The New Social History: Implications for Archivists

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Abstract: According to a recent survey by the Organization of American Historians, the fastest growing field of historical research is social history. Although many social historians use computers, this is not the most significant feature of the New Social History (NSH). More important implications for archivists and manuscripts curators arise from the use of new kinds of source materials and from a new approach to social inquiry and interpretation. Archivists who have attempted to respond to the challenges posed by NSH have tended to attack the problem piecemeal, dealing only with isolated aspects. Recognizing the highly interactive nature of archival functions, this study provides an overview of NSH's impact on all major aspects of archival practice and management. Traditional archival concerns such as solicitation strategies, appraisal criteria, provenance, and arrangement and description options are re-examined to assess the impact of NSH, point out some serious implications for archivists, and provide a starting point for institutional self-assessments and integrated planning.

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Introduction

MORE THAN FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED since the *Journal of American History* called attention to the fact that a new approach to the writing of social history, utilizing computer assisted statistical analysis, had become most popular among doctoral candidates. In its report on new dissertations, the *Journal* pointed out that more Ph.D. candidates had chosen social history topics than any other area. The combined number of dissertations in the traditional fields of economic, political, diplomatic, and military history barely exceeded those in social history by the narrow margin of 214 to 203.[1]

Another indication that this new approach or New Social History (NSH) is thriving may be found in the proliferation of journals devoted exclusively to social history phenomena. No less than a dozen are being published with such familiar titles as *Social History, Journal of Ethnic Studies, Social Forces,* and *Journal of Family History.* Another dozen are devoted to the history of blacks, women, and agriculture. Even the traditionally-oriented *Journal of American History* and *American Historical Review* have been publishing NSH articles with increasing frequency, and additional articles on social history and announcements concerning social history conferences and workshops appear in almost every issue of the *AHA Newsletter.* Furthermore, the titles of recent dissertations, articles, and conference papers clearly indicate that NSH disciples have taken over the field of social history.

These developments suggest that NSH has already achieved a great deal of acceptance within the historical community and that it has already influenced the way in which history is being taught and researched. One can also point to such developments as the in-service training workshops for high school teachers which Peter Stearns and Mildred Alpern have conducted for the past several years at the Carnegie-Mellon Institute. Perhaps an even more significant indicator lies in College Board tests which now routinely include questions designed to assess NSH awareness and interpretative skills.

Clearly NSH has arrived as a significant research trend worthy of response from the archival community. Archivists and manuscripts curators ought to be very concerned about this major shift in the research interests and techniques of a large segment of their clientele. The problem is to determine what kinds of responses are possible and desirable.

In addressing this problem, archivists are obliged to examine all areas of archival practice and management for these areas are inextricably linked in a manner that is often highly interactive. For example, decisions made while appraising and arranging collections often have significant implications for subsequent activities such as description and reference. Thus it does not seem advisable to focus on one or two isolated areas of practice or management. What is needed, rather, is an overview of all aspects of archival practice and management. This is the only way to appreciate the full significance of the challenges inherent in NSH.

A detailed analysis of NSH's impact on historical methodology is beyond the scope and intent of this discussion, but a brief summary of some of the more important contrasts between the traditional approach to social history and NSH seems appropriate as a basis for the remarks that follow. Table 1 may be used to facilitate these comparisons and to suggest some challenging implications for archivists.

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[1] "Recent Dissertations," *Journal of American History* 68 (December 1979): 774–783.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL HISTORY AND NEW SOCIAL HISTORY

Traditional Approaches to History	New Social History Approach
Contributions of leaders, great men, and elites ("classes").	Ordinary people in groups; changes in their environment, customs, values, status, economic well-being, and the institutions they set up ("masses").
Usually focused on a specific incident, issue, or time period.	Focused on changes over a period of time.
End product is based primarily on literary sources such as correspondence or diaries.	Systematic use of quantifiable data that can be interpreted satistically.
Narrative, descriptive accounts. May be a bit intuitive or impressionistic.	Studies the structure and process of societal change to produce accounts that are analytic and comparative.
Immigration history from the perspective of the "melting pot." Stresses assimilation of groups and their efforts to get along in a new environment. Accomodationist. Shows influence of Frederick Jackson Turner and William A. Beard who stressed rapidity of assimilation and how the result was better for all. Indians and Mexicans sometimes seen as being obstacles to progress and given short shrift.	Stresses resistance to assimilation, self-assertiveness, and conflict with mainstream. Persistence of ethnic culture regarded as an important measure of the "success" of a group. Often praises cultural pluralism, but some awareness of danger in un-critical acceptance of all cultural traits.
Themes include political, economic, military, diplomatic, and traditional approaches to cultural and social history. Interest in groups confined to voting behavior and labor union activity and growth.	Group experiences, intergroup conflicts, intrafamily and intragroup relationships, social mobility, community structure, cultural landscapes, and regional studies.
Fields of investigation growing (generally in a chronological scheme, i.e., recent diplomatic, political, military history) but fairly well established in contrast to NSH.	Fields still evolving at rapid rate with new areas being opened up all the time. Considerable interest in examining interrelationships between the principle themes especially in cases of labor, family, and women's history.

NSH involves several new approaches to historical research and utilizes new kinds of source materials along with an entirely new orientation which emphasizes "history from the bottom up." New social historians are not interested in the extraordinary accomplishments of a few, but in the common, everyday struggles and experiences of groups of ordinary people. Cultural assimilation does not interest them, but the persistence of ethnic cultural patterns does. The desired end product is a factual analysis—often based on the processing of quantifiable data—rather than a narrative that they regard as intuitive, impressionistic, and lacking in both objectivity and precision.

The new social historians use data in a manner that is entirely different from their traditionally-oriented predecessors. Their approach—including the questions that are important to them—is dramatically different. A further complication, which archivists may find both annoying and threatening, arises from the rejection of what some NSH practitioners refer to as elitist, narrative sources (i.e., diaries and correspondence).[2] Regardless of their attitude toward elitist materials, new social historians require new and different sources of information that have not been utilized before; and it is this difference—not the use of computers—that raises most of the challenges for archivists and manuscripts curators.

Effect of NSH on Archival Management

Seen first from the perspective of management, NSH will have a considerable impact on program planning. Virtually every aspect of professional ar-

chival activity is affected, especially if archivists view their professional responsibilities in connection with the life cycle of a document from the point of its creation on through solicitation, appraisal, preservation, arrangement, and reference service. In each instance managers face challenges that cannot be ignored without detriment to the long range welfare and professional reputations of their institutions. Managers should question whether their present programs are fully responsive to the needs and research interests of the new wave of social historians. The question is not whether priorities should be adjusted, but how—in what directions and to what extent?

A reallocation of manpower resources is one obvious place to begin, but first an institution must engage in a certain amount of self-evaluation. What are the strengths and weaknesses of its present holdings? How well is it serving its traditionally-oriented clientele? Does it have any commitments to its present clientele or benefactors that would preclude a meaningful reallocation of resources? Do existing collections have any potential for NSH research? What sort of change in collecting policy would be necessary to accommodate NSH interests? Are any new sources of funding likely if the institution attempts to improve its services to social historians?

After addressing questions such as these, managers will be in a better position to reallocate manpower and to provide additional training for their staffs. In attempting to upgrade staff training, two additional factors should be considered: the increasingly significant role of computers in historical research and

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[2]Lawrence Vesey, "The New Social History in the Context of American Historical Writing," *Reviews in American History* 7 (March 1979): 2. This attitude, which reflects the biases of some NSH practitioners, is most unfortunate for it overlooks the existence of perfectly valid and very useful NSH data in the constituent mail files that are often a part of so-called elitist collections. Equally valuable reports and studies may also be found in the papers of many upper-middle-class reformers.

the lack of an overall conceptual framework for NSH.

One of the more intriguing possibilities of NSH lies in its holistic approach to human history. Yet it is a curious contradiction that, despite a lip service commitment to seeing history whole, virtually nothing has been done to provide a conceptual framework or agenda for future research in the field. Because the field is still evolving in a dynamic and uncontrolled fashion, no one has bothered or dared to define the limits of NSH as a field of endeavor or to suggest an agenda of subjects to receive priority consideration.

Considering its potential for direct impact on current social policy, this is truly regrettable, for perhaps no other field has the same potential for demonstrating the relevance of historical research to current problems. One of the risks inherent in trying to frame such an agenda, as Peter Stearns reminds us, is that we may focus on the wrong areas, picking problems that may soon become irrelevant or less urgent. Stearns does offer, however, some interesting consolation and possible guidance in his observation that "family history is currently at the top of the heap —as well it should be."[3] The problem for archivists is that without an agenda, it is hard to plan solicitation strategies, appraise collections, and provide reference service. For the time being it appears that archivists will have to compile and be guided by their own view of the NSH universe.

No discussion of NSH-generated complications for management would be complete without reference to the role of the computer. It is not a matter of which equipment to buy, but rather a matter of staff training and development to insure that knowledgeable staff members are available to interact with researchers. Management should develop the staff's ability to relate more directly to NSH clientele and to recognize the potential for NSH research in collections. Archivists who lack this sort of awareness will be unable to relate to a growing number of researchers and will be severely handicapped in their ability to make informed decisions regarding solicitations, appraisal, arrangement, and description.

Because of their heavy reliance upon the computer, NSH researchers and the archivists who serve them should be very concerned about other problems and issues, some of them technological in origin and others involving ethical concerns, which are associated with the computer revolution. The Records Appraisal Division at the National Archives and Records Administration became aware of some of the problems in the late 1960s when it became painfully obvious that agencies using computers had not been paying sufficient attention to such essentials as proper storage environments, software documentation, and the compatibility of software from one generation of computers to another.

None of these problems has been dealt with satisfactorily. Archivists still have a hard time convincing people to keep records which would explain why a program was designed and how well it met their needs. These general problems will be aggravated in the future as more social welfare agencies and businesses computerize their records. Historians and archivists alike need to assert themselves and make sure that their needs are considered and understood by computer analysts and records managers.

The prospect of an office that does not produce or rely on permanent paper records is challenging to say the least.

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[3]Conversation with Peter Stearns during Denver regional seminar, American Association for State and Local History, 1 June 1981.

While this may be more of a problem for archivists in the future, that future is not very far off. The underlying concern—that the computer and the word processor will play a progressively larger role in records creation, revision, analysis, and storage—should command the profession's wholehearted attention now. One of the greatest concerns regarding computer produced records is the survival of these records and their reliability and integrity. When computer produced materials are lost, two questions immediately arise: what and how much was lost? Anyone who tries to assess the character and attributes of a historical period and its people will be highly disturbed by the loss of substantial quantities of condensed data and by their inability to determine the extent of the loss.

Equally alarming are the prospects for altering and revising records. The ease with which additions, erasures, deletions, and wholesale revisions can be made is one of the most heavily touted features of word processors. If substantial quantities of future records are preserved on computer tapes and discs, the question of the reliability and completeness of these records becomes a sobering one. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with its cynical rewriting of history to conform to the expediency of the moment, is no longer a novelist's fantasy. The Nixon-Sampson agreement seems to have convinced archivists and Congress that both the technology and motivation for a new and sinister kind of historical revisionism are available and in place.

Effect of NSH on Reference Service

Many of the complications arising from NSH have direct implications for reference service. Good reference service is impossible unless all of the intermediate steps have been attended to very carefully. This means soliciting all of the right materials, recognizing what

should be kept, arranging it to facilitate use, and describing it fully. A very basic prerequisite, if all of these goals are to be met, is that an institution's staff be encouraged to keep up with NSH literature and research trends.

Good reference service begins with a carefully thought out solicitation policy. Archives usually have little control over what they receive and, theoretically, do not solicit materials at all. There are obviously some exceptions. Medical, religious, corporate, and university archives do solicit materials from doctors, board members, clergy, executives, professors, and other leaders in their respective communities for the simple reason that their papers are not automatically routed to the archives. The time has come to broaden the range of these solicitations and to exercise greater restraint and selectivity in regard to the records of elites.

Archivists in social history and other theme related repositories may discover that they have unwittingly collected only the papers of elite, middle-class blacks, leading feminists, prominent minority businessmen, successful farmers and labor union leaders, and executives. It is important to collect their papers, but special efforts must be made to obtain those less readily available records which document the lives of poor blacks, ordinary women, small farmers, poor immigrant families, and labor's rank and file. One way to fill some of the gaps is by collecting the records of fraternal, ethnic, insurance, cultural, and benevolent organizations. Other devices include oral histories and family histories.

Oral histories can be an excellent source of group and community history. The Baltimore Neighborhood Project utilized an innovative and imaginative approach. Long-term residents of Baltimore's older neighborhoods were recruited to take part in recorded group interviews. The group setting served to

relax the participants and provided some very spirited and lively exchanges. It also provided a means of validating and sharpening the participants' recollections of common and shared experiences. Eventually the transcripts were fed into a computer and subjected to name and subject indexing. Elaborate projects such as this are probably beyond the means of many local or county historical societies, but many of the basic features can be worked into a less expensive project that will yield much valuable ethnic and neighborhood history.

Another approach to documenting community history has been suggested by Frederic Miller, who observes that the development of suburbia has been neglected as a field of investigation. He also calls attention to the need for studies on the "impact of various government programs—from education through transportation—on the neighborhood level."[4] If historians of the future follow his lead, they will demand more records of programatic planning and activity at the operational level and fewer records of policy makers at higher levels. This would necessitate a significant departure from previous doctrine which holds that the records of policy makers are the most valuable and that records of lower echelons of the bureaucracy are of progressively lower value. Implications for archivists abound.

Records management practices also have a bearing on solicitations. Historians and archivists should take a much greater interest in word processing and in the preparation of retention schedules along with other aspects of records management. Relations between archivists and records managers have deteriorated markedly in recent years, and the influence of archivists, especially in such areas as data processing, has declined even more precipitously. If these trends are not reversed, the historical record of the 1970s and 1980s will suffer irretrievable losses.

The second step to good reference service involves the appraisal and disposition of records. This area of archival practice has always been controversial, but the growing popularity of NSH has intensified the controversy in two ways: by suggesting new ways to use materials that were previously thought to be of minimal value[5] and by raising the very distinct possibility that uses may be found in the near future for materials that were previously destroyed as entirely useless to anyone. This latter category includes some of the housekeeping and facilitative records of individuals, businesses, and government agencies as well as the constituent mail files of congressmen and state legislators.

Included in the minimum value category are census records, ship's passenger lists, records of school districts, and the case files of a wide spectrum of social welfare agencies. These records have much to tell about the range and incidence of social problems and how society chose to deal with them. They also reveal a great deal about family structures and relations between family members; about societal attitudes towards various problems and aid recipients; about the experiences and position in society of children, women, and

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⁴Frederic M. Miller, "Social History and Archival Practice," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 118.

⁵A very interesting case in point is Carole Shammas's investigation of the evolution of domestic environment in colonial America. Drawing heavily on estate inventories in probate court records, this study incorporates a very interesting interpretation that makes the highly esoteric computer output meaningful. "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America," *Journal of Social History* 14 (Fall 1980): 3–24.

minorities; and even about such things as the persistence of cultural values and patterns, social mobility, and cultural pluralism.

The research potential of these case files is enormous. More importantly, they relate to issues which society so desperately needs to understand and with which society must come to grips. Yet these case files are often withheld due to privacy considerations and automatically targeted for destruction. Some state archivists have persuaded their legislatures and state agencies to adopt procedures that will enable researchers to obtain the information they need without compromising the privacy of individuals mentioned in the files. There is a need to re-educate the public and state legislators in those states where the law still provides for destruction of the records without any provision for access to the information.

Some archivists believe that more sophisticated sampling techniques can be developed which will allow them to extract the most important data from repetitive case files, prepare profiles of their characteristics, and then destroy whole series of records. Many archivists and historians are convinced that sampling techniques cannot be devised which will adequately satisfy the need for raw, undigested data. They point out that sampling techniques, no matter how sophisticated, produce data that has been processed and partially digested. Information obtained in this fashion may have certain uses, but its potential for further analysis by researchers is dramatically reduced.

Some institutions are severely pressed for space and have serious appraisal problems. It has recently been proposed that many old records in the National Archives should be reappraised, utilizing new sampling techniques, and that large quantities of records should be destroyed.[6] While this approach may be helpful in the future, sampling should be used cautiously and with great restraint until archivists have a better understanding of trends in NSH research and the manner in which social historians, in particular, use raw data.

Another hope for the future lies in a revitalized records management program to contain the problem and reduce pressure on the overall system. Careful management of word processing and the other aspects of machine readable data processing will have to be achieved, however, if records management is to succeed. Developing better sampling techniques will help, but we should not put all of our eggs into one basket. Additional research is desperately needed with respect to records management techniques and the development of improved microform technology and storage systems for paper records.

The final step to high quality reference service involves two closely related areas: arrangement and description. In recent years archivists have become progressively more frustrated with the growing realization that their options with respect to arrangement and description appear to be limited by certain inherent characteristics of records groups and manuscript collections.

One troublesome characteristic is the

[6]Leonard Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," *American Archivist* 44(Spring 1981):143–150. For an entirely different point of view see Karen Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tolls in an Archives," *American Archivist* 47 (Winter 1984): 43–49. For further counter-reaction to Benedict see Richard J. Cox's letter to the editor in *American Archivist* 47 (Summer 1984): 225–226. Another significant contribution to the literature concerning appraisal is David R. Kepley's "Sampling in Archives: A Review," *American Archivist* 47 (Summer 1984): 237–242.

tendency of records groups and many larger manuscript collections to document organizational activity, administrative history, and personal biography. When combined with the principle of provenance, the result has been arrangement and descriptive efforts that are heavily biased in favor of organizational history and oriented to the needs of records creators rather than those of historians and other researchers.

Manuscript collections share this tendency, for even the smallest collections reflect the activities of their creators. Larger collections are often arranged and described much like records groups, especially when provenance is intact and large runs of files focused on business or organizational activity have survived. Papers of politicians, reformers, and other "do-gooders" often contain materials which reflect their participation in organizing and leading social welfare movements and organizations, and, as a result, the papers have a pronounced bureaucratic flavor. Regardless of the reason, both records groups and personal papers share organizational characteristics and descriptive practices which are not responsive to the needs of researchers in general and social historians in particular. These characteristics also inhibit archivists when arrangement and descriptive options are being considered.

Clearly, some new options are needed. The only way to discover these new options is by coming to grips with the dilemma raised by provenance. Specifically, archivists need to come to a new understanding of the relative unimportance of provenance in the arrangement and description of personal papers and record groups. One of the problems with provenance as an arrangement principle arises

from the false assumption that all of the information concerning a given policy, program, or area of responsibility will be found in the files of a given bureaucratic entity. Obviously, such is not the case, and the uninformed or careless researcher will find provenance more of a hindrance than a help.

While some archivists and manuscripts curators may overreact in disregarding provenance entirely, it is probably the majority who have overreacted by erecting false totems to provenance and putting words into the mouth of Theodore Schellenberg. His disciples have been overzealous on the one hand and, on the other, have disregarded his highly significant observation that there is a higher law than provenance, namely, "usability."[7] The difficulty with "usability" is that in practice archivists have not been able to reconcile it with provenance and have chosen to disregard it.

If archivists and manuscripts curators are to reconcile these two principles, respond to the needs of social historians, and make their materials more usable, they will have to find ways to provide better subject access to the materials in their care. One way for manuscripts curators to provide better subject access involves the creation of subject file series in the papers they are arranging. This approach assumes some rearrangement of materials and more than a little disregard for provenance, but few curators encounter many arrangements that are reasonably intact and very few of those merit retaining. In many cases provenance is an illusion and a memory.

The traditional approach to badly disarranged materials has been to arrange them chronologically or by the names of correspondents on the assumption that those approaches are less demanding in-

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[7]Theodore R. Schellenberg, "Archival Principles of Arrangement," *American Archivist* 24 (January 1961): 24.

tellectually and less time consuming than the creation of subject files. Except for searches involving specific incidents, issues of limited duration, or biographical research, files arranged alphabetically or chronologically may be difficult for some researchers to use. Subject file arrangements have the advantage of addressing a wider range of research interests while permitting emphasis on important episodes in the life of the records creator.

Another traditional approach involves supplementing chronologically arranged series with card indexes for subjects. This approach takes much more effort than arranging the material into subject files and requires the services of experienced and highly paid archivists as indexers. The traditional objection to the creation of subject files, apart from their theoretical violation of provenance, has been that their arrangement is difficult and time consuming. Experience shows, however, that even very large collections usually have a rather restricted range of subjects and that, consequently, subject files are not particularly difficult to arrange. Once a collection has been arranged as a subject file, it is an extremely simple matter to prepare card indexes for correspondents and individuals mentioned in the correspondence. This approach to indexing is quick and easy and has the added virtue of being appropriate for clerks and typists rather than highly paid archivists.

Archivists may have fewer options with respect to description than their counterparts in manuscript repositories. In the case of current records, they often feel that they must give priority to the needs of records creators rather than those of researchers. Even so, improved subject matter access can be achieved without abandoning original order or the traditional preliminary inventory. This can be done by incorporating more anec-

dotal material in the administrative history or in descriptions of series and sub-groups. Unfortunately, it is very difficult—perhaps impossible—to prepare administrative histories of readable length which include all of the insights that archivists would like to share with researchers.

The basic idea of providing the researcher with additional insights and subject matter access points is a valid one, nevertheless. Relying too heavily on the administrative history—or the scope and content note, for that matter—is a mistake. A better location for such insights is in expanded sub-group and series descriptions. There is no reason why these cannot be longer, and they may well prove easier to prepare than a similarly enhanced administrative history. Furthermore, researchers are more likely to read material that has been interspersed throughout a finding aid. Scope notes at the beginning of a register or inventory are quite often ignored.

Successful enhancement of these descriptive notes depends upon sensitivity to the needs of social historians, to trends in NSH research, and on a growing familiarity with the literature of the field. While processing collections and record groups, archivists and their counterparts should be particularly alert for social history data in a series or case file which ordinarily would not be considered a likely source of NSH data. Correspondence, surveys, statistics, demographic information, or any other indicators of preference, tendency, or habit ought to be mentioned as potential sources.

Finally, provenance can be preserved while providing additional subject access through a combination of cross-referencing and rearrangement of the collection on paper—or in the computer—while leaving the physical arrangement intact. Whether it is described as a system of artificially created files, superimposed

finding aids, or notional rearrangement, the results are the same. The potential of the computer in this aspect is beginning to be recognized;[8] and it is encouraging to discover that the computer, which seems to have created so many new problems for archivists, may also provide a solution to one of their oldest.

Conclusion

Four years ago the American Association for State and Local History conducted a series of four regional seminars centered around the theme "Re-examining the Past: The New Social History and Interpretative Programs." These seminars were well received and, judging from articles and announcements in *History News*, have already borne fruit in the form of enhanced exhibits and interpretative programs. In the same period of time, archivists have done very little to respond to the challenges of NSH.

Only a few archivists and manuscripts curators appear to have more than a superficial understanding of NSH. Most are vaguely aware that computers are somehow involved, but few have any real understanding of the revolution that has taken place in the researching and writing of social history. It is no wonder that institutions have not reassessed their solicitations strategies, appraisal criteria, arrangement practices, or descriptive techniques.

Recent meetings and professional journals have featured some very interesting discussions and controversy over appraisal standards and sampling techniques. Unfortunately, much of the discussion has failed to acknowledge the needs of NSH researchers and seems mired in the traditional approach to social history. Perhaps the most significant omission from these dialogues is a recognition of the new social historians' emphatic preference for undigested, raw data. Not everything can be saved, but archivists need a better understanding of what is needed to support various NSH research scenarios before they can design intelligent sampling and appraisal strategies.[9]

NSH interests have been largely ignored as institutions have begun to index and cross-reference via computer. Such projects will be seriously flawed if those in charge of thesaurus development remain unaware of the needs and interests of new social historians. A number of social history thesauri have been developed, and most are designed to accommodate additional subject descriptors. Archivists must seize this opportunity to provide better subject access for all users, including practitioners of the new social history.

One mistake which should be avoided at all costs is the failure to plan. Beset by a variety of pressures, archivists may find it very tempting to respond in a piecemeal fashion rather than to take time to study all of the ways in which NSH challenges their current practices. Archival management and practice may not be a science,

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[8]W. Theodore Dürr, "Some Thoughts and Designs about Archives and Automation, 1984," *American Archivist* 47 (Summer 1984): 271–289 contains some intriguing insights and a look at one possible software scenario.

[9]Such insights can be readily absorbed by reading articles in the journals mentioned in the beginning of this article. The Shammas article referred to in footnote 5 above provides a good example of some of the research being done. Other worthwhile readings include: Peter N. Stearns, "Toward a Wider Vision: Recent Trends in Social History," in Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); John Modell, "Changing Risks, Changing Adaptations; American Families in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," from Allan J. Lichtman and Joan R. Challinor, eds., *Kin and Communities: Families in America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 19–44; and Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration and Assimilation* (1975).

but it is a highly interactive undertaking, and those who ignore this fundamental fact will eventually find themselves in trouble whether they are processing collections or making policy for the entire institution.

If archivists understand how the various aspects of archival management and practice interact and how NSH affects these interactions, they are ready to begin the process of self-evaluation. Each institution will approach this process differently, but each would do well to begin with the basic management concerns mentioned earlier.

The challenge of NSH is a difficult one because it requires readjustment, or at least study, in many areas. The challenge can be met, however, if archivists will take time to plan and will open their minds to discover new ways of thinking about their most basic responsibilities. The first hurdle to be overcome is contained in that familiar phrase: "We have never done it that way before."