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Company History

The Elsevier Heritage Collection (<https://www.elsevier.com/about/company-information/history/the-elsevier-heritage-collection>)

Nobel tribute (<https://www.elsevier.com/about/company-information/history/nobel-tribute>)

Elsevier, the modern publishing company, was founded in 1880. It has evolved from a small Dutch publishing house devoted to classical scholarship into an international multimedia publishing company with over 20,000 products for educational and professional science and healthcare communities worldwide. Elsevier takes its name from the original House of Elzevir, a Dutch family publishing house founded in 1580.

Elsevier's history reflects a series of collaborations in the effort to advance science and health. These publishing collaborations with a group of scientific visionaries – ranging from Jules Verne to Stephen W. Hawking – created the foundation of scientific and medical publishing.



The Elsevier logo on an old purpose built office in Amsterdam (dating from ca. 1912)

The efforts of the men and women dedicated to disseminating and using scientific and medical knowledge have been equally critical – the editors, printers, librarians, nurses, doctors, engineers, information specialists and business people at the center of scientific

and health publishing.

Relationships with other great science publishers such as North Holland, Pergamon, Mosby, W.B. Saunders, Churchill Livingstone and Academic Press have also been Integral to our success. These are just a few of the companies that are now part of the Elsevier family, bringing with them rich histories of their own. As the company moves forward, our founding motto remains apt: Non Solus – Not Alone.

How Elsevier Became a Science Publisher

Back in 1930, the Elsevier publishing house struggled with unsold books and large bank debt, but one director's decision to focus on technology, medicine, and history turned the company's fortunes around.

[Read more](#)

Non Solus: The Story Behind the Elsevier Tree



The Non Solus was introduced by Isaac Elzevir in 1620

There is some debate over the meaning of the original Elzevir printer's mark that is still used as Elsevier's logo today and features an old man standing beneath a vine-entwined elm tree. It is inscribed with the Latin term Non Solus (not alone). The mark, first introduced by Isaac Elzevir (son of Lowys) in 1620, was featured on all Elzevir works from that time forth.

That the Elzevir family took pride in their mark is undisputed; what they intended it to mean is less clear. Although most scholars agree that the elm represents the tree of knowledge, they cannot agree on the meaning of the intertwined vine. The Parisian librarian Adry posited in 1806 that the elm tree entwined with the grapevine symbolized the bond between brothers Isaac and Abraham Elzevir and that the old man, a hermit, symbolized the seclusion of study. However, contemporary art historian Lucy Schlüter

suggests more persuasively that the old man represents a wise scholar, a philosopher – evoking Erasmus' image of Socrates sitting under a tree in a rural setting delivering fruitful and inspiring lectures.

In this context the intertwined tree and vine represent a fruitful relationship – and the story therefore carries a moral. As Erasmus said, referring to the classic metaphor of tree and vine: "Like the vine which, though the most distinguished of all trees, yet needs the support of canes or stake or other trees which bear no fruit, the powerful and the learned need the help of lesser men."

Viewed this way, the logo represents, in classical symbolism, the symbiotic relationship between publisher and scholar. The addition of the Non Solus inscription reinforces the message that publishers, like the elm tree, are needed to provide sturdy support for scholars, just as surely as scholars, the vine, are needed to produce fruit. Publishers and scholars cannot do it alone. They need each other. This remains as apt a representation of the relationship between Elsevier and its authors today – neither dependent, nor independent, but interdependent.



The Elsevier tree as seen today


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