



# Kent Academic Repository

McBride, K., Bigoni, M. and Gomes, D. (2025) *How does accounting history shape the past, present and future of society?* *Accounting History*, 30 (2). pp. 139-158. ISSN 1032-3732.

## Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/109464/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

## The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10323732251334815>

## This document version

Publisher pdf

## DOI for this version

## Licence for this version

CC BY-NC (Attribution-NonCommercial)

## Additional information

## Versions of research works

### Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

### Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in **Title of Journal**, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

## Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact [ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

# How does accounting history shape the past, present and future of society?

Accounting History  
2025, Vol. 30(2) 139–158  
© The Author(s) 2025



Article reuse guidelines:  
[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
DOI: 10.1177/10323732251334815  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/ach](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ach)



**Karen McBride**   
University of Portsmouth, UK

**Michele Bigoni**   
University of Kent, UK

**Delfina Gomes**   
University of Minho, Portugal

## Abstract

Accounting history as a discipline is in danger in today's utilitarian society, where it is often seen as a prerogative of a select few who are disconnected from real-world problems and refuse to engage with studies that can 'help business'. The present work discusses how history, including accounting history, has never been more important, especially in today's highly turbulent society. We reject myths of continuity and finalism and a view of history as an unproblematic linear path toward current and future practice. By engaging with genealogical, quintessentially interdisciplinary 'histories of the present', accounting historians can shed new light on past practices and learn important lessons which can be invaluable in solving today's problems. To remain relevant, accounting history research needs to take advantage of the possibilities offered by digital technologies, broaden its range of sources, explore new methodologies and theoretical approaches and engage with wider audiences, beyond the borders of academia.

## Keywords

past, present, future, accounting, interdisciplinary

## Introduction

The status of accounting history, as an academic discipline and as a mode of critical inquiry, often seems increasingly precarious. In a period influenced by neoliberal rationalities, the value of

---

### Corresponding author:

Karen McBride, University of Portsmouth, Richmond Building, Portland Street, Portsmouth PO1 3DE, UK.  
Email: [karen.mcbride@port.ac.uk](mailto:karen.mcbride@port.ac.uk)

knowledge is often measured by its immediate utility, particularly relating to stakeholders, market outcomes and even employability. Within this context, historical scholarship is frequently deemed non-essential, a pursuit of erudition with limited practical relevance in a world oriented toward innovation, efficiency and economic growth. Accounting history is marginalised in publications across the accountancy field, with only a few generalist journals accepting historical studies. Such developments signal a devaluation of historical inquiry and raise questions about the role of the past in contemporary accounting, academia and society.

Despite calls to reconceptualise accounting as a technical, social and moral practice (Carnegie et al., 2021, 2024), prevailing paradigms continue to privilege instrumental knowledge and market-driven outcomes. Accounting research is incentivised by performance metrics that favour contributions to business practice, often at the expense of critical or historical perspectives (Gendron, 2008, 2015; Maran et al., 2023). Accounting education is largely oriented towards professional accreditation and career progression. Within such a framework, accounting history, particularly when informed by critical or interpretive approaches, is vulnerable to marginalisation, both institutionally and epistemologically.

In this article, we argue that contemporary life and recent financial crises render historical inquiry more important than ever. Foucault (1977, 1979) argues that history can assist in problematising the present, thereby highlighting taken-for-granted assumptions and revealing the historical context of contemporary arrangements. Genealogical approaches to history seek to deconstruct linear narratives of progress, to expose the discontinuities, ruptures and power relations that have shaped current forms of knowledge and practice. This is relevant for a discipline such as accounting, where dominant conceptions of neutrality and objectivity often obscure the political dimensions of calculative practices (Bigoni and Awais, 2024). Historical inquiry can offer insights into how accounting practices have emerged, evolved and function within their socio-political context; these insights are essential for understanding the past, transforming the present and informing the future.

This article critically reflects on the relevance of accounting historical inquiry. Drawing on contributions from the 11th *Accounting History* International Conference (AHIC), which are published in this special issue, and engage with both traditional and critical perspectives on accounting history, this article considers the current threats to historical scholarship, the theoretical and methodological resources available to counter them, and the potential for accounting history to contribute meaningfully to contemporary debates. It is argued that far from being obsolete, history, especially when approached genealogically, offers essential tools for critical engagement with the present and for envisioning alternative futures.

Following this introduction, the article is divided into three sections: the past, the present and the future. In engaging with the past, the present and the future, we also identify the ways in which the works in this special issue mobilise the ideas we discuss and provide fertile ground for further studies that can enrich interdisciplinary historical inquiry. This article then concludes with a call to embrace accounting history more fully, arguing that accounting history plays an important role not only in understanding the development of accounting practices but also in challenging prevailing assumptions and offering insights into present and future societal challenges. Building on Foucault's notion of a 'history of the present', this article rejects linear conceptions of history in favour of genealogical approaches that foreground discontinuity, contestation and contingency. This historical inquiry, essential for avoiding critiques that tend to reproduce dominant discourses, supports the development of alternative perspectives, addressing the complex, interrelated contemporary crises.

Accounting is thus approached as more than just a technical discipline but as a social and moral practice with the capacity to influence governance, accountability and social outcomes. With

interdisciplinary approaches to accounting history becoming more prevalent, there are broader debates relating to social sciences and humanities. Future-oriented accounting history research needs to embrace methodological innovation, expand its source base beyond traditional archives, and seek new modes of dissemination, including digital platforms and public history, to ensure continued impact. In doing so accounting historians can contribute meaningfully to confronting the ‘wicked problems’ of our time, from environmental degradation and social inequality to the erosion of democratic institutions.

## The past

### *History in academia and society: an endangered species?*

The past is in danger. History as a discipline is in danger. Our society is informed by a narrative of eminently desirable, unlimited ‘progress’ and disregards the past as irrelevant and history as a subject which is little more than a form of erudition for a selected few who are believed to be disconnected from the here and now. Even many of those institutions that are supposed to generate and nurture knowledge, such as universities, are increasingly abandoning the past. In the UK, the country where the 11th AHIC, which inspires this journal issue, took place, history in higher education ‘is in a state of unprecedented turbulence and uncertainty’ (Royal Historical Society, 2023: 1). Whilst colleagues gathered in Portsmouth were celebrating accounting’s past, even institutions which topped REF2021 rankings for history were declaring cuts and far-reaching restructuring exercises. The fact that even research excellence does not shield departments from cuts and uncertainty speaks volumes about how knowledge, and especially historical knowledge, is perceived today. The relentless process of commodification of knowledge by neoliberal society means that, on the one hand, universities operate as business-like organisations, which compete for market space (Durazzi, 2021; Lewis and Shore, 2019; Parker, 2011). On the other hand, universities are merely seen as a means for students to find a job. Such a narrow view is often fuelled by political parties in search of new ways to reduce investment into public services: former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged to promote apprenticeships by ‘putting an end to rip-off degrees’, leading to low job progression if he were to win the 2024 general election (Sunak, quoted in Courea, 2024: 1). This functionalist understanding of higher education, which disregards important features of university life such as socialisation, the promotion of free thinking and the civic formation of the individual, is highly relevant to business disciplines, most especially accounting.

Despite calls to broaden the scope of accounting (Carnegie et al., 2021, 2024), the latter is still perceived as quintessentially practical, a set of neutral techniques which students need to master to achieve a highly sought-after, well paid job (Bérubé and Gendron, 2022; Bigoni and Awais, 2024). At the same time, accounting academics are called to develop ‘impactful’ research which can benefit the world of business (and profit maximisation), whilst alternative perspectives, which seek to promote more reflexive and socially minded accounting and management practices are often side-lined, as dramatically shown in business schools ‘disinvesting’ from alternative research and scholarship (Andrew et al., 2021; Komlik, 2021). The diffusion of research and scholarship on social and environmental accounting offers some promising future avenues for the development of alternative accounting practices. Nevertheless, Tweedie (2024) has warned against placing excessive faith in the performative potential of environmental accounting in tackling the present environmental crises. At the same time, the search for new practices aiming at ‘producing profitable solutions from the problems of people and planet’ (The British Academy, 2017: 1) provides an indication that within the current economic system, goals can only be achieved via profit maximisation (Gray, 2010). Despite its laudable purpose of helping to fight environmental destruction, research

and scholarship on social and environmental accounting are already being captured by capital and turned into yet another profit opportunity (Bigoni and Mohammed, 2023).

Given the perceived lack of practicality of history and its limited ability to identify new impactful business practices that can lead to profit maximisation, the outlook is not promising. The situation is then exacerbated by current performance systems in the managerialised university, which reward publications in 'high-ranked' journals (Gendron, 2008, 2015; Maran et al., 2023). Niche areas, specialist journals and smaller communities are penalised by journal rankings and citation metrics, which hinders an academic's career prospects.<sup>1</sup> In turn, this makes subjects such as accounting history less appealing to current and, most especially, future scholars. In this grim, eminently utilitarian scenario, is there a place for accounting history? Despite these significant challenges, or perhaps *because* of these significant challenges, history, including accounting history, has never been more important.

### *(Re)gaining relevance: genealogical 'histories of the present'*

The power of current practices and discourses is premised on their perception by individuals as being natural and self-evident, to the point of them having become part of our common sense (Gramsci, 1999). Unquestioning, and often unconscious, acceptance of such practices and discourses ensures their smooth reproduction and evolution over time. This means that individuals, especially those who seek to criticise current social arrangements, may feel trapped in a situation where criticising existing discourses means challenging our own values and beliefs (Cooper, 1995): for example, how can we problematise university performance management systems, which are justified by the deceptively desirable need to achieve the rational allocation of public resources and 'reward excellence'? It is precisely history that can offer a key to analysing and problematising taken-for-granted assumptions which dominate today's society, including the irrelevance of history itself. As noted by Marx (2021 [1852]: 9), 'men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under given circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past'. Nevertheless, such historical circumstances are often insufficiently understood, which leads individuals to consider their beliefs as natural.

Foucault was probably one of the most committed supporters of the role of history in investigating and critiquing current social arrangements and power relations (Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1979, 2007). He developed a set of methodological prescriptions, genealogy, which he then deployed to demonstrate how understanding objects of knowledge such as sexuality, madness, the carceral system and the discursive formations that support them requires a deep analysis of the past and the conditions under which such discursive formations came to the fore. Historical analyses of the past developed by means of the genealogical method do not seek to identify the specific moment in time in which current beliefs arose, but to appreciate the contingent set of forces and disparate events that contributed to the development of dominant discourses which now appear self-evident to us. In the words of Dean (1992: 216), genealogical work requires 'the methodical problematisation of the given, of the taken for granted'. Therefore, a genealogical investigation of the past, including of accounting's past, seeks to bring to the fore new ways of seeing and thinking, demonstrating that things were not always as they are (Foucault, 1977; Smart, 1983).

A successful analysis of current values and beliefs in organisations and society requires a sound knowledge of the past. Understanding the past does not simply have value in itself, it provides fertile ground for any successful critique of the present. Knowing how dominant discourses and practices arose is essential for promoting alternative arrangements and ways of knowing.

Consistently, to exclude history from one's work is 'to risk producing the type of criticism that is insulated within the socio-political discursive context in which it was produced and is hence to risk reproducing precisely the forms of knowledge and comprehension that one had hoped to interrogate' (Hook, 2005: 9). It is therefore crucial to avoid reading the past in light of the present; rather, in Foucault's (1979: 31) famous words, the task is writing a 'history of the present'. Doing so requires dispelling the myths of continuity and linearity in history (Foucault, 1972). Assuming continuity in historical events means projecting current values and norms into the analytical field being observed and also implying an artificial, rational unity to such events (Hook, 2005). Moreover, if much of traditional history has sought to include events into universal explanatory schemes and linear structures (Hook, 2005; McNay, 1992), genealogy does not conceive of history as the linear progression of events leading to the present, a view which often presumes the concept of continuous progress. In accounting, this has meant that history has been interrogated to identify the path of continuous improvement and evolution of accounting practices leading to current arrangements (Littleton, 1966). This finalism affects historical work in that it reduces our understanding of an event to its present significance and underscores the importance of discontinuity and chance (Foucault, 1977). As a result, the present is not the culmination of events that started in the past or the end of a process of development, but the contingent manifestation of power struggles between different forces (Kearins and Hooper, 2002).

To a genealogist, history is not merely a 'search through the past's myriad details for future-determining continuities', but it should be conceived of as a 'tireless sifting out of disparate components that our interests and priorities turn into episodes in an imposed progression' (Prado, 2000: 34). Such an understanding stresses the importance of source data as the essential component of historical analysis, and how the researcher is themselves a part of the process of meaning formation. Foucault underlined the importance of accumulating vast amounts of primary sources, which can then be used to connect disparate, apparently unrelated events (Bigoni et al., 2024). History has no essence in itself but exists through the use of documents that a historian has discovered (Moussa and Scapp, 1996). As a result, accessing original documents is a key condition for the development of a genealogy, and a careful, painstaking search and analysis of documents is the only means for uncovering facts. Particular attention needs to be paid to 'local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges' that are often excluded or overlooked by globalising discourses (Foucault, 1980: 83). Although they are all based on documented facts, genealogy differs from empiricism and positivism in that the latter postulate 'stability and regularity and [are] linked to functionalist theorising, whereas genealogy is characterised by an interest in conflict, fragmentation, subjugated knowledges and contingencies' (Kearins and Hooper, 2002: 737). Such attention is key in promoting the rise of alternative knowledges that can challenge dominant ones. At the same time, unlike in traditional, positivist inquiry, the researcher does not seek to disappear from the field being investigated but rather decodes events based on their epistemological beliefs and worldview. As a result, any account of social life is little more than an interpretation of the source documents (Moussa and Scapp, 1996). Despite its potential as a tool to identify new knowledge, genealogy cannot make any claim to universality and generalisability, which was never, however, the goal of Foucault (Kearins and Hooper, 2002).

The most important feature of historical research inspired by the understandings of genealogy is its potential for challenging those dominant discourses which were briefly sketched at the beginning of this section, most especially the irrelevance of history: '[T]he return to history makes sense in the respect that history shows that that which is was not always so' (Foucault, quoted in Moussa and Scapp, 1996: 102). Genealogy is not merely a method for the production of knowledge but is mostly a mode of critique that seeks to raise suspicion towards objects of knowledge and our relationship to them (Hook, 2005). With genealogical work, source

documents are deployed tactically, in order to generate new, less obvious ways of seeing and show how the things that we take for granted have not always been as they are now. For example, in modern society time is seen as firmly linear, a progression from the past into the present and the future; nevertheless, this was not always the case, for in the past a circular understanding of time was common, one which was based on nature and human activities taking place in different seasons. This circular understanding of time also had an impact on accounting (Bigoni et al., 2021). Moreover, pay-per-performance schemes, which are now common in most businesses, were not initially developed to boost productivity but to discourage a collectivist, union-oriented mindset in workers (Moore and Rao, 2023). Genealogy, ‘suspends contemporary norms of validity and meaning as it reveals their multiple conditions of formation’ (Dean, 1994: 33), it seeks to reconceptualise current partisan social arrangements by exposing their contingency and partiality via a problematisation of their historical roots (Kearins and Hooper, 2002). This means that the production of new knowledge is important to the genealogist, but it is not their ultimate goal. As explained by Hook (2005: 8), genealogy

does apply itself to knowledge production and the generation of kinds of ‘truth’ ... however these are operative, action-directed ‘truths’, capable of opposition and/or resistance, rather than ‘truths’ of a static or merely factual variety. Genealogical research is thus tactical rather than unconditional (or positivistic), in its relationship to ‘truth’.

As a result, in Foucauldian terms, history is practical in that it fuels new understandings of reality that can inform progressive change by undermining power where it is most invisible (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977). The production of new knowledge by means of historical enquiry represents a key means for critiquing and acting on current arrangements in society, which is especially important in an epoch like ours that is characterised by rampant social and economic differences and a looming environmental catastrophe. After all, as explained by Foucault (1977: 154), ‘knowledge is not made for understanding: it is made for cutting’.

### *The impact of accounting practices in the past*

Some of the articles in this special issue: Antonelli, Bigoni, D’Alessio and Funnell; Foltin, Previts and Flesher; and Baker and Cohanier embrace an understanding of history as a relevant means to identify how the seemingly neutral practice of accounting is often used as a tool for social calculus. These articles show the profound impact that accounting practices can have on social arrangements in the reproduction of dominant discourses. Drawing upon the work of Foucault (1991, 2003, 2007), Said (1979, 1994) and Scott (1995, 2005) on colonial governmentality, Antonelli, Bigoni, D’Alessio and Funnell (this issue) investigated the use of accounting practices in the form of budgets and censuses of the population in the Italian colonies located in Africa. During the Liberal age (1912–1922), African colonies were managed with minimal state intervention, which, consistent with Liberal beliefs, was believed to have enabled business to thrive. The Liberals sought to improve the conditions of life of the colonised through the diffusion of medical facilities, hygienic measures and schools in order to reduce unrest and provide Italian businesses located therein with a large and cheap workforce. The use of accounting tools was limited to rough, minimally detailed colonial budgets, which were mainly a means to control expenditure and minimise resources spent in the colonies. The use of accounting changed dramatically with the advent of the Fascists (1922–1941). Budgets became extremely detailed documents that prescribed hundreds of expense and revenue items, which were to be followed closely by local governors and bureaucrats, thereby enabling the government to gain full control of the

colonies. Significant resources were invested in hospitals and other medical facilities, police forces, courts of justice, prisons, schools and army conscription to control and discipline local populations and ensure that they could internalise the way of life of the conquerors. Unlike in Liberal Italy, censuses were extended to indigenous populations. Statistical knowledge of economic, social and demographic phenomena was gathered and used to make both Italians and Africans the targets of regulation. Moreover, new racial categories previously unknown to the Italian people became a means of moral legitimisation of colonialism, serving as a justification for the duty of the conquerors to 'civilise backward lands'. The study therefore shows how the role of accounting evolved when the political rationalities underpinning its use changed under different political regimes.

Other articles about the 'past' in the special issue embrace a more traditional understanding of accounting; nevertheless, they problematise its use and the origin of well-known tools and practices. Foltin, Previts and Flesher (this issue) focused on the railroads sector in the USA, which is often considered the first modern business. In doing so, they investigated the peculiar case of the New York, Chicago & St Louis Railroad Company, the so-called Nickel Plate Road (NKP). The railroad had been built with the sole purpose of forcing the New York Central Railroad to acquire it in order to maintain its monopolistic advantage. The NKP was sold in 1916 to the Van Sweringen brothers due to evolving antitrust regulations. The authors question Adam Smith's (1776) 'invisible hand' theory by embracing Chandler's (1977) understanding of the 'visible hand' characterised by professional business management rather than owner-operated. The Van Sweringen brothers were not involved in the day-to-day management of the business, which they left to professional managers, most especially Jon Bernet, who had the power to make autonomous decisions. The new management used accounting information and statistics extensively to drive innovation and make strategic decisions. The creation of a virtuous cycle that balanced the need for capital maintenance with dividend and interest payments was instrumental in boosting profits, delivering technical innovations and new business practices. The NKP was so successful that it became a main contributor to the growth of Midwestern cities and businesses.

Baker and Cohanier (in this issue) engaged with the relationship between financial innovation and commercial development by investigating the link between double-entry bookkeeping (DEB) and the emergence of bills of exchange in the late medieval and early modern periods. In doing so, the authors illustrated the rise of two key practices that laid the groundwork for modern financial systems and economies. Bills of exchange provided unprecedented *stimuli* to international trade by reducing the cost of long-distance trade, offering a cashless form of payment that did not exist before for the issuer who could also order a third party to pay their debt in another currency. The emergence of this new financial instrument was facilitated by the development of DEB, which provided merchants with an improved tool to track financial movements accurately and make informed decisions, which in turn was vital in building the confidence needed for bills of exchange to be used. DEB also facilitated the evolution of credit systems by helping to establish the creditworthiness of merchants and banking institutions, enabling players to engage in more complex financial transactions, and ensuring that banks could intermediate between depositors and borrowers more efficiently, thereby facilitating the diffusion of bills of exchange. Lastly, DEB provided businesspeople with a way around existing rules against usury, which hindered the diffusion of credit and, hence, bills of exchange. DEB allowed merchants to disguise interest as other fees and charges. It also enabled merchants to structure transactions in a way that complied with legal restrictions whilst providing credit and favoured the use of deferred payments, which could function similarly to interest without explicitly violating usury laws.



## The present

### *Current conceptions of accounting and accounting history research*

Accounting research, including accounting history research, has been, is and will be influenced by what researchers and practitioners understand by ‘accounting’. Although this may appear to be a rather trivial issue, one which has not received a significant level of attention, the consequences of different understandings of accounting are substantial. Accounting is often conceived as a mere technical practice, informed by economic rationales alone. This has an impact both on the way in which accounting is taught in universities and on how it is understood by international organisations developing accounting standards (Bigoni and Awais, 2024). These organisations continue to view accounting merely as a technical practice which promotes profit maximisation, including when developing social and environmental accounting standards (Branco et al., 2024). Whether accounting is considered as a mere technical practice, a social and institutional practice, or a technical, social and moral practice will influence the ways in which accounting research is conducted and accounting standards developed and, consequently, accounting’s impact on present and future society (Carnegie et al., 2021, 2024; Gomes, 2008).

Accounting history research has undergone several changes, with new research themes emerging, new perspectives being adopted, and different theoretical and methodological perspectives applied from other disciplines, which increased the potential and dimensions of the research being developed (Carnegie, 2014; Carnegie et al., 2020; Edwards and Walker, 2020; Ferri et al., 2021; Gomes, 2008; Napier, 2006, 2020). Accounting history research has matured and has now overcome the traditional dichotomy between ‘old’ and ‘new’ accounting history, which created an artificial chasm that has divided accounting historians for a long time (Funnell, 1996; Miller et al., 1991). Current developments in accounting history research have resulted in a more attractive and contemporary classification of schools of thought. According to Napier (2020: 34), accounting history research can be classified into two areas: ‘history of accounting’ and ‘socio-historical accounting research’. Studies focusing on the history of accounting understand the latter as a set of procedures and practices and involve the study of accounting records or secondary sources to document how accounting was practised in the past. When seeking to explain and describe past accounting phenomena, researchers can use a theoretical framework to answer questions about how accounting was practised, why individuals and organisations adopted certain methods, and how and why accounting concepts emerged and changed over time. In the context of socio-historical accounting research, researchers seek to understand how accounting has an impact on specific individuals and organisations and on society at large, using methods and theories from sociology or social theory. This area of enquiry assumes that accounting plays a profound and complex role in society, which needs to be investigated and revealed to allow a fuller understanding of how individuals are controlled, limited, or even empowered through the use of accounting records and calculations. According to Napier (2020), these two areas or currents must support each other, instead of being juxtaposed as was the case of the ‘new’ and ‘old’ accounting history (Funnell, 1996).

Accounting history research has developed its perspectives and methodological and theoretical approaches considerably since the early 1990s, thereby embracing diverse fields and research topics (Gomes, 2008); at present, the possibilities are even greater, as are the challenges. In 2025, the world is facing complex, uncertain and challenging events/realities. This happens at the global level, with wars occurring in different areas of the planet, climate change, and threats posed by new pandemics, but also at the micro level, with people facing deprivation and social isolation even in developed countries, and several species of fauna and flora facing the risk of extinction every day. To address these challenges, new perspectives and paradigms are required to save planet Earth. This new and uncertain environment involves the need for accounting history research

to focus on the past and develop answers to be implemented in solving present and future problems. As noted in the previous pages, this means that history and accounting history, as a form of social history, have never been as relevant as today.

Accounting history research is a powerful tool to demonstrate the dangers and crises faced by individuals and populations in the past and how they have been overcome. Such are the challenges in today's world that we cannot afford to dismiss accounting history as something irrelevant. The answer to many of the world's grave problems can be found by understanding the past and the lessons that it can teach, which in turn can enable the development of new perspectives on current issues. Carnegie et al. (2021, 2024) have proposed a new definition of accounting, which may assist in solving the 'wicked problems' of present times and contribute to a better world. Consistently, accounting should be considered as 'a technical, social and moral practice concerned with the sustainable utilisation of resources and proper accountability to stakeholders to enable the flourishing of organisations, people and nature' (Carnegie et al., 2021: 69).

This definition moves from the simplistic consideration of accounting as a technical practice and presents accounting as a multidimensional practice with technical rigour, social responsibility and moral means and purpose. How can this definition contribute to the relevance of accounting history? It can do so by directing the attention of researchers, when investigating the past, to three key questions which have implications for the present:

- Technical practice: How was accounting done? What conventions drove what accounting failed to do?
- Social practice: What has accounting done? What were the impacts of accounting in the world?
- Moral practice: What should accounting have done? What should accounting not have done?

Consistent with this definition of accounting, it would appear to be timely for the findings and conclusions of accounting history research, developed all over the world, to be evaluated to assess whether these studies have clearly and convincingly portrayed accounting as a technical, social and moral practice, highlighting the lessons the past provides us to address present and future challenges. As argued by Napier (2024), it is of greater relevance to study accounting in the past, as much as in the present, in the political, social, cultural and economic contexts in which it operates. It is equally important for present studies to be aware of the moral responsibility of accounting towards organisations, people and nature.

### *Challenges faced by today's accounting history research*

Accounting history research is still considered a rather niche field, but it is also a prosperous one. Nevertheless, the field is also facing relevant challenges today. Gomes et al. (2011) have reflected on a number of proposals and suggestions to increase the quality, relevance and influence of accounting history research, which follow the affirmative and assertive response to the question: 'Does accounting history matter?'. Of the various challenges, one is related to the need to deconstruct misconceptions about the discipline, especially that the history of accounting is 'a narrow, highly specialised field that is not part of the "main game" or the "big picture"' (Gomes et al., 2011: 391). This can be done by demonstrating the richness and diversity of themes, theoretical perspectives and implications that accounting history can have for organisations and society. Another misconception to be deconstructed by researchers in accounting history is the notion that these researchers are a 'small, introverted group of potentially quaint individuals who attend only accounting history conferences' (Gomes et al., 2011: 391). On the contrary, history offers great opportunities to carry out interdisciplinary studies which look at accounting practices in a

tight connection with the social, political and economic circumstances in which such practices were used. Such projects would also appeal to generalist accounting conferences and journals, as well as other academic disciplines. It is up to researchers in accounting history to adopt strategies that counter the mistaken view of the lack of connection between the past and the present, by demonstrating that understanding the past contributes to increasing our understanding of present practice and theory and reinforcing the appreciation of the social and moral dimensions and the impact of accounting on individuals, organisations and society.

Challenges are therefore launched for researchers to contribute to improving the impact of research in accounting history. Specifically, researchers should be seeking to: emphasise the relevance of accounting history and its implications for the present; participate and promote joint work with researchers from other areas; adopt an informative and engaging writing style and adopt appropriate and innovative methodologies when conducting their research. A further, overarching challenge is the call for accounting history researchers to be agents of change. Accounting history researchers can be real agents of change through their active participation in the analysis of current developments in accounting, for example, as public commentators. Knowledge of the past enables a better understanding and a more detailed critique of the current state of accounting and reforms implemented and/or justified by means of accounting. As argued by Gomes et al. (2011: 398), 'there is also ground for accounting historians to engage in more "direct action" in shaping the policy debates and political decision-making processes from which much accounting practice is derived'.

From a different perspective, Gomes et al. (2015) highlight another crucial issue, that of language. The authors investigate the challenges and pressures faced by researchers whose native language is not English when seeking to publish their accounting history work in international outlets. The authors focused in particular on Portugal, Italy, France and Spain, which have a rich tradition of accounting history research (Bigoni and Funnell, 2018). Gomes et al. (2015: 183) call for 'a more cooperative environment within international accounting history research which considers the cultural differences and embraces those differences.' Consistently, non-Anglophone researchers need to take advantage of the long history, tradition and culture of their countries of origin in the development of research that can appeal to international audiences by offering something that is outside the periods and themes investigated in dominant Anglophone accounting history research. Moreover, joint work with scholars from other countries can enrich accounting history work through the integration of different perspectives and epistemological beliefs. At the same time, interdisciplinarity plays a crucial role too since 'the successes accounting historians achieve by engaging with other accounting scholars and scholars outside the accounting discipline will strengthen the capacity of our research to contribute to humanity's reflections upon, critiques of and decisions about its present and future' (Baskerville et al., 2017: 420). Another potential opportunity is offered by recent changes in language policies of some international journals, which are seeking to help scholars who are not native speakers of English to bring their work to the attention of the international community (Andrew et al., 2020). *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* now accepts submissions in French, Spanish and is experimenting with Italian, whilst *Accounting Forum* has launched a multi-language special issue.

To conclude, as argued by Napier (2024), the great challenge to accounting history researchers is providing lessons from the past that provide hope for the future of humankind. In the words of Krznaric (2024: 254):

Humanity needs to look backwards in order to move forwards. History has the power to crack through the baseline of our imaginations, opening our minds to the inspiring possibilities of the past. ... [W]ith history as a guide, ... we can create a civilisation that bends rather than breaks as we confront the turbulence of the twenty-first century. It is time to draw on history for tomorrow, and turn radical hope into action.

### *The legacy of accounting practices in the present*

Work in this special issue has analysed the past in a way that can provide lessons for the present, and identify possible actions for the future. These studies: Wright; Piper, McBride and Tait; and Bonollo engage with themes and events that are still very relevant today and which have helped to shape the present as we know it. These articles show that knowing the past is informative, as it enables a better understanding of current accounting practices, which in turn helps to find new ways to act upon them from a multidimensional perspective. Annual reports are a key component of corporate reporting today, one that serves several purposes, from providing information on a firm's financial performance to identifying how a company engages with sustainability issues. Wright (in this issue) provides a longitudinal analysis of the impact of external institutional pressures on the annual reports of large Australian corporations over a century to identify how annual reports evolved into their present form. The article draws from New Institutional Theory and the concept of isomorphism, which highlights the existence of coercive and normative pressures resulting from company regulations, societal expectations, the accounting profession and professional and industrial organisations. Due to these institutional pressures, the content of annual reports became increasingly homogeneous. However, tensions remained because of the coexistence of different audiences and objectives, which raised concerns over disclosure quality and transparency. Wright notes that annual reports are not simply statutory audited financial statements, but also symbolic 'mediascapes and videoscapes' that provoke 'interpretive and emotional reactions' from readers (David, 2001: 195). This means that annual reports need to address several (and potentially conflicting) strategic and symbolic concerns. These diverse roles started to appear in the second half of the twentieth century, more precisely between the 1950s and the 1980s. In this period, annual reports evolved from a statutory document to an accountability instrument, and even a public relations tool because of institutional pressures. Coercive and normative pressures contributed to the creation of a 'new annual report', divided into sections aimed at addressing the competing objectives of providing transparent information and glossy storytelling. It is important to recognise the role played by professional organisations. Normative pressures after the 1950s resulted in the issuing of accounting standards and the need to provide more information than required by the law, particularly narrative information. Between the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, these pressures resulted in an expansion of accountability to different dimensions within corporate and social responsibility (community, environment and diversity).

Another study in this special issue makes us reflect on the different types of lessons we can take from the past. In particular, the social and moral nature of accounting can be emphasised by analysing the dark moments of our history. As the world is facing the risk of a catastrophic third global conflict, it is fundamental to look back and analyse the implications for people and nature of such terrible moments and the motives leading to such situations to avoid the same mistakes in the present – a lesson that many world leaders do not seem to be prepared to learn for we are now 'in an era of rearmament' (von der Leyen, 2025). Piper, McBride and Tait (in this issue) conduct a prosopographical study to identify the backgrounds of 15 chartered accountants who served in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during the Second World War. The study investigated the networks and social capital of these chartered accountants and how they played a role in these accountants' recruitment and activities. In situations of conflict, many operations are kept secret. This was the case of the SOE, a secret group responsible for organising unconventional, paramilitary and irregular warfare with no restrictions. Given the importance placed on transparency in the present, such a level of secrecy seems strange, particularly when public funding is being used. However, extraordinary times call for new styles of leadership and strategy, as this study demonstrates through the analysis of the work of these qualified accountants and their role in the SOE.

The study by Bonollo (in this issue) highlights the importance of considering the legacy of the past in the implementation of new reforms in the public sector. She examines the role of the Italian Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) from 1992 to 2001, following reforms inspired by the rationality of the New Public Management (NPM), in a context characterised by strong legal traditions and a bureaucratic culture. NPM had a significant impact on public sector institutions in many Western countries, but its implementation has not been homogeneous. Italy is known for its large bureaucratic apparatuses, the presence of different bodies of law applying to the private and the public sectors, and the complete separation between judicial and executive powers. This is due to the legacy of the short-lived yet impactful Napoleonic conquest of much of the Italian territory. The article shows the importance of considering the context in which reforms are enacted and the process of their implementation to overcome criticisms and potential failure. The work broadens the compass of previous studies of public sector auditing conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries by offering a perspective from a different administrative tradition. As a result of NPM reforms, the SAI was expected to provide recommendations to improve public performance and strengthen accountability and transparency in the Italian public sector. The SAI had to publicly respond to NPM-inspired regulations in a context traditionally resistant to managerial innovations. The author's findings highlight that whilst the SAI's response to NPM regulations was aligned with the letter of the law, its actions were still consistent with its traditional watchdog role. These findings reveal unintentional organised hypocrisy, resulting from the conflict between norms, values, beliefs, or people. It shows how the SAI handled such disputes and tensions, thus demonstrating that the Napoleonic administrative tradition is quite resistant to the ideas of NPM.

## The future

### *Future interdisciplinary work in accounting history*

Consistent with the Foucauldian view of history that informs this work, the future can be seen as a contingent outcome of competing forces rather than a predetermined culmination of past and present developments. Lessons from past financial and social crises can guide policy and regulation to prevent future financial and social issues. Accounting historians view accounting as a social practice, impacting human behaviour, organisations and social behaviour and development, and accounting is throughout organisations and societies (Carnegie et al., 2020). The history of accounting sheds insight not only into the development of financial practices, institutions, and regulations but can also assist in understanding the social and provide context for calls for change with significant implications for future practice. Historical research in accounting contributes by providing insights into corporate governance and ethical accounting practices and informs contemporary debates on practice, sustainability, and financial transparency. Accounting histories can present a historical narrative and encourage readers to learn lessons from the past (Napier, 2001). A growing body of historical research provides valuable insights into contemporary accounting challenges, informing policy decisions, as the global business landscape shifts and new methodologies emerge, the field of accounting adapts to maintain its societal relevance and scholarly impact (Carnegie et al., 2021, 2024). It is within this genealogical framework that a 'history of the present' takes place. Beginning by identifying a present-day practice that is not only taken for granted but is also in some respects, problematic or seems unintelligible (Foucault, 1979; Garland, 2010; Hacking, 1990; Skinner, 2010; Walker, 2023), then determining the historical struggles; the genealogy that led to these. Indeed, there are many of these conundrums in management, organisations, business and society, the investigation of which requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Accounting history, whilst linked to management, organisation and business history, also serves as a powerful approach to these, only partly through analysing account books and financial records. Accounting historians can go beyond studying accounting techniques and procedures; they must also examine recorded operations, organisational structures, and administrative aspects within their broader economic, social and political contexts (McBride and Verma, 2024), informing change as and where inspired. Many economic historians lack deep knowledge of accounting techniques, often using account books merely as data sources rather than fully exploring their potential insights, as a result, significant topics in business and economic history remain incompletely studied. These unexplored accounts worldwide can provide valuable historical insights, but only accounting historians, experts in interpreting these records in their context, can fully unlock their potential. In this way accounting historians do not limit themselves to technical studies, but analyse and contextualise financial and other records to contribute meaningfully to social, cultural, and heritage, as well as historical research.

As interdisciplinary collaboration increases in importance within accounting research (Maran et al., 2023), the discipline will be enhanced. By engaging with other academic disciplines and publishing in broader outlets, accounting historians can highlight the relevance of their work beyond traditional accounting boundaries. Interdisciplinarity is central to the future of accounting history, by working across disciplines and engaging with perspectives from other fields, such as heritage and sustainability science (Atkins and McBride, 2023), accounting historians can push the boundaries of their research. This includes exploring international (Walker, 2005) and comparative accounting histories (Carnegie and Napier, 2002), which have long been espoused, as well as incorporating alternative viewpoints, such as postcolonial perspectives, to challenge dominant historical narratives; this could also be done through special issues. Collaborations with historians, archaeologists, architects, sociologists and anthropologists and their literature can provide background and context insights into the use of and inspire forward-looking change in accounting practices. Moving beyond Western narratives to study diverse accounting traditions in different cultural and economic settings can only enrich the discipline (see Greer and Neu, 2009; Neu, 2000; Sian, 2011). Research into the historical role of accounting in heritage and cultural settings will shed light on its broader socio-political impact. In examining the historical development of sustainability accounting and corporate social responsibility reporting, accounting historians can provide context for contemporary challenges (see McBride et al., 2023). Research in these areas, and in combinations of these, provides potential for a healthy future for the discipline.

Within this special issue, the article by Zan, Ferri and Baskakova considers heritage from a combination of business and accounting perspectives. The authors note that cultural heritage is a case, integrating the past, present and future. This article builds on work in the management of cultural heritage (Zan et al., 2016). It aims to explore the role of accounting, management and organisational historians in the preservation, representation, and narration of industrial heritage. The study seeks to determine whether and how this history is integrated into the regeneration of industrial heritage sites and to bridge the gap between accounting, management and organisational history and other disciplines (archaeology, architecture, sociology, tourism) in the study of industrial heritage. The article therefore advocates for a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach to accounting, management and organisational history within heritage studies.

This study highlights the diversity of approaches to preserving and representing accounting history in heritage sites. These approaches exist on a *continuum*, ranging from minimal representation, where historical use is barely acknowledged, to extensive integration, where the site's new function is almost entirely devoted to celebrating its past. There is significant variation in how the history is researched and incorporated into redevelopment projects. When research is conducted post-reuse, there are limited opportunities to influence historical representation. Conversely,

when research occurs during or as an integral part of the reuse process, accounting, management and organisational history are more prominently featured. The study considers the variety of methods used to present history, with the most effective representations integrating accounting, management and organisation into a functional narrative, for example, depicting the flow of materials and labour within the former production process. This research emphasises the role of site owners in determining the extent to which history is preserved, researched and incorporated.

From this article, it can be noted that heritage sites can present unique opportunities for accounting and business historians to contribute to historical preservation, sustainability and public engagement. The realising of this potential requires interdisciplinary collaboration with academics in other disciplines, for example, architecture, urban planning and heritage studies. With examples of how accounting historians can expand their methodological approaches, shifting from an exclusive focus on archival research to engaging directly with sites. With more of a curatorial role, accounting historians can ensure that heritage sites serve as historical records, and as spaces that foster meaningful connections between past accounting and business practices, and present-day audiences.

### *Innovations, methodologies and the future*

Amidst innovations and challenges, the evolution of accounting history also depends on methodological advancements (Cordery et al., 2023). It is important to preserve and analyse historical accounting records and ensure access to critical primary sources. However, research for the future should not only embrace traditional methods of archival research, but also include those methods, such as oral histories and ethnographies (Hammond and Sikka, 1996) that appear less frequently in accounting history research. Expanding the use of personal narratives and ethnographic methods can capture lived experiences in historical accounting as they have been used within business histories (Decker, 2013). Using methodological innovation, for example, in the writing and presentation of accounting history. Different approaches, such as biographies (Burrows, 2019), micro-histories and prosopographies (Carnegie and McBride, 2023), allow for different ways of exploring historical actors and events and making accounting history more engaging and nuanced. Engagement with public history, by including collaboration with museums, schools and professional bodies, can further enhance the relevance of accounting history and make it accessible to wider audiences. These more varied sources provide deeper insights into personal experiences and everyday business practices, enriching historical narratives in accounting and offering alternative perspectives on past events.

The final article in this special issue, by Maran, Lai, Napier, Sandu and Sangster, explores the significant role of special issues in academic journals, particularly in shaping research development and pushing the boundaries of academic fields. They note that special issues, often guest-edited, can be catalysts for fostering innovative research, highlighting emerging or neglected topics, and creating new areas of study. The article contains self-reflections on the experiences of guest editors and offers insights into the challenges and benefits of editing a special issue. Benefits include influencing intellectual direction, increasing exposure and advancing careers. The article discusses the rigorous process of planning, topic selection, submission review and managing publication. The article also highlights the importance of reflexivity in editing special issues, where guest editors take risks and experiment with new formats or topics. It emphasises the impact of special issues on the research community, promoting critical thinking and influencing public opinion. The article identifies three key sources of inspiration for topics: new areas, under-researched themes, and those related to past events like *AHIC*. In selecting topics, balancing narrow and broad scopes is deemed important. Success factors include alignment with the guest editors' research interests, effective collaboration with co-editors, and maintaining academic rigour.

### *Future potential: new technologies*

The future of accounting history research lies in embracing innovation through new sources and methodologies, including digitalisation (Leoni and Sangster, 2025). With technological advances, the ways in which historical data are collected and disseminated are evolving, and digital archives and interactive media offer fresh opportunities for engagement (Quinn and Murphy, 2023). The future of accounting history research will be increasingly influenced by digitalisation, and this offers both opportunities and challenges. Whilst digital archives provide greater accessibility to historical sources, expanding research possibilities both quantitatively (more sources globally available) and qualitatively (digital archives and diverse types of materials such as images, videos and online forums), the shift may require new research methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches. The proliferation of digital archives and access allows accounting historians to explore previously inaccessible sources and conduct international comparative studies. However, challenges arise, not least of which is the need to verify the authenticity of digital materials, increased time spent sifting through vast amounts of data, and potential copyright issues (Cordery et al., 2023). New forms of historical sources, including those born-digital, that is, materials or information, which were created and exist entirely in a digital format, as opposed to digitised versions of physical items (such as emails, digital photographs, website content, social media) can introduce novel research avenues. These sources can help to fill gaps in traditional archives and provide insights into accounting and accountability practices, but their use will require adopting interdisciplinary methodologies, including leveraging digital tools for historical analysis. Digitalisation expands source availability and transforms how accounting history is researched and disseminated, whilst creating opportunities for innovation and broader engagement with historical knowledge.

The future of accounting and accounting history research will increasingly involve greater emphasis on international collaboration. By fostering connections across countries and academic traditions, researchers can develop more inclusive (Lai and Samkin, 2017) and globally informed studies. Internationalisation is key to the current and future direction, with comparative studies incorporating diverse perspectives that challenge conventional narratives, including, for instance, postcolonial viewpoints. The shift towards virtual communication and online dissemination supports this trend, making knowledge-sharing more efficient and accessible. An increasing reliance on virtual platforms for research dissemination reflects a shift towards a more accessible and inclusive academic engagement. Within heritage contexts, the integration of digital tools, such as virtual exhibitions, interactive maps, and visual storytelling, enhances the accessibility and impact of research. Online conferences and remote collaborations allow research to reach wider audiences and foster global connections. As accounting history continues to evolve, the adoption of these technological approaches will ensure its relevance and impact going into the future. Future accounting history will be shaped by a combination of technological advances, new methodological approaches, interdisciplinary engagement, and international collaboration, all of which will contribute to a richer and more diverse understanding of the past.

### **Conclusion**

Accounting history can provide insight and understanding for the future, as understanding the past is essential for critically analysing present values and beliefs in organisations and society (Carnegie and Napier, 2012; McBride and Verma, 2021). Historical knowledge is not only valuable in itself but also important for challenging the present dominant discourses and envisioning alternative perspectives going into the future. Ignoring history risks producing critiques that remain trapped within



existing socio-political contexts, thereby reinforcing the very ideas they seek to question (Bigoni and Mohammed, 2023). Following Foucault (1979), we argue against viewing history as a linear progression leading to the present and inevitably to the future. Instead, we call for his 'history of the present', the idea of using history to critically engage with the present (Garland, 2014), which rejects myths of continuity and finalism. Traditional historical approaches can impose rational unity and continuous progress on events, particularly in accounting, where history has often been used to trace an evolutionary path toward current practices and to inform future, similar practices (Carnegie, 2014; Gaffikin, 2011; Gomes et al., 2011). This perspective limits understanding by reducing past events to their present significance, overlooking the role of discontinuity, chance and power struggles in shaping history.

Current interdisciplinary developments in accounting history research have resulted in a more attractive and relevant field of research, with greater emphasis on the study of accounting in the past and its impact on the present within different political, social, cultural and economic contexts. The challenges of the twenty-first century are immense, and to address them, new perspectives and paradigms are required. This new and uncertain environment requires accounting history research to focus on the past and develop answers to be implemented in solving present and future problems. Accounting history research needs to become a powerful tool to analyse the dangers and crises faced by individuals and populations in the past and how they have been overcome. By understanding the past and its lessons, answers can be found to many of the world's serious problems. Embracing the definition of accounting as a technical, social and moral practice (Carnegie et al., 2021, 2024) can enable accounting history research to help solve the 'wicked problems' of our time and contribute to a better world.




Research in accounting history needs to remain dynamic, whilst seeking opportunities for innovation in theories, sources, methodologies and dissemination. In embracing innovations, accounting history can deepen our understanding of governance, accountability and the societal role of accounting, thus demonstrating its continued relevance. The increase of accessible sources, through digital technologies, can open new research possibilities, but also requires careful verification and other ethical considerations. Along with this, methodological innovations, use of micro-histories, biographies, comparative studies, and interdisciplinary approaches enable historians to explore accounting practices in diverse contexts and time periods. The choice of theory remains important, not as a rigid framework but as a means to meaningfully interpret the historical sources. Another significant approach is the diversification of sources, moving beyond traditional accounting archives to include ethnographies, oral histories, personal diaries and ephemera.

The dissemination of accounting history is also evolving, with new digital and interactive formats broadening its reach. Engaging with wider audiences, through public history collaborations, interdisciplinary publications, and innovative presentation methods, ensures that accounting history remains impactful. True innovation, however, requires openness from researchers, journal editors, special issue editors and institutions. Scholars can step beyond traditional boundaries, embracing creativity and new perspectives, engaging with heritage, culture and social issues to sustain the future of accounting history. As understanding accounting's past and present is essential for shaping its future, ensuring it remains relevant to contemporary challenges in organisations and society.

## **Funding**

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Delfina Gomes has conducted the study at the Research Center in Political Science (project UID/00758), University of Minho/University of Évora and is supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science through national funds.

## ORCID iDs

Karen McBride  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0923-8061>  
 Michele Bigoni  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5803-249X>  
 Delfina Gomes  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0151-4762>

## Note

1. For example, in the latest ABS guide, the most important journal ranking guide in the UK, none of the specialist accounting history journals is ranked above 2-star, whilst performance systems in most institutions insist on the importance of publishing in journals with at least a 3-star rating.

## References

- Andrew J, Cooper C and Gendron Y (2020) Addressing the English language hegemony problem in academia: An ongoing experiment and preliminary policy. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 69: 102127.
- Andrew J, Cooper C and Gendron Y (2021) Open letter from the editors of *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*. Available at: <https://eaa-online.org/arc/blog/2021/03/26/open-letter-editors-critical-perspectives-accounting/> (accessed 18 September 2024).
- Atkins J and McBride K (2023) Paradigm shift or shifting mirage? The rise of social and environmental accountability. In: Carnegie GD and Napier CJ (eds) *Handbook of Accounting, Accountability and Governance*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp.168–194.
- Baskerville R, Carrera N, Gomes D, et al. (2017) Accounting historians engaging with scholars inside and outside accounting: Issues, opportunities and obstacles. *Accounting History* 22(4): 403–424.
- Bérubé J and Gendron Y (2022) Through students' eyes: Case study of a critical pedagogy initiative in accounting education. *Accounting Education* 31(4): 394–430.
- Bigoni M and Awais W (2024) 'I am no longer part of this rat race'. Student resistance to neoliberal accounting education in Pakistan. *Accounting Forum*: 1–26. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01559982.2024.2309595> (accessed 18 September 2024).
- Bigoni M and Funnell W (eds) (2018) *The Italian and Iberian Influence in Accounting History: The Imperative of Power*. New York: Routledge.
- Bigoni M, Maran L and Ferramosca S (2021) Time, space and accounting at Nonantola Abbey (1350-1449). *The British Accounting Review* 53(2): 100882.
- Bigoni M, Maran L and Occhipinti Z (2024) Of power, knowledge and method: The influence of Michel Foucault in accounting history. *Accounting History* 29(3): 344–387.
- Bigoni M and Mohammed S (2023) Critique is unsustainable: A polemic. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 97: 102555.
- Branco MC, Gomes D and Martins A (2024) An institutionalist political-economy perspective on social and environmental accounting. *Meditari Accountancy Research* 32(7): 35–55.
- Burrows GH (2019) Biography in accounting history: Some personal reflections. *Accounting History* 24(1): 138–152.
- Carnegie GD (2014) Historiography for accounting: Methodological contributions, contributors and thought patterns from 1983 to 2012. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 27(4): 715–755.
- Carnegie GD, Gomes D, Parker L, et al. (2024) How accounting can shape a better world: Framework, analysis and research agenda. *Meditari Accountancy Research* 32(5): 1529–1555.
- Carnegie GD and McBride KM (2023) Prosopography and microhistory: Illuminating historical actors. In: Decker S, Foster WM and Giovannoni E (eds) *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp.245–263.
- Carnegie GD, McBride KM, Napier CJ, et al. (2020) Accounting history and theorising about organisations. *The British Accounting Review* 52(6): 100932.
- Carnegie GD and Napier CJ (2002) Exploring comparative international accounting history. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 15(5): 689–718.

- Carnegie GD and Napier CJ (2012) Accounting's past, present and future: The unifying power of history. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* 25(2): 328–369.
- Carnegie GD, Parker L and Tsahuridu E (2021) It's 2020: What is accounting today? *Australian Accounting Review* 31(1): 65–73.
- Chandler AD (1977) *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.
- Cooper C (1995) Ideology, hegemony and accounting discourse: A case study of the national union of journalists. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 6(3): 175–209.
- Cordery C, Gomes D, Leoni G, et al. (2023) Innovation in accounting historiography: Where to from here? *Accounting History* 28(3): 368–389.
- Courea E (2024) Sunak pledges to replace 'rip-off' degrees with skilled apprenticeships. *The Guardian*, 28 May. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/may/28/rishi-sunak-promises-to-create-100000-high-skilled-apprenticeships-a-year> (accessed 18 September 2024).
- David C (2001) Mythmaking in annual reports. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 15(2): 195–222.
- Dean M (1992) A genealogy of the government of poverty. *Economy and Society* 21(3): 215–251.
- Dean M (1994) *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Decker S (2013) The silence of the archives: Business history, post-colonialism and archival ethnography. *Management & Organizational History* 8(2): 155–173.
- Durazzi N (2021) Opening universities' doors for business? Marketization, the search for differentiation and employability in England. *Journal of Social Policy* 50(2): 386–405.
- Edwards JR and Walker SP (eds) (2020) *The Routledge Companion to Accounting History*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Ferri P, Lusiani M and Pareschi L (2021) Shades of theory: A topic modelling of ways of theorizing in accounting history research. *Accounting History* 26(3): 484–519.
- Foucault M (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault M (1977) Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In: Bouchard DF (ed) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp.139–164.
- Foucault M (1978) *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault M (1979) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault M (1980) Two lectures. In: Gordon C (ed) *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, pp.78–108.
- Foucault M (1991) Governmentality. In: Burchell G, Gordon C and Miller P (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.87–104.
- Foucault M (2003) *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*. New York: Picador.
- Foucault M (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault M and Deleuze G (1977) Intellectuals and power. In: Bouchard DF (ed) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp.205–217.
- Funnell W (1996) Preserving history in accounting: Seeking common ground between 'new' and 'old' accounting history. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 9(4): 38–64.
- Gaffikin M (2011) What is (accounting) history? *Accounting History* 16(3): 235–251.
- Garland D (2010) *Peculiar Institution: America's Death Penalty in an age of Abolition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Garland D (2014) What is a 'history of the present'? On Foucault's genealogies and their critical preconditions. *Punishment & Society* 16(4): 365–384.
- Gendron Y (2008) Constituting the academic performer: The spectre of superficiality and stagnation in academia. *European Accounting Review* 17(1): 97–127.

- Gendron Y (2015) Accounting academia and the threat of the paying-off mentality. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 26: 168–176.
- Gomes D (2008) The interplay of conceptions of accounting and schools of thought in accounting history. *Accounting History* 13(4): 479–509.
- Gomes D, Carnegie G, Napier C, et al. (2011) Does accounting history matter? *Accounting History* 16(4): 389–402.
- Gomes D, Giovannoni E, Gutiérrez-Hidalgo F, et al. (2015) Moving from regional to international publishing in accounting history: Pressures, issues, strategies and implications. *Accounting History* 20(2): 183–205.
- Gramsci A (1999) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Electric Book Company.
- Gray R (2010) Is accounting for sustainability actually accounting for sustainability ... and how would we know? An exploration of narratives of organisations and the planet. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 35(1): 47–62.
- Greer S and Neu D (2009) Indigenous peoples and colonialism. In: Edwards JR and Walker SP (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Accounting History*. London: Routledge, pp.487–501.
- Hacking I (1990) *The Taming of Chance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hammond T and Sikka P (1996) Radicalizing accounting history: The potential of oral history. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 9(3): 79–97.
- Hook D (2005) Genealogy, discourse, ‘effective history’: Foucault and the work of critique. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 2(1): 3–31.
- Kearins K and Hooper K (2002) Genealogical method and analysis. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 15(2): 733–757.
- Komlik O (2021) Condemning the University of Leicester — Standing for political economy and critical management studies. Available at: <https://economicsociology.org/2021/01/28/condemning-the-university-of-leicester-standing-for-political-economy-and-critical-management-studies/> (accessed 18 September 2024).
- Krznaric R (2024) *History for Tomorrow: Inspiration from the Past for the Future of Humanity*. London: WH Allen.
- Lai A and Samkin G (2017) Accounting history in diverse settings – An introduction. *Accounting History* 22(3): 265–273.
- Leoni G and Sangster A (2025) Accounting history in the digital age. *Accounting History* 30(1): 3–6.
- Lewis N and Shore C (2019) From unbundling to market making: Reimagining, reassembling and reinventing the public university. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 17(1): 11–27.
- Littleton AC (1966) *Accounting Evolution to 1900*. New York: Russell & Russell.
- Maran L, Bigoni M and Morrison L (2023) Shedding light on alternative interdisciplinary accounting research through journal editors’ perspectives and an analysis of recent publications. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 93: 102420.
- Marx K (2021 [1852]) *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Paris: Foreign Languages Press.
- McBride KM, Sagitova R and Cam O (2023) ‘As bad as bad can be’: Accounting for species extinction in the North Pacific. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 36(6): 1574–1605.
- McBride KM and Verma S (2021) Exploring accounting history and accounting in history. *The British Accounting Review* 53(2): 100976.
- McBride KM and Verma S (2024) Accounting in society: A historical perspective. In: Vollmer H (eds) *Handbook of Accounting in Society*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp.29–43.
- McNay L (1992) *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Miller P, Hopper T and Laughlin R (1991) The new accounting history: An introduction. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 16(5-6): 395–403.
- Moore L and Rao S (2023) Moving beyond experts’ answers: Unmasking silences of the social in management accounting courses. *Accounting Forum* 48(4): 723–746.
- Moussa M and Scapp R (1996) The practical theorizing of Michel Foucault: Politics and counter-discourse. *Cultural Critique* 33(Spring): 87–112.
- Napier CJ (2001) Accounting history and accounting progress. *Accounting History* 6(2): 7–31.
- Napier CJ (2006) Accounts of change: 30 years of historical accounting research. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 31(4/5): 445–507.

- Napier CJ (2020) Historiography. In: Edwards JR and Walker SP (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Accounting History*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, pp.32–53.
- Napier CJ (2024) Accounting history for tomorrow: Social, cultural and moral dimensions. In: International Congress of Accounting History, OCC – Ordem dos Contabilistas Certificados, Porto, Portugal, 10–11 October 2024.
- Neu D (2000) ‘Presents’ for the ‘Indians’: Land, colonialism and accounting in Canada. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 25(2): 163–184.
- Parker LD (2011) University corporatisation: Driving redefinition. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 22(4): 434–450.
- Prado CG (2000) Genealogical analytics. In: Prado CG (ed) *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*. New York: Routledge, pp.33–52.
- Quinn M and Murphy B (2023) Accounting history in a digital age: Empirical experiences, improving methods and unlocking new research avenues. *Accounting History* 30(1): 23–43.
- Royal Historical Society (2023) History in UK higher education: A statement from the Royal Historical Society, 13 June 2023. Available at: <https://royalhistsoc.org/policy/history-in-uk-higher-education-a-statement-from-the-royal-historical-society/> (accessed 18 September 2024).
- Said E (1979) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Said E (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Scott D (1995) Colonial governmentality. *Social Text* 43(Autumn): 191–220.
- Scott D (2005) Colonial governmentality. In: Inda J (ed) *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*. Victoria: Blackwell, pp.23–49.
- Sian S (2011) Operationalising closure in a colonial context: The Association of Accountants in East Africa, 1949–1963. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 36(6): 363–381.
- Skinner Q (2010) The sovereign state: A genealogy. In: Kelmo H and Skinner Q (eds) *Sovereignty in Fragments*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.26–46.
- Smart B (1983) *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Smith A (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. London: Strahan and Cadell.
- The British Academy (2017) Future of the corporation. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/programmes/future-of-the-corporation/> (accessed 18 September 2024).
- Tweedie J (2024) Environmental accounting: In communicating reality, do we construct reality? *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 100: 102764.
- Von der Leyen U (2025) Press statement by President von der Leyen on the defence package. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_25\\_673](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_25_673) (accessed 10 March 2025).
- Walker SP (2005) Accounting in history. *Accounting Historians Journal* 32(2): 233–259.
- Walker SP (2023) The blindfold witness? An accountant’s response to slavery and atrocity in the Devil’s Paradise. *The British Accounting Review* 55(3): 101068.
- Zan L, Baraldi SB, Lusiani M, et al. (2016) *Managing Cultural Heritage: An International Research Perspective*. London: Routledge.