

# Alfred W. Crosby

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**Alfred W. Crosby** (/ˈkrɔːzbi, ˈkrɑːz-/; born January 15, 1931, Boston, Massachusetts) is a Professor Emeritus of History, Geography, and American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of such books as *The Columbian Exchange* (1972) and *Ecological Imperialism* (1986). In these works, he provides biological and geographical explanations for why Europeans were able to succeed with relative ease in what he refers to as the Neo-Europes of Australasia, North America, and southern South America.

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## Career

### Books

Recognizing the majority of modern day wealth is located in Europe and the Neo-Europes, Crosby set out to investigate what historical causes are behind the disparity. According to Hal Rothman, a Professor of History at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Crosby “added biology to the process of human exploration, coming up with explanations for events as diverse as Cortez’s conquest of Mexico and the fall of the Inca empire that made vital use of the physical essence of humanity.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Reference to his works is made by Indian scholar Ramachandra Guha in his publication(s).

In his 1972 he created the term *Columbian Exchange* in his book of the same name. The term has become popular among historians and journalists, such as Charles C. Mann, whose book *1493* expands and updates Crosby's original work.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

### Academic

He has taught at Washington State University, Yale University, the Alexander Turnbull Library in New Zealand, and the University of Helsinki. He was appointed an academician by Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari. He is currently Professor Emeritus of History, Geography, and American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

## Books

- *America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon: American Trade with Russia and the Baltic, 1793-1812*. Ohio State University Press 1965.
- *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*. Greenwood Press 1976. Republished as *America's Forgotten Pandemic*.
- *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Greenwood Press 1972, Praeger Publishers 2003. Available in Spanish, Italian, and Korean translations.
- *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge University Press 1986, 1993, 2004. Available in German, Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Greek, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean translations.
- *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. Cambridge University Press 1989, 2003. Originally published as *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*. Available in Japanese translation.
- *Germs, Seeds, and Animals: Studies in Ecological History*. M. E. Sharpe 1994.
- *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600*. Cambridge University Press 1997. Available in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Swedish, Japanese, Slovenian and Korean translations.
- *Throwing Fire: Projectile Technology Through History*. Cambridge University Press 2002. Available in Turkish and Japanese translations.
- *Children of the Sun: A History of Humanity's Unappeasable Appetite for Energy*. W.W. Norton 2006.

## Notes

1. Rothman, Hal. "Conceptualizing the Real." *American Quarterly* 54.3 (2002): 485–497. ProQuest. University of Washington, Lynnwood. November 1, 2006.
2. Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972
3. de Vorse, Louis (2001). "The Tragedy of the Columbian Exchange". In McIlwraith, Thomas F; Muller, Edward K. *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 27. "Thanks to...Crosby's work, the term 'Columbian exchange' is now widely used..."

## References

- Gallup, John, and Jeffrey Sachs. "Location, Location." *Harvard International Review* 21.1 (1998): 56-610. ProQuest. University of Washington, Lynnwood. November 1, 2006.
- Sellers, Christopher. "Thoreau's Body." *Environmental History* 4.4 (1999): 486-514. ProQuest. University of Washington, Lynnwood. November 2, 2006.

## External links

- Alfred Crosby website. (<http://www.awcrosby.com/>)
- Review (<http://www.hilwerda.com/ecologicalimperialism.htm>) of *Ecological Imperialism*.
- Review ([http://www.denisdutton.com/crosby\\_review.htm](http://www.denisdutton.com/crosby_review.htm)) of *The Measure of Reality*. Denis Dutton (1999) "Culture, Reality, and Success," *Philosophy and Literature* 23: 243-55.

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