

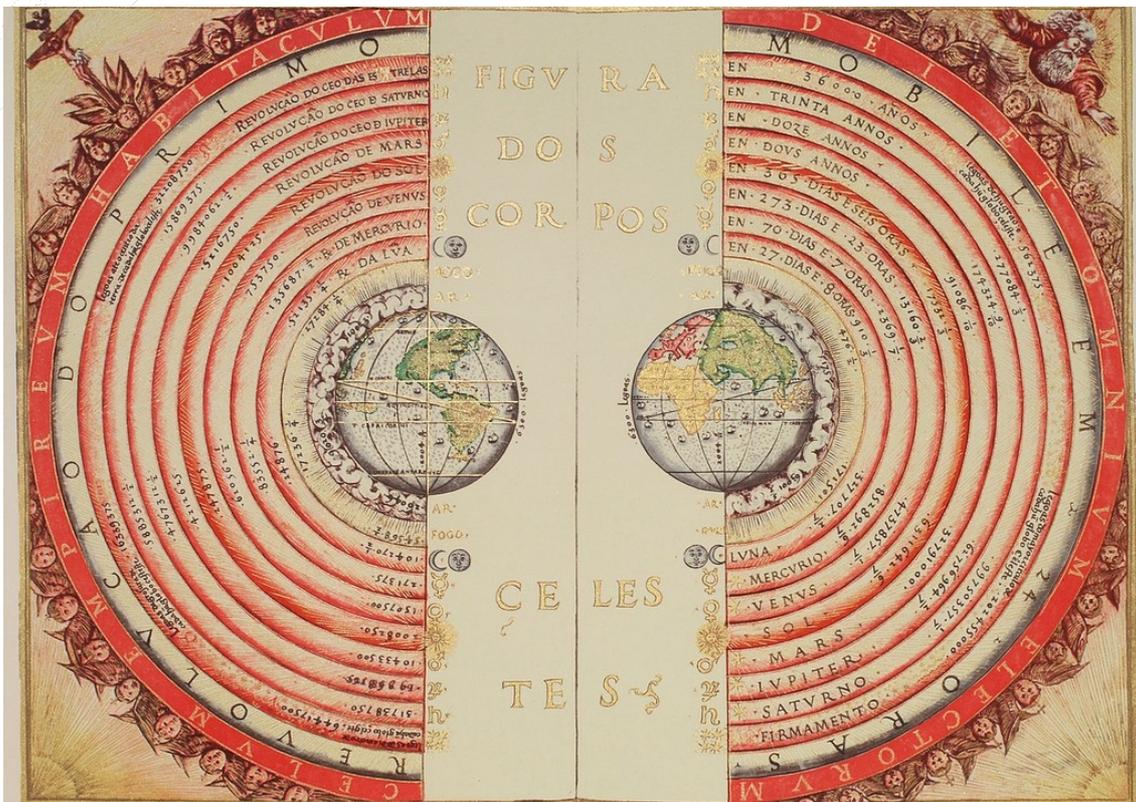
SPACE

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WHO IS A SCIENCE HISTORIAN?

Field Science, history
Type Research
Level of study Bachelor





What is the field about?

All activities of mankind are a subject of study for history, and science is not an exception. A science historian studies the evolution of a particular field of science like mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc. A science historian is different from other historians in the sense that he/she needs to master the subject of their study. For instance, a biology historian needs to be well acquainted with biology, a chemistry historian should understand chemistry, and so on. He might dedicate his time to study the development of technology associated with a certain field or practice, or the impact of that field in society, the evolution of a certain theory, the life of a particular scientist, and many other aspects related to the history of science.

What would I do every day?

A science historian tries to understand the way a certain field of science has evolved in the past. They base their study in historical sources, which are generally written documents: manuscripts or prints, school handbooks, notes from classes, scientific journals and published works from discoveries, letters between scientists and research institutions; but they can also be material remnants like instruments used for research, maps, or objects used for outreach.

How much and what do I need to study?

Most science historians have had a basic training in the science field of their scope or a similar one. In most cases they did not have any formal training in history. In the last decades, however, some degrees in science history have been created in a few science departments, and also dedicated departments to science history.

Where can I work?

A science historian can work in science museums or museums with scientific or technological collections like military museums, naval and marine museums, pharmacy museums, etc. They can also work in astronomical observatories, universities, planetariums, laboratories, libraries, archives and other institutions that have scientific collections.

This is the job for me, if...

...you are someone interested in knowing the past and the way scientific knowledge has evolved.

...you have a willingness to read a lot, and you are able to spend long periods alone with your papers.

On the other hand, it is also important to work in network with other historians and be well connected to specialists in subjects that you do not dominate as much.

A science historian should be:

A detective, capable of connecting the information extracted from documents and material remnants from scientific and technological activity to figure out a certain subject of study.

Good at writing, as the final result of your research is written in the form of books or publications.

Learn more about intersection of science and history:

- History of Science, Britannica article
- Video "Inside the museum of the History of Sciences"

Text based on information kindly provided by António Costa Canas, Naval Officer, PhD in History, Former Director of the Maritime Museum in Lisbon

Image: Figure of the heavenly bodies

Credit: Wikipedia



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