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**Autor:** Amory Hugh

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Volume 1, The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World carries the interrelated stories of publishing, writing, and reading from the beginning of the colonial period in America up to 1790. Three major themes run through the volume: the persisting connections between the book trade in the Old World and the New, evidenced in modes of intellectual and cultural exchange and the dominance of imported, chiefly English books; the gradual emergence of a competitive book trade in which newspapers were the largest form of production; and the institution of a "culture of the Word," organized around an essentially theological understanding of print, authorship, and reading, complemented by other frameworks of meaning that included the culture of republicanism.

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