

## Book Reviews

well-known study of English ecclesiastical thought on social questions, was clearly in an ideal position to investigate the campaigns and ruminations on fertility in this period, and he has done the job with exemplary thoroughness and care.

It is possibly to be regretted that the author did not highlight the peculiarities of the English debate on these questions by reference to more European and American writing. To do so would be to define demography as a system less of social biology and statistics than of social thought and rhetoric, bearing the distinctive hallmarks of very different national cultures. That task remains to be done.

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JANET PERCIVAL (editor), *A guide to archives and manuscripts in the University of London*, vol. 1, London, University of London Library Resources Co-ordinating Committee, 1984, A4, pp. xi, 219, £7.50 + postage (paperback).

This welcome guide brings together the results of work done by six archivists on the collections held at the School of Economics, the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University Library, and at Imperial, King's, and University Colleges. Each institution receives a separate entry, which gives a list of manuscript holdings in alphabetical order and useful information to the prospective reader. The utility of the volume is enhanced by a select bibliography and a full name index.

Some entries must surely send any proper historian, i.e. one who relishes the *pulvis literaria* of documents, into an enthusiastic fit of anticipation: 500 *boxes* of the main Beveridge collection and about 3 *bays* of Malinowski papers. For readers of this journal, the archives of University College, with its distinguished medical and scientific traditions, are those of most obvious interest. Though the collections of Chadwick, Galton, Pearson, and Haldane are perhaps best known, they do not exhaust the riches of the UCL holdings: witness those of Barrington, Bayliss, Burdon-Sanderson, Cameron, Carswell, de Beer, Horsley, Jenner, Lewis, Penrose, and Sharpey, plus various students' notes on lectures and demonstrations. If the other five institutions do not rival UCL in their medical archives, they should not be airily dismissed. One wonders, for instance, what jewels lie in the 70 boxes of the British Hospitals Contributory Schemes Association, 1913–47, or in the 21 boxes of the Unicorn Bookshop, covering anarchist and sexually subversive publications of the 1960s (both LSE)?

Janet Percival and her colleagues are to be congratulated for the skill and energy which they have lavished on this first volume, which deserves wide circulation and may be obtained from the Publication Office, University of London, 52 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PJ, allowing 75p for postage. It is an enticing earnest of the second volume, which will cover the remaining schools and institutes of the University.

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JAMES H. CASSEDY, *American medicine and statistical thinking, 1800–1860*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. x, 306, £18.00.

Following a course he initially charted out in *Demography in early America: beginnings of the statistical mind, 1600–1800* (1969), James H. Cassedy in his new study carries his account of “statistically minded physicians” (p. viii) up to the start of America's Civil War. Statistical activity among physicians steadily increased during this period, and attained its nineteenth-century peak, Cassedy proposes, in 1860. Enthusiastic but rarely mathematically sophisticated, physicians engaged in a crude Baconian programme of collection, propelled by the belief that enough facts duly enumerated would have something important to say for themselves. Nevertheless, the reform animus of this endeavour is evident, for statistical arguments became central in efforts to improve orthodox medical care of the mentally and

## Book Reviews

physically ill, scotch sectarian competition, and better the sanitary condition of cities and thereby the public's health.

The study is a historical reconnaissance of physicians who counted, and as such takes as its scope the full range of topics the statistical mind in medicine probed. Few components of American medicine escape notice: temperance, urban waste, registration of births and deaths, hospitals and asylums, mesmerism and phrenology, medical sectary, dietary and hygienic habits, medical and surgical research on diagnosis and therapeutics, care of deaf-mutes and the blind, epidemiological surveys, the European origins of the urge to count, and professionalization in statistics all receive attention. Controlling this diversity of subject matter would leave less knowledgeable scholars fumbling and exhausted, but Cassedy manages adeptly by embedding his examples of statistical enterprise within a narrative that is nothing short of a social and intellectual history of antebellum American medicine. While this narrative framework will be largely familiar to anyone well read in the secondary literature on medicine in America, it makes the book's central theme readily accessible to the reader interested in the history of medical statistics but unacquainted or unconcerned with the American context.

Yet if the massiveness of this framework is a strength, it may be one source of the study's most conspicuous weakness as well, for it leaves no room for the medical critics of statistics to be heard. Indeed, except for mentions of physicians who took issue with statistical studies on asylums and sectarian practices, only in the book's final few pages is the sceptical attitude of many physicians toward statistics discussed. And even then, this scepticism is presented as newly arising toward mid-century. On the contrary, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, many American physicians remained ambivalent about statistics, and some were vocally hostile toward the statistical activities of their medical brethren. In the final analysis, then, this is a study of the statistical enthusiasts among American physicians, and more needs to be written before a balanced appraisal of the place of statistical thinking in American medicine can be made. As it stands, the book Cassedy has written is well crafted and important, and deserves to be widely read.

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PIETRO CORSI and PAUL WEINDLING (editors), *Information sources in the history of science and medicine*, London, Butterworth, 1983, 8vo, pp. xvi, 531, £30.00.

This new reference guide to the history of science and related areas contains twenty-three essays and accompanying bibliographies, loosely grouped into four sections. The first part deals with aspects of the historiography of science and with perspectives derived from philosophy and the social sciences. Part II is made up of just three chapters concerning research methods and sources. Part III focuses on different disciplines (physics, chemistry, natural history, etc.) and historical periods ('Medicine since 1500', 'Experimentalism and the life sciences since 1800', etc.). The last section partly redresses the overall European bias with four contributions on science and medicine in America, China, India, and in Islamic culture.

There are some nice things here: Simon Schaffer's bravura survey of the history of physics (the longest chapter, with the longest bibliography); some minor masterpieces of concise synopsis (Charles Webster on the historiography of medicine, W.H. Brock on chemistry, D.E. Allen on natural history, C.B. Schmitt on the historiography of medieval and Renaissance science); and two valuable and provocative essays that one wouldn't immediately expect to find in a reference work (Pietro Corsi's analysis of twentieth-century French views of science, theology, and philosophy; Margaret Gowing's perceptive chapter on 'The history of science, politics and political economy'). Several of the essays are free of the bland even-handedness that generally characterizes reference works. I think particularly of Ludmilla Jordanova's refreshingly partisan chapter on 'The social sciences and the history of science and medicine', even though some readers may question the reliability of a survey in this area that omits even to mention the existence of microsociological and ethnomethodological research (for instance,