

*Understanding Quantitative History*. By Loren Haskins and Kirk Jeffrey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990) 361 pp. \$27.50 paper. *Quantitative Methods for Historians*. By Konrad H. Jarausch and Kenneth A. Hardy (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991) 240 pp. \$ 37.50 cloth, \$ 11.95 paper.

It has been a generation since anyone published a textbook in quantitative methods for historians.<sup>1</sup> Long outmoded by developments in computer technology and statistical techniques, the earlier volumes have neither been comprehensively updated nor replaced. Now, suddenly, we have two new introductory-level texts, both co-authored by one historian and one statistician, both intended for self-study, as well as undergraduate and graduate classroom use, both approachable and well-written. Which should one choose and why?

The Jarausch and Hardy book (hereafter JH) begins with six chapters by Jarausch, the well-known German-American social historian, which first *gently* attempt to convince timid historians who are *perhaps tentatively considering* quantifying and analyzing some information, and then provide helpful hints on recording and organizing data. Statistician Hardy then rushes the reader at a frantic pace from frequency distributions and cross-tabulations through regression and logit analysis to latent structure analysis in four chapters of roughly 25 pages each, filled with graphs, but with few equations. Although in many instances offering intuitive explanations of these techniques that will seem admirably clear to those who have already studied them, Hardy is so constrained by limited space that he can instill in the reader neither an ability to use even the simplest methods nor a fundamental preparation for further study. Jarausch concludes with two broader, more philosophical chapters on the connection between quantification and theory-building and on different national styles of doing history. Full of wise saws, and perhaps useful for apprentices beginning their first projects, the beautifully produced JH book will be almost impossible to build a class around and it will not teach anyone to do or assess quantitative research.

Less grandiose in concepts, methods, and diction, Haskins and Jeffrey's book (hereafter HJ), a genuine collaboration, involves the reader from the beginning by inviting her to help the authors analyze tables and graphs from recent books and

articles by historians. Do these numbers add up by rows or columns? What's the denominator here? Does the table support the author's hypothesis? Are the numbers in these two rows sufficiently different from each other for us to base an interpretation on? Could the data be presented more effectively? If there's a lot of information, what techniques can we use to make general sense of it all? What steps should an analyst go through in formulating and testing a theory, and what steps should a reader go through in evaluating what the author did? Unlike the one rather uninteresting and inconclusive data set on which JH concentrates, HJ, which grew out of a 1984 faculty seminar at Carleton College that met to discuss current articles in journals of social scientific history, offers tables and graphs on so many topics that everyone will find something to interest her. For each example, HJ asks a series of commonsensical questions and, in the back of each chapter, provides answers. It takes a strong will to avoid the lure of this game when reading the book.

Compared to JH, HJ introduces only a limited number of methods, explicitly treats few meta-theoretical issues, and hardly discusses computer software packages. MIT Press has overpriced and underadvertised HJ, neglecting to send a review copy, for instance, to this journal. Neither book will fully prepare a fledgling quantitative historian to perform a complete analysis. Nonetheless, because of its enticing, meticulously carried out format HJ is much the preferable choice for text or self-help manual, and it may even expand the number of quantitative historians. If it does, where will they turn once they have finished HJ? Now that we have two elementary-level texts, where is the intermediate-level book?

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1. Charles M. Dollar and Richard J. Jensen, *Historian's Guide to Statistics* (New York, 1971); Roderick Floud, *An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians* (Princeton, NJ, 1973).