

Hi, I'm Melissa Lafranchise.

My research relates to shop signs and printers' marks in 17th century London.

Research Topic

- ◆ Publishers, booksellers and printers understood the importance of crafting a brand identity
- ◆ This identity was embodied in their printers' devices and shop signs
- ◆ St. Paul's Churchyard was a center for the London book trade in the seventeenth century

The proposed research will attempt to show that publishers, booksellers and printers working during the seventeenth century understood the importance of crafting their brand identity, and that this identity was embodied in their printers' devices and shop signs

St. Paul's Churchyard has been chosen as it was a center for the London book trade, and it offers the ability to see how various brand identities coexisted in a confined and competitive arena

For an explanation of branding, I'll quote Alina Wheeler:

"Mankind has always used symbols to express fierce individuality, pride, loyalty and ownership . . . a simple form can instantaneously trigger recall and arouse emotion . . . Branding is about making an emotional connection. People fall in love with brands—they trust them, develop strong loyalties, buy them and believe in their superiority. The brand is shorthand: it stands for something and demonstrates it."

Seventeenth-century publishers, booksellers and printers understood the fundamentals of branding.

Value

- ◆ Previous research has viewed printers' marks and shop signs as ornamental or directional
- ◆ This research hope to show that publishers understood the emotional value of visual symbols and purposefully chose certain symbols to represent themselves
- ◆ The value of the research is a re-evaluation of the sophistication of marketing efforts
- ◆ The printers' mark and shop sign will be shown as forerunners of modern day logos

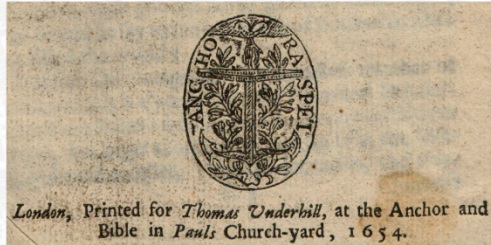
Much previous research has viewed printers' marks and shop signs as either merely ornamental or merely directional—meaning, the marks were pretty on the title page or the signs simply provided the shop's address

The proposed research will attempt to show that publishers understood the emotional value of these visual symbols, and purposefully chose symbols to identify themselves in a certain way, as well as to differentiate themselves from competitors

The value of the research lies in a reinterpretation of the sophistication of publishers' marketing efforts in the seventeenth century

The printers' mark and shop sign will be shown as forerunners of modern day logos and brand identities.

Example



- ◆ THOMAS UNDERHILL
- ◆ Mark: anchor
- ◆ Sign: Anchor and Bible
- ◆ The anchor is a Christian sign of hope
- ◆ It was also a symbol used in the printer's mark of Aldus Manutius

To hopefully elucidate the research a bit more, here's a simple example.

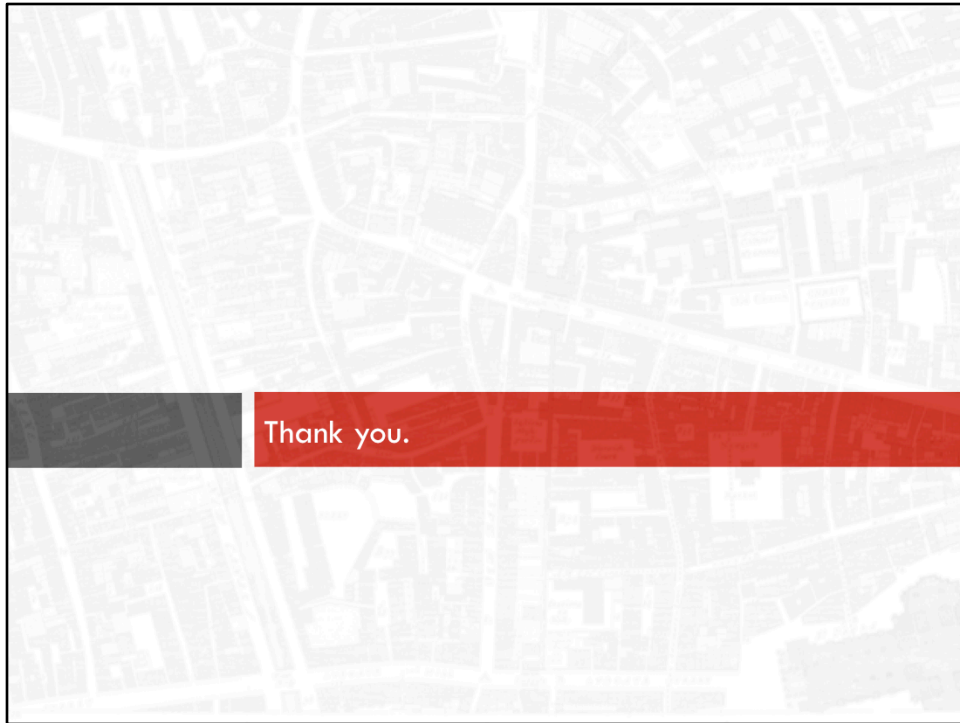
Thomas Underhill was a successful bookseller working in St. Paul's.

His sign was the Anchor and Bible and his printers' mark—as you can see—was an anchor.

The anchor has a long history of symbolizing hope in Christian traditions. So we see Underhill adopting this overtly religious symbol to represent himself and his business. His customers would have had very positive emotional associations with the anchor and would have transferred these to Underhill.

Equally, the anchor was a key component of the printer's mark of Aldus, the very influential and successful Venetian printer of the late 15th and early 16th centuries. So, again, we see Underhill has chosen the anchor in order to co-opt the reputation that Aldus and his family developed over generations.

So we can see that the printers' device is more than an ornament and the shop sign is more than an address. They trigger an emotional connection between the bookseller and his audience.



Thank you for listening.