and the emergence of modernity.”

Martin Mulsow,
University of Erfurt

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To Hana Takusagawa

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