

points de vue, de se situer par rapport à eux et, sur un plan plus intime, « d'y voir clair personnellement » (p. 25).

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Since its inception almost a decade ago *Archivaria* has reflected a concern for the dynamic interface between historians and their documentation. Recent issues, though, have highlighted the history of archival institutions and the internal dynamic of the archival profession. One danger of this tendency has been the gradual but definite separation of the historical and archival professions in Canada—to their mutual disadvantage. Yet historians who ignore *Archivaria* do so at great risk, for some of the insights presented there are central to understanding the historical paradigms currently preoccupying our profession.

To counter this trend towards introspection, from time to time *Archivaria* features theme issues that focus attention on problems or issues of more general concern, inviting a broader participation from the academic community. Such a strategy can be fraught with difficulty but also offers the opportunity for creative interchanges on a scholarly basis. Volume 14 includes several informed appraisals of recent trends in Canadian social history, along with some suggestions for innovation in more traditional archival sources. Within its own terms it succeeds very well.

Tom Nesmith of the Public Archives of Canada is consulting editor for this issue. His introductory essay outlines the paradigms informing recent Canadian social history and calls on archivists and historians to match innovations in computer-assisted analysis of regularly generated records with an equal commitment to making collections more accessible. Ranging across recent Canadian, American and European literature in the new social history, he properly points out that innovative analysis is rapidly outpacing the archivist's capacity to deal with great masses of new documentation and often creates its own parallel archives, thereby by-passing the traditional repositories. He argues that archivists must reassert their positive role in redefining social history, particularly quantitative history where technology is so central to the method and the sources so difficult to manipulate. His is a refreshing and forward-looking approach, capturing the tremendous advances in archival practice over the past decade, yet demanding more collecting and accessing of archival material of interest to a wide range of historians. Nesmith clearly recognizes that the political preoccupations of past generations of Canadian archivists and historians are insufficient for present concerns with the socio/economic dynamic of Canadian history, but he has a legitimate concern for the distance that seems to be opening up between the two major professions concerned with historical analysis in Canada.

David Gagan and H.E. Turner report very positively on the "State of the Art" in Canadian social history—an admirable romp across the last decade which touches most bases and manages to synthesize a great deal of the sort of history that, in their somewhat pretentious phrase, "treats society not as a museum of artifacts to be described, but as a constantly changing archive of public and private experiences awaiting both empirical investigation and theoretical speculation aimed at delineating the historical meaning of social reality."

In contrasting the writing of social history by French- and English-speaking historians in Canada, they reaffirm the commonly accepted conclusion that *Québécois* historians, because of their prior exposure to the *Annales* tradition, are more advanced in theory and method. While true to a point, the range of *Québécois* scholars who can be properly categorized as within the *Annales* orbit is often exaggerated, and invoked when one wants really to show respect for work rather than attempt a systematic analysis of the dynamic that pervades so much of recent Quebec social history. Most anglophone Canadian historians still back away from any systematic assessment of the major issues informing the work of French Canadian social historians.

The full richness of regional research in English Canada tends to be dissipated by vast distances and disparate questions, so that the critical mass of comparable research that occurs on some themes in Quebec history is difficult to match. But when one considers the contributions of sister disciplines like historical geography, folklore and anthropology, the achievement of the past decade in English Canada seems more than Gagan and Taylor are prepared to admit. Whatever the situation might have been a decade ago, French- and English-speaking historians are coming together in their methods and theoretical approaches.

Briefer essays examine more limited perspectives: New France (Peter Moogk), family papers (Peter Ward), nineteenth-century urban directories (Garth Shaw), and death and vital statistic records for Ontario (Bruce Bowden and Roger Hall). All offer insights into particular aspects of archival collections that social historians should address more frequently. In most instances attention is focused on a particular type of source, highlighting the limits and possibilities for innovative research on social history.

Susan Larkin, Beth Light and Alison Prentice assess the archival dimensions of their ongoing investigations into the feminization and gradual professionalization of teaching in eastern Canada's schools through the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their melding of locally generated school records with census and other data collections provides a unique perspective on the dissemination of teaching technology and other changes taking place within the educational system during the late nineteenth century. They also demonstrate the impact that the mapping projects sponsored by forthcoming volumes of the new *Historical Atlas of Canada* will have on our perception of social themes in the past.

Chad Gaffield surveys recent trends both in and outside Canada in the field of historical demography. His general conclusion is that the resources available to such studies for late nineteenth-century Canada are comparable with those of any other western nation and excellent in some limited geographical areas. For all that though, he points out that studies of family or vital processes have failed to evolve far beyond a concern for methodological problems and are still far from the accepted orthodoxy in Canadian historical presentation. In spite of current limits he, at least, is convinced that in Canada the field is maturing rapidly and is bound soon to achieve a broader acceptance among Canadian social historians.

Jan Sundin and Ian Winchester call for a more systematic approach to the creation of computer databases in the social/demographic field. They argue for standardized procedures within similar databases to maximize compatibility and comparative research. They cite the experience of Sweden, where a government make-work programme has assisted the creation of a massive population database for much of the nineteenth century based on local vital statistics and church records. They argue for introduction of some standardization of publicly supported automated databases created from Canadian census materials.

Overall, the authors in this volume tend to reflect basic trends within various sectors of social history rather than offer particularly new insights. Not too much in the historiographical essays will surprise informed social historians, though presentation here is generally thoughtful and occasionally provocative. The volume overlooks museums and historic sites as innovators in social history. Archivists might think that those who work with material culture are too

removed from archives to warrant inclusion in a volume such as this. Yet the majority of clients in any Canadian archive these days are not academic scholars but public sector historians of one sort or another. Many of them are advancing the scope of social history in ways their academic counterparts have infrequently considered. Their absence from this volume reflects one of the great gulfs still dividing the Canadian historical community. But this is a very successful volume in its own terms; any one interested in social history in Canada can read it with profit.

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