Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History

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Abstract: This article analyzes the use of archives and manuscripts in 214 scholarly articles on social history published between 1981 and 1985. More broadly, it addresses the ongoing debates over the triangle of relationships among appraisal, current use, and historical scholarship. The study's findings show that most social historians continue to rely regularly on archives in their research. Patterns of use vary significantly according to time period, research orientation, and subject. Social historians use collections in older historical societies and collections of personal papers extensively, but rarely draw on state and local public archives. The numerical distribution by time period of the types of series used and their relative importance in articles may help predict future patterns of archival use.

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THE APPRAISAL OF HISTORICAL records is the archival profession's most important intellectual responsibility, and facilitating their use its central reason for being. This article is concerned with how information about the use of records can be employed in exploring the triangle of relationships among appraisal, use, and historical research. Specifically, it analyzes in detail the use of archives and manuscripts in recently published articles in social history. It also considers some of the methodological issues that arise in such research, in the hope that others will do similar work. This is thus an effort both to contribute to the development of a much needed archival research base and to comment on important professional debates.

Appraisal is an elusive, subjective process. The role that current use should play in long-term appraisal decisions has been the subject of much discussion. Unless use plays some substantial role, appraisal can simply become an elaborate process of begging questions and avoiding answers. Discussing the problem of unused records, Leonard Rapport maintained that appraisal archivists should ask themselves, "Is there a reasonable expectation that anybody, with a serious purpose, will ever ask for these records?"—a question with the two key qualifications on possible use of *reasonable* expectation and *serious* purpose.[1] More broadly, Maynard Brichford in his SAA manual on appraisal asserts that "the value of archives is wholly dependent on the existence of persons attaching value to them."[2] Yet many archivists would still agree with Karen Benedict, who wrote in reply to Rapport that "frequency of past use is not a valid determinant of the archival or research value of records. . . . It is ahistorical and anti-intellectual to determine that, because a group of records has not been used within a limited period of time, those records are valueless."[3] Perhaps more typically, a recent attempt to formalize the appraisal decision process listed possible "Use of the Records" as "the third component of the Value-of-Information module," which itself was but one of three modules employed in appraisal.[4] Clearly, there is little professional consensus regarding the relationship between appraisal and use. Similarly, the changing research interests of historians have traditionally affected both appraisal and use, but the importance of historical research trends has also been questioned within the archival profession.

In addition to dealing with such conceptual issues, archivists have been increasingly concerned with gathering reliable data upon which to base both their discussions and their practical planning. In a widely cited article, Elsie Freeman wrote that "[archivists] must begin to learn systematically, not impressionistically as is our present tendency, who our users are; what kinds of projects they pursue, in what time frames and under what sponsorship; and most importantly, how they approach records." For acquisitions and appraisal, she con-

[1]Leonard Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 149.

[2]Maynard Brichford, *Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning*, SAA Basic Manual Series (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977): 9.

[3]Karen Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives—A Reply to Leonard Rapport," *American Archivist* 47 (Winter 1984): 47-48.

[4]Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, "Exploring the Black Box: The Appraisal of University Administrative Records," *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985): 129.

tinued, "we should have at least one verifiable frame of reference."[5]

A substantial body of information, admittedly unsystematic, is now available about the user population, and most repositories are aware of their most commonly requested materials. The studies of Margaret Stieg and Michael Stevens have established that when identifying possible resources, historians rely more on secondary sources, colleagues, and basic bibliographies than on elaborate indexes, data bases, or archival finding aids.[6] Less research has been done in the key area of the actual applications of records, including their use in publications. Clark Elliott's 1981 article on scientific publications and Jacqueline Goggin's 1986 article on black and women's history are the notable exceptions; they suggested much of the methodology and analysis employed here.[7] The SAA's Task Force on Goals and Priorities, in its report *Planning for the Archival Profession*, noted the need for more such use and/or citation studies in relation to both identifying records of enduring value and making them available.[8]

Social history is an especially useful vehicle for such studies. Broadly defined as the examination of common experiences and of social and economic events and processes, social history encompasses a wide variety of specialties, from the study of women, minorities, and immigrants to the analysis of such social processes as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of the consumer culture.[9] Some social historians emphasize quantitative techniques and the methods of the social sciences in an effort to generalize about common experiences. Others draw on disciplines like anthropology and linguistics to investigate shared attitudes and symbols. Most combine perspectives from the social sciences with traditional historical methodologies. Their concentration on people and processes that have often been underdocumented as well as unstudied leads many social historians not only to utilize a wide variety of published and unpublished sources, but also to draw significant inferences from the relatively limited bodies of documents remaining for some fields of study. Like the search for quantifiable information about groups of people, this intensive use of surviving documentation is a key archival practice of many social historians.

Social history has been the major innovative force in American historical research during the past two decades. By the 1980s social historians were becoming predominant in sheer numbers as well. Archivists are accustomed to political, military, diplomatic, institutional, and intellectual historians. Indeed, many institutions and common practices were developed around their needs, and archivists are familiar with the fairly well-

[5]Elsie T. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archival Administration from the User's Point of View," *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 112.

[6]Margaret Stieg, "Information Needs of Historians," *College and Research Libraries* 42 (November 1981): 549-60; Michael Stevens, "The Historian and Archival Finding Aids," *Georgia Archive* 5 (1977): 68-74.

[7]Clark Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science: Some Methodological Considerations," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 131-42; and Jacqueline Goggin, "The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women's Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division," *Midwestern Archivist* 9, no. 1 (1986): 57-67.

[8]Society of American Archivists' Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1986), 9, 27.

[9]The most comprehensive archivally-oriented discussion of social history is *Archivaria* 14 (Summer 1982), an issue devoted entirely to the topic. See also Fredric Miller, "Social History and Archival Practice," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 113-24.

defined types of records they have traditionally required. In contrast, the requirements of social historians can seem both nebulous and insatiable. Because social history often takes as its subject common human experience, social historians are theoretically interested in everything; ordinariness is a positive virtue. In the context of social history, a credible case can be made for saving virtually any record, making selection standards seem obsolete. Archivists, however, might suspect that the social historians' affinity for quantifiable data and their disdain for records generated by a narrow elite would lead them to neglect archives no matter how the latter adapt. If archivists—and especially manuscript curators—are saving large quantities of records partly because they hope (or fear) that social historians might find a use for them, a study of what those researchers actually use will clearly be helpful.

The issue is complicated by the larger question of scholarly historians as archival users. Elsie Freeman's statement that "historians are neither our principal nor our most significant users"[10] combines an unchallengeable assertion about numbers with a more subjective judgment about the relative societal unimportance of academics. Roy Turnbaugh made a similar point when he noted that "there have never been enough scholars in the United States to provide adequate justification for maintaining a really effective, tax-supported archival program." Reflecting the new, more combative mood, he continued, "The notion of archives as a preserve for historians is especially deep rooted. It is also nonsense."[11] Historians and other scholars certainly are a minority of all users. The place of their interests in overall appraisal is therefore questionable. As William Joyce has pointed out, however, such quantitative judgments can easily obscure the fact that "the primary purpose of archives is cultural, and it is the research value of documents that invests this essentially cultural purpose with substance and significance."[12]

On a more practical level, archivists preserve a great many records that fairly quickly become of interest only to people doing some type of scholarly historical research. Archives have other clienteles, several of which are larger, others which exercise more direct power over repositories. But these groups—lawyers, policy makers, genealogists, preservationists, title searchers, journalists—are frequently satisfied with relatively limited or obvious sets of files, such as tax lists or property records, or with program and policy files extending back only a few decades. Since only a very small proportion of all the collections in any repository ever attract large numbers of users, the scholars play a role disproportionate to their low numbers. In the absence of any other likely clientele, they become in many repositories the researchers of last resort for many collections. Almost by default, it is for scholars that stacks of files are being preserved and detailed information retrieval systems are being developed. Use by non-scholars of a large proportion of the records in most repositories is highly unlikely. For voluminous modern records, such as the vast compilations of public and private bureaucracies, social historians are often the most likely users of last resort. A review of their practices is thus relevant to archival planning not only for use, but also for acquisition, appraisal, processing, and preservation.

[10]Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder," 116.
[11]Roy Turnbaugh, "Living With a Guide," *American Archivist* 46 (Fall 1983): 451.
[12]William Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 125.

Methodology

In this study, 214 articles on American social history were selected for analysis. It must be stressed that this is an examination of the citation of archival materials in published, refereed journals. It is not concerned with holdings consulted but not cited, or with holdings that should have been consulted but were not. Therefore, there is no consideration of relevant social history sources that authors ignored or misused. Social history was broadly defined to include not only social and economic processes, but also social policy and social politics, and the history of groups traditionally neglected by historical scholarship. Thus, articles about blacks, women, specific ethnic groups, and Native Americans were included unless they concentrated on the group's participation in electoral politics or traditional military, diplomatic, and intellectual affairs. The goal was not to enforce a rigid theoretical definition of social history, but to include most of the areas that fall loosely into the overall field as it has evolved since the 1960s. Since many colonial and revolutionary era archival sources have been published, and pre-1800 records are unlikely to be destroyed, the study concentrated on topics from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The 214 articles were drawn from 16 different journals. The articles all appeared between 1981 and 1985, with the dates varying by journal. There were three distinct types of journals: general historical journals, social history subject journals, and social history journals with a strong emphasis on quantification and rigorous social science methodology. As Table 1 indicates, 60 articles were selected from the first group; 103 from the second; and 51 from the third. The articles in the last group of journals proved to be very different from those in the social history subject journals in their use of archival sources and revealed a good deal about the lack of use of archives in the social sciences.

Each of the 214 articles was categorized by time period, primary subject, and research orientation. There are four time periods: 1800-1860, 1860-1900, 1900-1945, and 1945-present. Articles straddling the cutoffs were placed in the period they predominantly cover. The number of subject categories was restricted to eight in order to generate a useful analysis. Primary subject sometimes was not easy to determine because articles like "Work and Family Experience of Older Black Women in Southern Cities, 1880-1900" are not uncommon in social history. In part for that reason, the first category is comprised of articles focusing on a specific racial, religious, ethnic, or gender group. Though the groups are very different, the questions and approaches in the articles have much in common. The second subject category, social and demographic structure, includes family history and social classes. There are also individual categories for articles on social policy, health / medicine / technology / environment, business and economic history, and urban structure. Popular culture, the seventh category, included sports and festivities. The eighth subject category included both the labor movement and the work experience since the two were so often discussed together.

The division of articles into two types of research orientation, suggested by Clark Elliott's similar procedure in studying the history of science,[13] proved extremely useful. In this study a distinction is made between (1) *event-oriented* articles, which is shorthand for articles

[13]Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 135.

focusing mainly on a specific event, person, policy, issue, or institution; and (2) *process-oriented* articles that analyzed social processes, structures, and long-term change. For example, an article about a shoemakers' strike would fall in the first category, while an article about the changing nature of shoemaking would fall in the second. Archivists might suspect that the first category could be called "archives-oriented," while the second would be "numbers-oriented," since by their organic nature most archives would seem to relate more obviously to specific events or people. Long-term processes, it might be thought, would not be well-documented in archival holdings. As will become evident, however, this distinction proved relatively unimportant.

In the 214 articles, a total of 915 series uses were identified. This aspect was probably the most difficult and problematic of the study. Archival citation analysis is complicated by the lack of common professional standards and terminology. One repository's series is another's collection, while subgroups and subseries proliferate. Some National Archives series are larger than entire academic research collections. But a common unit of analysis is essential to any useful analysis. In this study each distinct and identifiable set of files cited was counted as a series, regardless of how it might be listed internally in a given repository. A series appearing in an article was counted as one series use, even if documents from the series were quoted several times within that article. (As discussed below, a separate category of analysis indicated how intensively the series was used within the article.) If, however, the same series was cited in a different article, it was counted as a separate series use. Thus seven citations of different letters from Mr. Smith's papers in Article A was one series use. The use of Mr. Jones' letters, also in Article A, was counted as another series use. The citation of Mr. Smith's same letters in Article B would be a third series use. And if Mr. Smith's account books were cited in Article B, they were counted for this study as a separate financial series, even if the repository grouped them with the letters under the title of "Smith Personal Papers." Thus the 915 series are really 915 citations to sets of files, with some duplication of actual records.

Each of the 915 series uses was categorized by series type, collection type, repository type, and intensity of use within the article. To keep the analysis manageable, there are nine series types. The three within personal and family papers are (1) correspondence; (2) diaries, memoirs, and reminiscences; and (3) organizational records, such as minutes or reports of an organization to which a person belonged (excluding financial and case files). Four categories dealt with public or organizational records: (4) the corporate policy "backbone" of board and executive minutes, annual reports, constitutions, and histories; (5) executive correspondence, statements, and speeches; (6) case files, personnel records, membership lists, and other files on individuals; and (7) all other general program, committee, operating, research, and housekeeping records. The seventh category thus includes all non-case or financial records below the board and executive level. The eighth category includes all financial and accounting records, personal or corporate. The ninth category covers public census, tax, land, probate, and other vital records.

The four general collection categories were personal/family papers, non-public organizational records, public records, and artificial collections. There were very few citations in the last category. For the purpose of analysis, the thirty-six poten-

tial types of series within the four collection types were combined—or "collapsed"—to form the sixteen series types listed in the tables.

Eight categories of repositories were used: the National Archives and Records Administration system, state and local archives, non-public institutional archives, academic research collections, private historical societies, public libraries, private personal or family collections, and non-archival public offices. The National Archives (NARA) includes the presidential libraries. Academic research collections include such subject collections as the Labor and Urban Affairs Archives at Wayne State University and the Southern History Collection at the University of North Carolina. Historical societies include the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress and other historical libraries holding manuscript collections. University archives holding the university's records are included under institutional archives. Private collections and public offices both include materials used by researchers that were not at the time in any formal archival or library custody.

Categorization of series by the intensity of their use by an author proved an especially useful method of analysis. Simple citation counts would be misleading in any use study, but particularly in archival research. A single source formally cited once might be the basis for an entire article, while multiple citations of other sources might be mainly decorative. Archivists need to know how series are used as well as how often. As Bruce Dearstyne suggested, archivists need to understand "significant use," the "*difference* research in archives makes" to scholars and other users.[14] In this analysis, each series was assigned to one of four categories:

(1) Incidental use—generally the series was used only for one or two primarily illustrative quotations;
(2) Substantive use—the series was the basis for a single major point or an extended illustration;
(3) Important use—multiple citations to the series were used to make several points;
(4) Fundamental use—the series was the only source, or one of the very few sources, upon which the article rested.

This categorization is to some extent another subjective judgment, though based on the actual number of citations. But without some such judgment, citation analysis loses much of its usefulness.

Thus, seven pieces of information were gathered and coded for each of the 915 series uses. For example, the (1) correspondence series from George Johnson's (2) personal papers in (3) the Syracuse University Library research collections was (4) an important source in Gerald Zahavi's *Journal of American History* article, "Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoemakers of Endicott Johnson, 1920-1940." That article was (5) an event-oriented article in (6) business and economic history covering the (7) 1900-1945 period. After the information for each series was coded and entered into a computer, tables, cross-tabulations, and averages aggregating and comparing the seven variables were generated utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings

A variety of clear patterns emerged from the statistical analysis. Despite obvious variations, the number of series used and repositories visited per article

[14]Bruce Dearstyne, "The Impact of Research in Archives" (Paper delivered at Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., September 1984), 1.

Table 1

Journals Consulted: Number of Series Used and Repositories Visited per Article

	No. of Articles Used	Average No. of Series per Article	Average No. of Repositories per Article
I. General Historical Journals			
Journal of American History	25	5.1	2.7
Journal of Southern History	13	6.9	3.2
Pacific Historical Review	10	5.8	3.7
Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography	9	3.7	1.7
American Historical Review	3	2.0	1.7
TOTAL	60	5.3	2.7
II. Social History Subject Journals			
Labor History	31	5.2	2.9
Journal of Social History	29	5.1	2.8
Journal of Urban History	12	5.0	1.8
Journal of Negro History	11	3.7	2.5
Journal of American Ethnic History	11	5.4	2.8
Feminist Studies	7	2.0	0.7
Radical History Review	2	5.0	2.5
TOTAL	103	4.7	2.5
III. Social Science/Quantitatively-Oriented Journals			
Journal of Economic History	20	2.3	1.0
Social Science History	12	1.3	0.9
Journal of Family History	11	2.5	1.3
Journal of Interdisciplinary History	8	3.1	1.6
TOTAL	51	2.2	1.1
OVERALL TOTAL	214	4.3	2.2

Note: A full list of articles is available from the author.

indicate that authors used archival collections to a considerable degree in social history research (see Tables 1 and 2). Only 39 of 214 authors cited no archival sources; in another 17 articles they were used only marginally. In the remaining 158 articles—three-quarters of the total—archives and manuscripts were employed in a substantive manner. In her analysis of archival use in books on black and women's history, Jacqueline Goggin found less reliance on primary unpublished sources.[15] This may in part reflect the considerable difference between the expansive nature of books compared to the far more concentrated research focus of journal articles, as well as the relative paucity of sources in many areas of black and women's history.

[15]Goggin, "Study of Scholarly Users," 60.

Table 2

Average Number of Series Used Per Article with Subject Breakdown by Time Period and Research Type

	Time Period				Research Type		
Subject of Article	1800-1860	1860-1900	1900-1945	1945-present	Event Oriented	Process Oriented	Overall Averages
1. Specific Groups	5.5	3.6	3.3	5.0	4.6	3.9	4.2
	(19)	(20)	(24)	(2)	(27)	(38)	(65)
2. Social Structure	5.3	4.8	0.0		0.0	4.7	4.5
	(12)	(11)	(3)		(1)	(25)	(26)
3. Social Policy	9.2	3.0	5.8	8.5	5.8	6.3	5.9
	(4)	(6)	(17)	(2)	(26)	(3)	(29)
4. Health & Medicine		4.0	4.2		5.7	2.2	4.3
		(7)	(8)		(9)	(6)	(15)
5. Economic & Business History	1.3	1.3	4.5	0.0	5.7	1.5	2.9
	(3)	(7)	(11)	(1)	(7)	(15)	(22)
6. Popular Culture	2.0	2.0	3.6	1.0	1.8	3.4	2.5
	(1)	(3)	(5)	(2)	(6)	(5)	(11)
7. Urban Structure	0.0	.7	.5	6.0	2.0	.8	1.3
	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(3)	(4)	(7)
8. Labor & Work	18.0	4.2	5.0	0.0	4.8	5.6	4.9
	(1)	(13)	(24)	(1)	(29)	(10)	(39)
Average # of Series Cited	5.6	3.5	4.3	3.9	4.8	3.7	4.3
	(41)	(70)	(94)	(9)	(108)	(106)	(214)

Note: The total number of articles in each category is in parentheses.

Archives were important in all types of research. Perhaps the most significant finding reported in Table 2 is the average of 3.7 series per article in the 106 process-oriented articles; a much lower average might have been anticipated for this more quantitative research. Event- and process-oriented articles also cited about the same number of repositories. The 214 articles cited holdings from 476 repositories, an average of 2.2 repositories per article. The average number of repositories noted in event-oriented articles was 2.42, while the average for process-oriented articles was 2.02. As in average number of series, the figure for the latter is less, as one would expect, but the difference is not highly significant.

There is, however, a substantial group of social historians who do not use archives. The difference becomes particularly clear when citations per journal are analyzed (see Table 1). Articles in general journals (group I) used an average of 5.3 series drawn from 2.7 repositories, while in the social history subject journals (group II) the average figures were 4.7 series from 2.5 repositories. But the 51 articles from the social science and quantitatively oriented journals (group III) used an average of only 2.2 series from 1.1 repositories. These contrasting use figures were clear and consistent. They were reinforced by the conscious social science methodology of journals like *Social Science History*, which emphasize statistical analysis of aggregated data, often drawn from printed sources.

The series-level use patterns identified in this study are summarized in Tables 3, 4, and 5. Table 3 explains in detail the categories of series used and repositories visited. The data reveal a substantial use of traditional sources such as personal correspondence and research at repositories such as historical societies. Elliott, in his study of the history of science, found an even higher reliance on personal papers.[16] Goggin also discovered that such standard materials as correspondence, reports, and minutes were the most common sources in the history of women and blacks.[17] These records are not only available in abundance, but are relatively easy for researchers to use. Table 3 also illustrates the underuse of state and local archives. Most of the forty-nine series counted in the public offices column are state and local records *not* in archival custody. They outnumber the forty uses of public records from local archives. Aside from the census and vital records category, there were only seventeen series of public records held in state and local archives cited. Thus, state and local archives are probably the most obviously underutilized resource in the nation's archival system. Given the contrasting high use of records in historical societies, the location of these repositories is presumably not an inhibitory factor. Instead, the underuse probably reflects a combination of severe underfunding by government and lack of initiative by scholars.

In contrast to the state and local archives, the National Archives is used by researchers in all areas, with 185 series in 40 record groups cited. Not surprisingly, the National Archives' most heavily used resource is the 1850-1910 manuscript censuses. Social historians, however, also make extensive use of records down to a fairly low bureaucratic level from a number of well-known agencies, such as the Freedman's Bureau, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Women's Bureau, and the National Recovery Administration. Committee minutes and geographically organized program or subject files are

[16]Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 138.
[17]Goggin, "Study of Scholarly Users," 61.

frequently cited. Nevertheless, public records of all kinds—federal and nonfederal—are not used as much as might be expected. There were more uses of private organizational records than public records in the categories of "backbone" policy series (129 to 50), financial records (24 to 5), and case files and membership lists (51 to 35). The totals for all other program and operating files were virtually equal (79 to 84). Only their official function as keepers of records relating to the census, taxes, and land holdings allow governmental repositories to approach the use of the holdings of either historical societies or academic collections.

Organizational records in academic research collections are also often used in detail, perhaps reflecting these repositories' emphasis on acquiring and processing twentieth-century records. Many of the correspondence and diaries series used in social history research are from historical societies; however, the use of such papers from academic research collections (106 uses) is not only absolutely higher than for historical societies (83 uses), but virtually equal as a proportion of all the materials used from those repositories (40.5 percent versus 40.8 percent).

The distribution of series use by subject (Table 4) has more predictable variations, such as the heavy use of census records in studies of social and demographic structure and of operating files in studies of social policy. But a broad range of sources is also used in such specialties as the study of individual population groups, overall social and demographic structure, and labor, topics that often rely on quantitative data. The consistency in the use of personal correspondence in virtually all specialties is striking.

The most significant differentiation in terms of series used relates to research orientation (Table 5). While process-oriented articles do not neglect archives, they cite different records from event-oriented articles. Thus, 61.7 percent of the sources used in the latter are organizational files such as minutes, executive correspondence, memoranda, and program and committee files; only 25.9 percent of the series used in process-oriented articles fall into those categories. Conversely, 50.5 percent of all series in process-oriented articles are quantifiable records—including case and related files, financial records, or public censuses and vital records—compared to only 12 percent of all series in event-oriented research. It can be concluded, therefore, that in terms of archival use social historians fall into three groups—the quantitatively oriented social scientist historians; the students of process and structure; and the students of specific events, persons, issues, and institutions. The first group uses archives very sparingly, while the latter two use different kinds of archives. These latter two groups are similar to those Clark Elliott revealed in his science study, in which, roughly speaking, intellectual historians and social historians of science used different kinds of records, with the former relying almost exclusively on personal papers.[18]

One factor that accounts for much of the variation in social history research is the time period being studied. Most of the process-oriented articles cover the nineteenth century, largely because of the availability of census records and case files. Event-oriented research deals predominantly with the twentieth century. In terms of the eight subject categories, all of the articles on social and demographic structure deal with the nineteenth century, while two-thirds of the social policy articles cover the twentieth century. The time division presumably explains the heavy use of archives in

[18]Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 138.

Table 3

Series Used, Broken Down by Type from Each Category of Repository

Series Type	Repository: NARA	State & Local Archives	Inst. Archives	Academic Research Colls.	Historical Societies	Public Libraries	Private Colls.	Public Offices	TOTAL
PERSONAL / FAMILY PAPERS									
1. Correspondence	5 (2.7)	11 (13.1)	8 (13.8)	76 (28.3)	56 (27.5)	3 (13.0)			159 (17.9)
2. Diaries & memoirs	2 (1.1)	6 (7.2)		30 (12.2)	27 (13.2)	5 (21.7)			70 (7.6)
3. Organizational files	3 (1.6)	8 (9.5)	2 (3.4)	44 (16.3)	13 (6.4)	3 (13.0)			73 (8.0)
4. Case files & name lists				8 (3.0)	2 (1.0)				10 (1.1)
5. Financial records		8 (9.5)	1 (1.7)	5 (1.9)	19 (9.3)	2 (8.7)			35 (3.8)
ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS									
6. Minutes, histories, annual reports	1 (.5)	2 (2.4)	15 (25.9)	29 (10.7)	27 (13.2)	2 (8.7)	13 (33.3)		89 (9.7)
7. Executive correspondence	1 (.5)	1 (1.2)	10 (17.2)	19 (7.0)	12 (5.9)	1 (4.3)	2 (5.1)		46 (5.0)
8. Operating files	2 (1.1)	4 (4.8)	15 (25.9)	35 (13.0)	16 (7.9)	2 (8.7)	4 (10.3)		78 (8.6)
9. Case files & name lists		3 (3.6)	6 (10.3)	9 (3.3)	17 (8.4)		17 (43.6)		52 (5.7)
10. Financial records		1 (1.2)	1 (1.7)	12 (4.5)	9 (4.4)		1 (2.6)		24 (2.6)

PUBLIC RECORDS									
11. Minutes, histories, annual reports	7	4			1	1		8	21
	(3.8)	(4.8)			(.5)	(4.3)		(16.3)	(2.3)
12. Executive correspondence	24	6						1	31
	(12.9)	(7.2)						(2.0)	(3.4)
13. Operating files	74	4				1		5	84
	(40.0)	(4.8)				(4.3)		(10.2)	(9.2)
14. Case files & name lists	17	3				1		14	35
	(9.2)	(3.6)				(4.3)		(28.6)	(3.8)
15. Financial records	1			1			3		5
	(.5)			(.4)			(7.7)		(.5)
16. Census, tax, & vital records	48	23		1	5	2	2	18	99
	(25.9)	(24.2)		(.4)	(2.5)	(8.7)	(5.1)	(36.8)	(10.8)
TOTAL	185	84	58	269	204	23	39	49	911*
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

*There were 4 series for which no repository was indicated.

Note: Absolute totals, with percentage of column in parentheses.

Table 4

Series Used Broken Down by Type in Each Subject Category

Series Type	Subject: Specific Groups	Social Structure	Social Policy	Health & Medicine	Economic & Bus. History	Popular Culture	Urban Structure	Labor & Work	TOTAL
PERSONAL/FAMILY PAPERS									
1. Correspondence	51	17	32	12	11	3		33	159
	(18.9)	(14.5)	(18.8)	(18.8)	(17.5)	(10.7)		(17.0)	(17.9)
2. Diaries & memoirs	26	12	9	5	1	8		9	70
	(9.6)	(10.3)	(5.3)	(7.8)	(1.6)	(28.6)		(4.6)	(7.6)
3. Organizational files	8	5	15	8	7	2		28	73
	(3.0)	(4.3)	(8.8)	(12.5)	(10.9)	(7.1)		(14.4)	(8.0)
4. Case files & name lists	4			5		1			10
	(1.5)			(7.8)		(3.6)			(1.1)
5. Financial records	7	2	11		1	1		13	35
	(2.6)	(1.7)	(6.5)		(1.6)	(3.6)		(6.7)	(2.8)
ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS									
6. Minutes, histories, annual reports	27	12	12	7	5	3		23	89
	(10.0)	(10.3)	(7.1)	(10.9)	(7.9)	(10.7)		(11.8)	(9.7)
7. Executive correspondence	16		11	3	2	1		14	47
	(6.3)	(.9)	(6.5)	(4.7)	(3.2)	(3.6)		(7.2)	(5.1)
8. Operating files	20	3	22	4	4	3		24	80
	(7.4)	(2.6)	(13.0)	(6.3)	(6.3)	(10.7)		(12.4)	(8.7)
9. Case files & name lists	23	17	7	1				5	53
	(8.5)	(14.5)	(4.1)	(1.6)				(2.6)	(5.8)
10. Financial records	5	4	9	1	2			3	24
	(1.9)	(3.4)	(5.3)	(1.6)	(3.2)			(1.5)	(2.6)

PUBLIC RECORDS									
11. Minutes, histories, annual reports	7	2	5	1	1		2	3	21
	(2.6)	(1.7)	(3.0)	(1.6)	(1.6)		(22.5)	(1.5)	(2.3)
12. Executive correspondence	9	2	4	2	6	1		7	31
	(3.3)	(1.7)	(2.4)	(3.1)	(9.5)	(3.6)		(3.6)	(3.4)
13. Operating files	15	1	21	9	12	1	5	20	84
	(5.6)	(.9)	(12.4)	(14.1)	(19.0)	(3.6)	(55.6)	(10.3)	(9.2)
14. Case files & name lists	13	4	3	6	1	2		6	35
	(4.8)	(3.5)	(1.8)	(9.4)	(1.6)	(7.1)		(3.1)	(3.8)
15. Financial records	2		1		1			1	5
	(.7)		(.6)		(1.6)			(.5)	(.5)
16. Census, tax, & vital records	37	36	8		8	2	2	6	99
	(13.7)	(30.8)	(4.7)		(12.7)	(7.1)	(22.5)	(3.1)	(10.8)
TOTAL	270	117	170	64	63	28	9	194	915
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

Note: Absolute totals, with percentage of column in parentheses.

Table 5

Series Used, Broken Down by Type, Time Period, and Research Orientation

	Time Period				Research Type		
Series Type	1800-1860	1860-1900	1900-1945	1945-present	Event-Oriented	Process-Oriented	Total
PERSONAL / FAMILY PAPERS							
1. Correspondence	41 (17.9)	38 (15.6)	72 (17.6)	7 (20.0)	102 (19.4)	57 (14.5)	159 (17.9)
2. Diaries & memoirs	25 (10.9)	23 (9.4)	20 (5.0)	1 (2.9)	33 (6.4)	37 (9.4)	70 (7.6)
3. Organizational files	2 (.9)	26 (10.7)	37 (9.2)	8 (22.9)	53 (10.2)	20 (5.1)	73 (8.0)
4. Case files & name lists	3 (1.3)	6 (2.5)	1 (.2)		2 (.4)	8 (2.1)	10 (1.1)
5. Financial records	31 (13.5)	2 (.8)	2 (.5)			35 (8.9)	35 (3.8)
ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS							
6. Minutes, histories, annual reports	23 (10.0)	21 (8.6)	45 (11.1)		58 (11.1)	31 (7.8)	89 (9.7)
7. Executive correspondence	3 (1.3)	15 (6.1)	27 (7.0)	2 (5.7)	42 (8.0)	5 (1.3)	47 (5.1)
8. Operating files	6 (2.1)	10 (4.1)	60 (14.9)	4 (11.4)	67 (12.8)	13 (3.2)	80 (8.7)
9. Case files & name lists	14 (6.1)	18 (7.4)	21 (5.2)		18 (3.5)	35 (8.8)	53 (5.8)
10. Financial records	10 (4.3)	11 (4.5)	3 (.7)		4 (.8)	20 (5.1)	24 (2.6)
PUBLIC RECORDS							
11. Minutes, histories, annual reports	7 (3.0)	3 (1.2)	9 (2.2)	2 (5.7)	13 (2.6)	8 (2.1)	21 (2.3)
12. Executive correspondence	1 (.4)	9 (3.7)	18 (4.5)	3 (8.6)	24 (4.6)	7 (1.8)	31 (3.4)
13. Operating files	5 (2.3)	15 (6.1)	56 (13.9)	8 (22.9)	66 (12.7)	18 (4.6)	84 (9.2)
14. Case files & name lists	9 (3.9)	11 (4.5)	15 (3.7)		17 (3.3)	18 (4.6)	35 (3.8)
15. Financial records	2 (.9)	3 (1.2)			2 (.4)	3 (.8)	5 (.5)
16. Census, tax, & vital records	48 (20.9)	33 (13.5)	16 (4.0)		19 (3.7)	80 (20.2)	99 (10.8)
TOTAL	230 (100)	244 (100)	402 (100)	35 (100)	520 (100)	395 (100)	915 (100)

Note: Absolute totals, with percentage of column in parentheses.

Table 6

Intensity of Use of Series for each Type of Repository

Type of Repository	No. of Series Cited	Average Intensity of Use per Series
Private Collections	39	2.77
Public Offices	49	2.69
National Archives	185	2.58
Institutional Archives	58	2.24
State and Local Archives	84	2.23
Academic Research Collections	269	2.09
Public Libraries	23	2.09
Historical Societies	204	1.99
TOTAL	911	2.25

Table 7

Intensity of Use by Type of Series

	Intensity of Use								Total No. of Uses
	Incidental		Substantive		Important		Fundamental		
Series Type									
PERSONAL / FAMILY PAPERS									
1. Correspondence	50	(31.3)	68	(41.1)	37	(23.2)	4	(2.5)	159 (100)
2. Diaries & memoirs	24	(34.3)	31	(44.3)	12	(17.1)	3	(4.3)	70 (100)
3. Organizational files	13	(17.8)	44	(60.3)	14	(19.2)	2	(2.7)	73 (100)
4. Case files & name lists	2	(20.0)	4	(40.0)	3	(30.0)	1	(10.0)	10 (100)
5. Financial records	20	(57.1)	7	(20.0)	8	(22.9)			35 (100)
ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS									
6. Minutes, histories, annual reports	16	(16.9)	53	(58.5)	14	(15.6)	6	(6.7)	89 (100)
7. Executive correspondence	8	(17.4)	20	(41.3)	14	(30.4)	5	(10.9)	47 (100)
8. Operating files	18	(23.1)	45	(57.7)	10	(12.8)	7	(9.0)	80 (100)
9. Case files & name lists	8	(15.4)	15	(28.2)	11	(21.2)	19	(36.5)	53 (100)
10. Financial records	8	(33.3)	4	(16.7)	10	(41.7)	2	(8.3)	24 (100)
PUBLIC RECORDS									
11. Minutes, histories, annual reports	1	(4.8)	8	(38.1)	7	(33.3)	5	(23.8)	21 (100)
12. Executive correspondence	4	(13.2)	16	(51.3)	11	(35.5)			31 (100)
13. Operating files	6	(7.1)	49	(58.3)	24	(28.6)	5	(6.0)	84 (100)
14. Case files & name lists	4	(11.4)	13	(37.1)	10	(28.6)	8	(22.9)	35 (100)
15. Financial records			2	(40.0)	2	(40.0)	1	(10.0)	5 (100)
16. Census, tax, & vital records	9	(9.1)	23	(23.2)	33	(33.3)	34	(34.3)	99 (100)
TOTAL	191	(20.9)	402	(43.9)	220	(24.9)	102	(11.1)	915 (100)

Note: Absolute totals, with row percentages in parentheses.

process-oriented research. Primary archival research material is abundantly available for such research in the nineteenth century, but not the twentieth century. Time period also helps explain why the process-oriented research draws heavily on holdings in historical societies while event-oriented researchers instead use academic research collections. Overall, it remains true that historical society collections are strong in the earlier periods, while the newer academic research collections have concentrated on the past one hundred years.

Some of the variations by intensity of use of records drawn from the different repositories are more surprising. The average intensity of use for all series from each type of repository is indicated in Table 6, with the scale running from 1 (incidental use) to 4 (fundamental use). The relatively high figure of 2.58 for the National Archives largely reflects the use of the census as the basis for many articles. The intensive use of records in private collections (2.77) and public offices (2.69) is also notable. These are records not yet in professional archival care. Perhaps because of the record type—case files, tax lists—and the difficulty of finding them, researchers mine such records intensively when they uncover them. The level of use of such records certainly suggests an area of potentially fruitful collaboration between the social historians who find the records and the archivists who should provide them with professional care.

Just as there are differences between the levels of use of records from certain repositories, so there are differences in terms of the use of different types of records. These variations have implications for appraisal decisions and may modify the initial impression of the overall use pattern. The figures on intensity of use of different series types are presented in Table 7. They reveal that personal and family papers—correspondence, diaries, organizational records—and all forms of financial records are used far less intensively than case files, census records, and similar resources. On the scale of 1 to 4, personal papers and financial records fell between 1.90 and 2.05, while case files and related records rated 2.67 and census and related records, 2.93. Of the 229 personal correspondence and diaries series cited, 173 (76 percent) were in use levels 1 (incidental) or 2 (substantive). In contrast, 67 of 99 census and vital records (68 percent) were either important (level 3) or fundamental (level 4) to the article in which they appeared. Overall, public records were used far more intensively than personal papers (an average of 2.63 to 1.96), with non-public organizational records falling in between (2.27).

These figures suggest that the relatively low total use of public records is mitigated by the intensity with which such records are employed when they are consulted. Further, the total figures for the use by social historians of such traditional sources as personal correspondence may be misleading. These records are used often, but are less central to research than other types of materials. The intensity of use figures for general organizational records—series types 8 and 13 in the tables—also have interesting implications. The main issue for archivists is how to balance bulk and processing time versus the potential use of such records below the executive level. In terms of social history, the picture is ambiguous. Of the total of 164 series of organizational records, only 12 were fundamental (level 4) to the relevant article, though another 34 played an important role (level 3). Social historians use committee files, program records, staff memoranda, and similar records regularly but not very intensively.

Some of the variation in level of use derives from the fact that different user communities rely on archives to markedly different degrees. One-half of all the series fundamental (level 4) to articles were case files, census records, and related materials cited in articles on specific population groups or social and demographic structure. In contrast, only 5 of the 194 series in articles on work and the labor movement were fundamental. In the latter case, archives were typically one of many sources, while in the former the articles were often essentially analyses of a single source. The distinction was consistent in terms of research orientation as well. Of the 395 series used in process-oriented articles, 59 played a fundamental role, while that was true for only 43 of the 520 series used in event-oriented articles. Again, the latter drew more broadly on such materials as newspapers, periodicals, and—since so many were in the twentieth century—oral history interviews.

Conclusions and Implications

Such information about the users and uses of different types of records should contribute to the process of appraisal, which in large degree is a process of prediction. Although archival wisdom holds that appraisal should not be based exclusively on current use patterns, the data collected in this study provides some suggestions about the future of social history research. The articles analyzed appeared in the period 1981-1985, which saw a reaction against an overreliance on quantification in social history. The narrative style regained much of its prestige, and new perspectives from fields like anthropology and linguistics reinforced the return to archival sources.[19] Social historians may have reached a rough balance between the use of quantitative and qualitative sources. This may not change radically for some time. If so, the data on the use of different series types from different time periods might indicate some future patterns in social history, especially dealing with the twentieth century. The relevance of this to any given repository will depend on that repository's mission and clientele, though by now most institutions will have some involvement with social history research.

The two most likely developments in social history may be (1) increased use of the kinds of records now heavily used in research on the 1860-1900 period for research on the 1900-1945 period, and (2) a continuation of the pattern in research on the 1900-1945 period in work on the post-World War II decades. The first is an inevitable consequence of the regular release of the census and similar public records and of case files, all of which are now used intensively in research on the nineteenth century. This increased use of these materials may also raise the overall role of archives in early twentieth century social history research. The present data indicate a distinct difference in the average intensity of use of series in articles on the 1860-1900 period (2.32) versus the 1900-1945 period (2.20). The census and case-level information that will become available for the early twentieth century probably will be used as intensively as it has been for research on the previous period. In addition, oral history will obviously no longer be the major source that it has been for work on the 1930s and the Second World War, thus adding to the probable increase in the importance of archives for research on the early twentieth century.

[19]See for example Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography," *American Historical Review* 87 (February 1982): 1-24; Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present* 85 (November 1979): 3-24; and the reply to Stone by Eric Hobsbawn, "The Revival of Narrative: Some Comments," *Past and Present* 86 (February 1980): 3-8.

Yet the 1900-1945 research profile will never resemble the earlier profiles, simply because very different kinds of records were generated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Complex program and operating files (series types 8 and 13) form a significant part of the research base for the later period, in sharp contrast to the nineteenth-century pattern. Similarly, while personal correspondence remains important in the early twentieth century, sources such as diaries become much less common. The situation is more complex with financial records (series types 5, 10, and 15). They certainly continued to be generated in the twentieth century, but their use by social historians is relatively light and declines sharply over time. The bulk and complexity of twentieth-century financial records offers little reason to suspect that this clear trend will be reversed.

Predictions about research on the postwar period can be made with less confidence. The number of articles published is still too small, and the proliferation of new record formats too rapid. If, however, the discussion is limited to the years up to the early 1970s—before the conversion of so many records to automated formats—some very tentative hypotheses can be advanced. Given confidentiality and privacy laws, research sources for the 1945-c. 1972 period may not differ greatly from the current 1900-1945 pattern for some time. Vital records, case files, and similar materials will probably remain restricted, and their use will be limited. The data from this study suggest a reliance on the type of program and operating files common in 1900-1945 research; and the average use level in post-1945 articles (2.14) already approximates the figure for 1900-1945 articles (2.20). Thus, even in research on the most modern period, archives continue to play an important role, and social historians probe into complex organizational records. As historians turn their attention to the postwar decades, it seems probable that these trends will continue.

Such predictions are speculative, but they indicate the type of issues raised by an archival use study. A summary of the overall findings will suggest broader generalizations. Based on the data presented here, social historians seem to be frequent and capable users of archives. They do not use as many sources as they could, or find and use records exactly as archivists would prefer. The typical article in social history, however, did cite a variety of archival sources, drawn from more than a single repository. There were several distinct patterns of use, which varied according to the time period studied, subject, and research orientation of the article. While social historians studying processes and structures used markedly fewer archival sources than those studying events and individuals, the former did generally employ archives substantially in their research. Social historians whose methodology was drawn primarily from the social sciences, however, made relatively little use of archives.

Predictably, use of the National Archives and academic research collections was high, but so was use of traditional historical societies. In contrast, state and local public archives were clearly the most underutilized type of repository. Within repositories, social historians relied heavily on such quantifiable sources as manuscript censuses, tax and baptismal records, case and transaction files, and membership lists. This was especially true of process-oriented research. Certain types of detailed organizational records, beyond the commonly used minutes and executive correspondence, were also regularly cited, especially such records from the National Archives. Social historians also utilized diaries and personal correspondence fre-

quently, though not as intensively as other records. Personal and organizational files were used particularly heavily in event-oriented research. In contrast, financial records were rarely important in any type of research in social history.

These findings suggest several conclusions regarding the relationships among use, appraisal, and historical research. First, social history research remains archives-dependent in practice. Archives and manuscript collections are relevant, usable, and, most importantly, used by social historians. The data in this study reaffirm Margaret Stieg's finding that, unlike any other group of scholars, historians rely on such primary sources almost as much as on books and periodicals.[20] Archival research is still central to the majority of social historians who remain within the confines of traditional historical methodology. This reflects both the resourcefulness of historians and the adaptibility of archivists.

Second, historical research is not intellectually archives-driven. The social history of the past few decades developed independent of changes in accepted archival practices, though some American archivists had been collecting in social and economic history since the turn of the century. Despite the traditionalism of such archivists as Sir Hilary Jenkinson and the medievalists of the Ecole des Chartes, British and French historians pioneered in social history research. Only after formulating new questions did social historians in Europe and America come to archives. Their new questions in turn stimulated many archivists to reevaluate their collecting policies and appraisal practices. Yet even the early social historians were always dependent on archival sources, and often drew on long-held materials in old repositories. Such recycling of old sources for new uses continues. While social historians may sometimes ask archivists to save everything, in reality they have concentrated on reinterpreting existing holdings. Their research is primarily question centered, not materials centered.

Third, understanding the extent to which social historians use specific types of archives can aid archivists in making acquisitions and appraisal decisions. The more likely it is that a large body of records under consideration will shortly be of interest primarily to scholars, the more important that understanding becomes. Thus, the findings of this study relating to voluminous organizational records and financial records may be more relevant to most repositories than the findings about census and vital records, which have different publics and are kept for legal as well as research reasons. Archivists confronted with difficult decisions may also benefit from the realization that there appears to be no critical deficiency of resources for social history research. Archival holdings remain constrained by the social, bureaucratic, and political environments that produce them. Yet historians are able to find and use resources to document their new perspectives and interpretations. While an awareness of the potential scholarly use of a given series can be an important factor in appraisal, only in rare cases should archivists suspect that one appraisal decision might seriously change the course of historical research.

Fourth, efficient and imaginative processing is now as important as acquisition and appraisal in encouraging the further use of archives in social history. Repositories of all kinds already have a wealth of appropriate materials. It is quite possible that archivists can make as much

[20]Stieg, "Information Needs," 551.

material available through processing or rewriting and automating their descriptions of existing holdings as they can through making new acquisitions. For example, the relatively high use of personal papers in social history may be largely due to the fact that they are easy to use and comparatively well-processed. Conversely, the underutilization of state archives must in part be due not to the lack of important holdings, but to the lack of effective arrangement and description. Projects designed to include state archives in automated national data bases are therefore particularly important. Computerized subject access for all archival holdings should increase use by social historians, for whom provenance is often an unusable guide to resources.

Fifth, even improved processing and appraisal may not suffice to get social science historians (and other social scientists) into archives. The fundamental reality remains that social science methodology almost pridefully rejects the use of archives and manuscripts as unsystematic and unrepresentative, as well as time consuming. To begin to change that, automated file-level retrieval is probably a minimal requirement, combined with an emphasis on the retention and elaborate description of quantifiable information within series. More importantly, an external outreach program would have to overcome the aversion to all non-quantifiable sources, which seems inherent in social science methodology.

Sixth, archival planning in general should not overemphasize the low number of historians visiting repositories. As William Joyce has pointed out, "while some archivists may want to absolve themselves of dealing with historians, they cannot avoid dealing with the historical method and its implications for archival repositories and archival researchers."[21] In fact, the dynamic and uniquely symbiotic relationship between archives and history remains fruitful for both professions. Archivists have proven adept at issuing reports documenting their problems, reinforcing a cycle of poverty with a cycle of depression. After reviewing social history research, such gloom appears unjustified. The archival profession can be proud of its response to changes in both historical research and society as a whole. The importance of such fields as women's history and popular culture and such resources as social service case files and ethnic association records is widely acknowledged by archivists. The use of any one collection or repository by social historians will probably be too small to impress many administrators. On the *overall* professional level, however, the connections between innovative historical research, archival holdings, and archival use remain strong and vital.

From such generalizations down to the specifics of the underutilization of financial records and state archives, this article has illustrated how use studies can be conducted and employed in research about archives. The findings of such studies ought not be applied mechanically. In Clark Elliott's words, they "should be seen as contributions to the liberal education of the archivist, not tools of management."[22] Appraisal will remain partly an intuitive and subjective process. But the kind of information presented here about publications in social history should also be collected about other applications of archives and manuscripts. Only thus can we develop a realistic understanding of the archival role in society and its possibilities for the future.

[21] Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," 132.
[22] Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 133.