

Proposal of Revisions for the Information-Literate Historian

Jenny L. Presnell

Most of the changes highlighted below are simple and more in the realm of sentences or paragraphs. I've tried to indicate which ones would be more substantial. The suggested revisions are based on feedback from a number of sources.

One of our faculty members had her graduate thesis class use the book and have a library session to tell me what they thought of the text. (I really did encourage them to tell me what could be improved.) Many liked the book and found it useful even though they had been history majors as undergraduates. A number of valid criticisms came up. One thought that it was too text dense. We discussed the problem with cost and images. One was concerned that many of the databases included were for western resources. But this is sort of the fact of publishing, if you stay with English language sources. Another suggested a large checklist at the end to sort of run through your research. Yet another was using genealogical research techniques and would have liked those kinds of records addressed.

One comment on Amazon.com (*The main drawback to The Information-Literate Historian is that the use of artifacts from the historical period as a tool to augment and verify documents is not addressed. In fact, Presnell seems to shy away from "hard" data science, such as statistics, in general. I'm thinking that the next edition of this book (and I hope there is one!) covers these missing research areas.*) correctly suggests that the book needs the statistics chapter discussed above.

Overall, the book does need another chapter on statistics and data. This chapter would be similar in format to the chapters on maps and non-print media. I'd anticipate it would be about the same length (about 18 pages) and approach as the maps chapter. Introductory material would discuss the history, forms, definitions, and uses of data. There are a number of simple sources for statistics that would be listed. A discussion about finding and using larger datasets would follow. As in the other chapters, this statistics chapter would include how to evaluate statistics and how they have been used in the past ie. "how to lie with statistics".

Journal reviews for and Cited in Sources for I-LH

Reviews

- Goedeken, Edward A. "The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students." *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 43 (4) (November 2008): 490. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 18, 2011).
- Mangun, Kimberley, and Karen Miller Russell. "The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students." *Journalism History* 32, (4) (Winter 2007): 249-250. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 18, 2011).
- Forgay, Jane. "The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students." *History Teacher* 40, (4) (August 2007): 565-566. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 18, 2011).

Cited:

- Blair, Sheila and Sharon Carlson. "Where Keywords Fail: Using Metadata to Facilitate Digital Humanities Scholarship." *Journal of Library Metadata*, 8 (3) October 2008 : 249 – 262.
- Mages, Keith C. and Julie A. Fairman. "Working with Primary Sources: An Overview," in Sandra B. Lewenson, Eleanor Krohn, eds., **Capturing Nursing History**. New York: Springer Publications, 2008.
- Stephens, Ronald J. "Methodological Considerations for Micro Studies of UNIA Divisions: Some Notes Calling on an Ethno-Historical Analysis." *Journal of Black Studies*. 39 (2) Nov. 2008: 281-315
- Hodel, Jan and Peter Haber. "Das Kollaborative Schreiben von Geschichte als Lernprozess Eigenheiten Und Potenzial von Wiki-Systemen und Wikipedia." In Marianne Merkt, etal. *Studieren Neu Erfinden – Hochschule Neu Denken*. Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2007, pp 43-53.
- **Representing the Past : Essays in Performance Historiography**. Charlotte M. Canning & Thomas Postlewait, eds. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010. – page 27 (need chapter)
- Wardhaugh Benjamin. **How to Read Historical Mathematics**. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c2010

Chapter by Chapter Proposed Revisions

Chapter 1: Historians and The Research Process: Getting Started

- Note taking and documenting sources needs updating. Zotero, a free software is much more robust than before. It can also be used to make online note cards. (I believe it used to be called Scribe.)
- I'd like to suggest ways that students can go completely digital by using Acrobat professional to highlight articles and make notes on digital journal articles, etc.
- New methods of distributing scholarship such as institutional repositories and self-publishing need to be briefly mentioned.
- Need to look at the doing history digitally as several new books have come out. May or may not need to be changed, for instance, Facebook is being used by historical groups for awareness

Chapter 2: Reference Resources

- Mostly what needs to be updated are the sources. Not only are there more updated sources, but some of the electronic sources have moved and or have online options.
- Address the "mixed" online source – that is some databases have many components of what I discuss in the reference chapter coupled with secondary sources, such as journal articles. This is probably a 1-3 sentence mention.
- Sidebar for Wikipedia needs to be updated.
- Statistical Sources needs an entire chapter to itself. (See my explanation elsewhere in this document). One justified criticism I have had is that the book doesn't deal with hard core data --- from statistical almanac to datasets.

Chapter 3: Finding Monographs and Using Catalogs

Chapter 4: Finding Journals, Magazines and Newspapers: Using Indexes

The changes in these two chapters will be much the same.

- Catalog searching has changed. While subject headings are still the foundation, there are a variety of ways that a search is executed – you can use facets, keyword subject searching vs just keyword searching. Worldcat has a free, public interface. Faceted searching is also a key feature of most of the Ebsco databases which now provide access to the two major history databases
- America: History and Life and Historical Abstracts have a new interface. The one in the book no longer exists.
- The chapters need to deal with electronic resource (monographs and journals) in more substantive ways. I suspect the electronic journal is the main form of delivery. Electronic books are becoming more prevalent, even in smaller libraries. There are some subtle differences in how you use these resources. Google Books also needs to be addressed
- More journals are being born digital, so finding those needs to be addressed
- A section on using Google Scholar – how it can be used (for citation searching for instance) and what are still some of the problems. I think since the last edition it is much more of an influence.

Chapter 5: Evaluating Your Sources

- I think this chapter is mostly ok

Chapter 6: Thrill of Discovery: Primary Sources

- At the end of this chapter, I think I need either a section (or another small chapter) on putting everything together. That is simply how do you integrate primary and secondary sources. This isn't about how to write a paper, but how to think about and integrate the two types of sources (primary and secondary) to build an argument. I've had small "Putting it all together" sections at the end of each chapter, but they only address the concepts of that chapter. This would kind of be like a summing up of the basics in a strong example. I'm not sure how long this would be – certainly not as long as the other chapters, but more substantial than a side bar.
- Students are increasingly using artifacts for research – ie. Taking a piece of clothing and looking at how it reflected common life. I need to expand the artifact section.
- Genealogy is becoming a component of local research. Students may trace an individual and discuss how that reflected the place/time, etc. Genealogy opens a whole can of worms and there are many how-to-guides. What I would add would be simply what can be done with "genealogical" sources and then send students to places that would provide further training.
- I have to address such new projects as Hathi Trust (<http://www.hathitrust.org/home>) and Google Books. Google books is not really mentioned much in the chapter because it had few primary sources in 2007.
- Sources and urls have to be checked

Chapter 7: History and the Internet

- Some of this can be condensed as it is either second nature or no longer applies. Some of the searching capabilities have changed.
- Will need to check urls.

Chapter 8: Maps: From Simple to Geographic Information Systems

- GIS has become a bit more accessible, so the explanation may be able to be condensed
- Satellite data is more readily/freely available. Students can use Google maps and satellite images in ways that were not accessible before.

Chapter 9: Beyond the Written Word: Finding, Evaluating, and Using Images, Motion Pictures, and Audio

- I'd reduce the section on scanning. So much of the software these days makes the decisions for you. Access to video, both free and paid, has just exploded. So that section would be beefed up.
- Sources need to be checked/changed

Chapter 10: Presenting Your Research: Traditional Research Paper, PowerPoint, or Website?

- Expanded section on doing a poster presentation. Many faculty have students do this instead of a regular class presentation.
- Reduce and rework the website section. New software make creating a website easier. Also a Blog as a delivery method has become somewhat popular. I think I'd reduce the images on types of website organization. This needs a rethink in general.
- The traditional research paper is still the standard. I think not much needs to be changed there.
- Powerpoint. There are other ways to deliver a presentation. These need to be mentioned, including different ways of using video or animation that are very simple.
- Copyright needs to be more clearly and succinctly addressed.
- I think the case study needs to change.