

Editors' Notes

EDITORS' REPORT. SEPTEMBER 1990

At my first Economic History Association conference I could not imagine why anyone went to the Business Meeting, and I ended up in the room much against my wishes. When Herman Krooss gave his Secretary-Treasurer's report, however, I realized why there was standing room only. Herman's reports had little to do with the Treasury or his correspondence as secretary. They were designed to let us know there was an informed, caring, likable person in charge of the tasks—and were spiced with enough humor to pack the room with avid listeners. As I recall, if you heard one of his reports you heard them all, but still people cut short their lunches in order to hear his inimitable delivery. Alas, I am no Herman Krooss.

While Herman could draw us into the meeting, he could not compel us (or me in particular) to pay attention to the other items on the agenda. So before being placed in the position of having to give an editors' report I had paid no attention whatsoever to previous ones. Intuitively, I had nothing to go on—what would I want to hear from an editor other than “yes” my article has been accepted? I would have liked to emulate Herman Krooss, but since his reports were never published, I could not consult them for guidance. Instead I turned to old editorial reports, which seemed the proper thing to do given that these commemorative meetings were designed to include a fair amount of retrospection about the Association and the *JOURNAL*.

I thought the first and the twenty-fifth such reports would be nice benchmarks, but there were no reports in those years. In fact, there were none until 1975, and the chief point of that was to report that Herman Krooss had passed away. From 1977 to 1982 the *JOURNAL* carried a one-paragraph summary of the manuscript flow and a list of outside reviewers. Not until 1983 did the modern-style report appear, with its extended description of the manuscript flow, statistical analysis of one feature or another of that flow, and an opinion or two about the state of things.

This year's report resembles very much the format and style of those that have emanated from my recent predecessors. Following their lead I will introduce a new and meaningful statistic that you had not realized you wished to know. My real innovation, however, is in keeping with the style—or should I say length—of an increasing number of submissions. I want you to see the full version. A report of this length should not be published, but you deserve to see the complete argument.

If I were to follow in Paul David's recent path, I would surprise everyone and conclude at this point. Such brevity would also be more in the spirit of Herman Krooss. Some things, however, cannot be left unsaid.

It seems repetitive (especially if you read a number of these reports at one sitting) but worth saying again that this *JOURNAL* could not be produced without the dedicated work of our various assistants. There is absolutely no way the American office could function if it were left up to me. Donna Gullett is indispensable to the operation—all the more so now that we have become the head office. My colleague, Joshua Rosenbloom, has also made life much easier for me by performing admirably as the book review editor. In Troy, Margaret Mirabelli did a marvelous job of running that office and seeing to it that the final product came out right. She advised us well over the years, and especially so as we inherited that last iota of responsibility. She has also turned over the “un-American” activities to Davis, California, in fine shape. As has been the case in these years of transition, the new office hits the ground running, immediately taking up some responsibility for the September issue. Peter Lindert has been hard at work since April (or so it seems), and Pamela Evans came to his rescue in July. The early evidence is that they will put us all to shame.

These offices can function as well as they do because the financial affairs are well taken care of by Bill and RuthAnne Becker, and because Byrd Press does such a fine job printing the final product. We also are indebted to our universities—RPI, Kansas, and now UC Davis—for providing necessary and substantial financial support.

We must also thank our referees, those on the editorial board who provide substantial amounts of high-quality service, and those off it who, almost without exception, provide superb reports when called upon (their names are listed below).

Finally, now that Paul Hohenberg is no longer a co-editor, we can express our deep gratitude for the fine job he did over the past four years. I shall miss his efficient, if sometime hectic, administration, and his down-home counsel.

As for the year's activities, Herman Krooss would probably say we are still in business, with no co-editor captured on videotape engaged in incriminating activity. We published about the same number of articles as has been our wont in recent years, the quality and areas of specialization reflecting, and properly so, the pile of stuff given us to choose from.

The facts bear him out. The number of submissions was about the same as it has been for the past five years: totaling 120, exclusive of the Tasks issue. The split between offices was about even (63 were handled by the American office, 57 by the non-American); the number of acceptances was dead even at nine apiece; and the revise-and-resubmit decisions nearly so (six versus nine). The number of rejections was much higher for the American office, 37 versus 20, but half this difference reflects the larger number of papers still pending in the non-American office—due, no doubt, to the transfer of power now under way. In the Tasks issue we published 12 of the papers given at the annual meeting held in Washington, DC.

The distribution of papers by field is summarized in the accompanying table (where Other is used to designate non-American). Feel free to use that raw data however you wish, keeping in mind that the allocation of each paper to a field is arbitrary. Should a paper titled "The Value of Children in Antebellum Northern Agriculture" be placed in agriculture, labor, or demography? Given these problems of classification, it still seems clear that our interests are quite concentrated in labor, industry, money, and the ambiguous category of political economy.

As promised, I have compiled a new statistic: the length of time to publication. Some journals take so long getting articles into print that they put the date of submission in a footnote so that readers will not inquire why this outdated stuff is still being published. We have no need for that. Articles accepted for publication in this JOURNAL normally get into print within one year of the date submitted. The average for the JOURNAL is 346 days, with the non-American office taking nine days longer than the American. This number does not include the Tasks issue, which is processed more quickly on average (from the time of the meetings to publication is only 270 days, and from date of submission to publication is a mere 210). Moreover, the presence of the Tasks issue delays the publication of other articles and biases upward the average length of time to publication. This short overall turnaround time reflects an unwritten policy to keep a small inventory of papers (in fact, it approaches zero), which in turn explains why we have such a high rejection rate, and why the editors occasionally lose some sleep. Obviously, we rely on a steady flow of high-quality manuscripts, and so far we have not been caught short. The wisdom of doing it this way seems obvious: we publish pieces while they are still hot.

So much for the fact, now for the opinion. It takes only a short time on the job to realize why one former editor became very interested in rhetoric and the art of writing. Some of what we receive is in great need of repair, and I shudder to think what less literary economics journals get to see. Poor writing makes it difficult, if not impossible, for referees to fully appreciate the true force and originality of your arguments. Other papers are not actually jeopardized by their writing quality, but their style leaves much

TABLE I
SUMMARY OF THE JOURNAL'S OFFICE ACTIVITY: JULY 1, 1989 TO JUNE 30, 1990

	Regular Submissions by Office		
	American	Other	Total
Number of Submissions	63	57	120
Accepted	9	9	18
Revise & Resubmit	6	9	15
Pending	11	19	30
Rejected (or withdrawn)	37	20	57
Submissions by Quarter			
July, Aug., Sept.	18	13	31
Oct., Nov., Dec.	11	15	26
Jan., Feb., March	22	11	33
April, May, June	12	18	30
		Number of Days	
Time to Decision			
All Submissions	66	74	69
Acceptances	56	34	50
Rejections	67	72	69
Revisions	77	97	89
Time to Publication	342	351	346

DISTRIBUTION BY FIELD	Submissions		Acceptances	
	American	Other	American	Other
Agriculture	9	4	2	2
Demography	1	7		
Growth	1	5		2
Industry	10	8	1	1
Technology	1	2		
Labor	12	5	2	
Money and Macro	10	12	2	2
Public Finance	2	0		
History of Thought	1	1		
Trade	2	7		1
Urban and Regional	2	1		
Political Economy	12	5	2	1
Totals	63	57	9	9

to be desired. Many people, for example, write in the present tense. As Stan Lebergott said recently, "the nice thing about history is that it has already occurred." The past tense is remarkably useful for conveying this to the reader. The fact that you have now produced a table with some numbers about a past event does not alter its place in historical time. Perhaps another example of what might possibly appear to be somewhat less than ideal writing is the excessive use of cautionary phrases to suggest that possibly the evidence may only allow you to draw some tentative conclusions. Or, the use of ways that are roundabout in style to say things that could be said by employing other, more direct ways of saying those same things should be dropped in favor of the more direct way. (Notice the feeble efforts to use McCloskey's device of showing by example.)

It would be nice to jettison the paper format that resembles a summary of your research steps. I have been as guilty as anyone, but now that I have the responsibility to read this stuff a bit more carefully, I see things differently. We do not really care to know every thought you had on the subject, every detour you took, every question that

prompted you along the way. You need not try to show that you are the innocent, objective scholar setting up the test for the first time and eagerly anticipating the results. You now know the results, so tell them to us in a positive, clear, and interesting manner.

Finally, the JOURNAL tries to appeal to a wider audience than most academic publications, and toward that end we sometimes must rewrite—as some of you well know. We may not always succeed in making the articles clear and accessible, but we keep trying. On occasion, however, we can be completely stumped. Did one author really mean to thank us for our “*unsightful comments*”?

In addition to the members of the editorial board, the following outside referees deserve our thanks for their generous assistance during the year:

Robert C. Allen, University of British Columbia
 Lee Alston, University of Illinois
 George Alter, Indiana University
 Fred Bateman, Indiana University
 William N. Becker, George Washington University
 Jere Behrman, University of Pennsylvania
 Maxine Berg, University of Warwick
 Kathleen A. Biddick, University of Notre Dame
 Michael Bordo, University of South Carolina
 Loren Brandt, University of Toronto
 John C. Brown, Clark University
 Malcolm Burns, University of Kansas
 Charles Calomiris, Northwestern University
 Bruce Campbell, The Queen's University of Belfast
 Forrest Capie, City University Business School (London)
 Susan Carter, University of California, Riverside
 Gregory Clark, University of California, Davis
 John Clark, University of Kansas
 John Coatsworth, University of Chicago
 Raymond L. Cohn, Illinois State University
 N. F. R. Crafts, University of Warwick
 George K. Davis, Miami University
 Lance E. Davis, California Institute of Technology
 J. Bradford De Long, Harvard University
 Christopher Dyer, University of Birmingham
 Bernard Elbaum, University of California, Santa Cruz
 Stanley Engerman, University of Rochester
 Gerald A. Epstein, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
 Peter Fearon, University of Leicester
 David Feeny, McMaster University
 Stefano Fenoaltea, University of Pennsylvania
 Louis Ferleger, University of Massachusetts, Boston
 Elizabeth Field-Hendry, Queens College, CUNY
 Price Fishback, University of Arizona
 Albert Fishlow, University of California, Berkeley
 Roderick Floud, City of London Polytechnic
 Robert W. Fogel, University of Chicago
 Nancy Folbre, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
 James Foreman-Peck, St. Anthony's College, Oxford
 David W. Galenson, University of Chicago
 Henry A. Gemery, Colby College
 Richard T. Gill

Alberto Giovannini, Columbia University
Victor P. Goldberg, Columbia University
Claudia Goldin, Harvard University
George Grantham, McGill University
Richard Grossman, Wesleyan University
Farley Grubb, University of Delaware
William W. Hagen, University of California, Davis
Bronwyn Hughes Hall, University of California, Berkeley
Joan U. Hannon, St. Mary's College of California
J. Robert Hanson II, Texas A&M University
C. Knick Harley, University of Western Ontario
Timothy J. Hatton, University of Essex
Will Hausman, College of William and Mary
G. R. Hawke, Victoria University of Wellington
Thomas Hazlitt, University of California, Davis
Carol E. Heim, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Bruce Herrick, Washington & Lee University
Glenn R. Hueckel, Purdue University
Douglas A. Irwin, Federal Reserve System
Charles Issawi, Princeton University
John James, University of Virginia
Eric L. Jones, LaTrobe University
Alex Keyssar, Duke University
Emine Kiray, Wellesley College
Paul Kuznets, Indiana University
Stanley Lebergott, Wesleyan University
Nathaniel H. Leff, Columbia University
John Legler, University of Georgia
Frank Lewis, Queen's University
John Lyons, Miami University
Robert McGuire, University of California, Davis
Howard P. Marvel, Ohio State University
Thomas Mayer, University of California, Davis
Donald Moggridge, University of Toronto
Joel Mokyr, Northwestern University
Morris D. Morris, Brown University
R. J. Morris, University of Edinburgh
Carl Mosk, University of Victoria
Daniel Nelson, University of Akron
Anthony Patrick O'Brien, Lehigh University
Patrick K. O'Brien, St. Anthony's College, Oxford
Kerry Odell, Scripps College
Alan Olmstead, University of California, Davis
Martha L. Olney, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Sevket Pamuk, Villanova University
Sidney Pollard, Universität Bielefeld
Clayne Pope, Brigham Young University
Daniel Raff, Harvard University
Angela Redish, University of British Columbia
Alan R. Richards, American University in Cairo
Hugh Rockoff, Rutgers University
Joshua Rosenbloom, University of Kansas
Winifred B. Rothenberg, Tufts University

Larry Schweikart, University of Dayton
 Thomas E. Skidmore, Brown University
 Byung-Nak Song, Harvard University
 Robert C. Stacey, University of Washington
 William Sundstrom, Santa Clara University
 Richard Sylla, North Carolina State University
 Peter Temin, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 Robert Tignor, Princeton University
 C. Peter Timmer, Harvard University
 Elias Tuma, University of California, Davis
 Abraham L. Udovitch, Princeton University
 Thomas S. Ulen, University of Illinois
 Georgia Villaflor
 Terry von Ende, Texas Tech University
 Jan de Vries, University of California, Berkeley
 Kenneth Wachter, University of California, Berkeley
 John Wallis, University of Maryland
 Scott L. Waugh, University of California, Los Angeles
 David Weiman, Yale University
 Warren C. Whatley, University of Michigan
 Lawrence H. White, University of Georgia
 Jeffrey G. Williamson, Harvard University
 Gavin Wright, Stanford University
 Leland B. Yeager, Auburn University

THE 1991 RENAISSANCE CONFERENCE

Women and Gender in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: A Workshop on Pedagogy and Research will be held on May 3–4, 1991, at the Newberry Library in Chicago. This workshop, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, will highlight the distribution of materials and the challenges of pedagogy in a new field that crosses traditional national and subject boundaries in medieval and Renaissance studies. Four interdisciplinary panels will focus on disseminating the results of new research on women and gender and on defining future directions for the field. For more information, write The Center for Renaissance Studies, The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL 60610-3380, or call (312) 943-9090.

A MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS EXCHANGE

The Economic History Association's Committee on Teaching is collecting reading lists, exams, and writing assignments for economic history courses. Any teacher who sends in a diskette containing this material will receive the diskette back with copies of the material sent in by all other respondents. The committee would be interested in material for any economic history course, undergraduate or graduate, as well as for courses that have close connections with economic history (for example, courses in business or demographic history). If at all possible, please use WordPerfect to put the material on diskette. If this is not possible, xeroxes of your material would be of some use. Please use a 5.25-inch 360k diskette, suitable for an IBM-compatible machine. In order to receive back your diskette with the material of the other respondents, please include a stamped, self-addressed diskette mailer with your diskette. In order to receive the collection in time to plan for the 1991–1992 academic year, please send in your diskette by May 30, 1991. Send diskettes to Professor Robert Whaples, Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53201.