



# Making Marie Curie: Intellectual Property and Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information (science.culture)

*Eva Hemmungs Wirtén*

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In many ways, Marie Curie represents modern science. Her considerable lifetime achievements—the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize, the only woman to be awarded the Prize in two fields, and the only person to be awarded Nobel Prizes in multiple sciences—are studied by schoolchildren across the world. When, in 2009, the *New Scientist* carried out a poll for the “Most Inspirational Female Scientist of All Time,” the result was a foregone conclusion: Marie Curie trounced her closest runner-up, Rosalind Franklin, winning double the number of Franklin’s votes. She is a role model to women embarking on a career in science, the pride of two nations—Poland and France—and, not least of all, a European Union brand for excellence in science.

*Making Marie Curie* explores what went into the creation of this icon of science. It is not a traditional biography, or one that attempts to uncover the “real” Marie Curie. Rather, Eva Hemmungs Wirtén, by tracing a career that spans two centuries and a world war, provides an innovative and historically grounded account of how modern science emerges in tandem with celebrity culture under the influence of intellectual property in a dawning age of information. She explores the emergence of the Curie persona, the information culture of the period that shaped its development, and the strategies Curie used to manage and exploit her intellectual property. How did one create and maintain for oneself the persona of scientist at the beginning of the twentieth century? What special conditions bore upon scientific *women*, and on married women in particular? How was French identity claimed, established, and subverted? How, and with what consequences, was a scientific reputation secured?

In its exploration of these questions and many more, *Making Marie Curie* provides a composite picture not only of the making of Marie Curie, but the making of modern science itself.

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