Learning Disability held in 1994. The thrust of the book is that oral, documentary and photographic resources are complementary strands in the history of learning disability. The period covered is mainly the twentieth century. Included is the autobiography of Mabel Cooper, produced with the help of Dorothy Atkinson. Although this is a very interesting human story, it would have been enhanced by a correlation with the histories of the institutions concerned. Mabel Cooper's contribution is analogous to a soldier's account of the horrors of trench warfare, but, like a soldier's description of the Battle of the Somme, it adds very little to the understanding of the overall strategy.

Rebecca Fido and Maggie Potts give an account of the harshness of conditions in some institutions. By contrast, Andrew Stevens describes how nurses in Colchester were ostracized by their colleagues whenever they broke the no-punishment code. Differing behaviours are described.

Drawing on the records of Sandlebridge (Cheshire), Mark Jackson demonstrates the value of photographs in the study of the development and maintenance of an institution, illustrating attitudes to the disabled and, at the same time, providing material for use in medical text books. The Sandlebridge photographs were taken in 1909 and 1911, and Jackson is rightly concerned to ensure that the right to confidentiality is preserved, while pointing out there are adequate conventions protecting anonymity. We are unlikely ever again to see such a spectacular breach of the codes as Sano's 1918 paper in the *Journal of Mental Science* in which he discussed William Pullen by name and gave full details of his autopsy.

Two chapters by Jan Walmsley, one on the history of learning disability in Bedfordshire and the other on the history of community care, are based on the records of Bedford Mental Deficiency Committee 1915–1946. They emphasize the value of local studies and indicate what can and cannot be gleaned from local records, listing Northamptonshire, Cheshire, Greater London, and Norfolk as holding substantial archives. Dorothy Atkinson similarly describes material in Somerset County Records Office, in particular after 1913, when the county's "range of institutions and systems . . . put it high on the Board of Control's 'league table' of local authorities". The authors might also have mentioned Surrey County Records Office, which holds a substantial volume of material on the Royal Earlswood Asylum for Idiots, already used extensively by Lilian Zihni and David Wright for their unpublished PhD theses. The final contribution by Julia Sheppard lists the relevant resources available in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.

Overall the book contains very useful information, and it should stimulate further study of the history of learning disability.

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Leslie Morton and **Robert J Moore,** *A chronology of medicine and related sciences*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1997, pp. 784, £75.00 (1-85928-215-6).

For the past decade or so, my colleague John Heilbron and I have written a Commentary column for each year's first issue of *Nature*, light-heartedly discussing some of the scientific and medical anniversaries which might be remembered during the forthcoming year. Although we desultorily collect possible items for inclusion as they come to hand, we rely heavily on a series of old and new chronologies of science, medicine and technology. In checking our facts, we have become aware of the widely varying standards of this popular if flat-footed genre. Even such mundane matters as dates and the spelling of proper names are routinely incorrect; more subtle issues such as whether the key date is the idea, the experiment or observation, or the publication further complicate the chronological approach.

Interpretation will always be a question of judgement, but Morton and Moore score well on the accuracy scale. Leslie Morton was of course

for many years the chief compiler of 'Garrison and Morton', and the present volume naturally leans heavily on that bible of the antiquarian bookseller. GM numbers are given at the end of relevant entries. Each year with an entry, from 3000 BC (Edwin Smith Papyrus) to 1996 (three deaths), is divided, where appropriate, into three main categories, events, births and deaths. Since 1901, information about the Nobel Prize (always for medicine or physiology, but also for chemistry or physics if there were medical implications) heads the list of events, and the authors are understandably chary of judging what was significant in the recent world of discovery: AIDS in 1981 and BSE in 1985 are the only two non-Nobel events noted since 1978.

The volume is thus fullest for the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, where entries often have explanatory paragraphs, either qualifying the information or expounding briefly the career of the individual being cited. Morton and Moore have been admirably cosmopolitan in their trawling, and the full list of journal titles in which something significant was published occupies sixteen pages.

A simple system of numbering, reasonable amount of cross-referencing and good subject and name indexes increase the usefulness of the volume. People looking for something to celebrate can start here, of course: 1999 will be the centennial, *inter alia*, of the founding of the London School of Tropical Medicine, the introduction of aspirin, the births of Max Theiler, Charles Best, Alfred Blalock and Macfarlane Burnet, and the deaths of Lawson Tait, James Paget and Theodore Puschmann. More generally, historians will appreciate the ready access to "context" which this attractive volume provides.

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John Henry, *The scientific revolution and the origins of modern science*, Studies in European History, Basingstoke, Macmillan, and New York, St Martin's Press, 1997, pp. x, 137, £7.99 (paperback 0-333-56047-7).

Steven Shapin, *The scientific revolution*, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. xiv, 218, illus., $19.95 (0-226-75020-5).

It is always slightly invidious when two books are published within a short time of one another, each with similar aspirations and attributes. In this case, we are presented with two works of roughly comparable length offering an introduction to the Scientific Revolution. Of the two, Shapin's—a one-off production from the University of Chicago Press—is the more elegantly produced, with an attractive page layout and over twenty pages of illustrations (though it is not yet available in this country in paperback). Henry's, on the other hand, forms part of Macmillan's well-established series, 'Studies in European History'; its author has therefore inherited the rather dense and utilitarian format of that series. Both have lengthy and valuable bibliographies, in Shapin's case taking the form of a 'Bibliographic essay' in continuous prose, in Henry's an alphabetical, numbered list of items, each with a brief commentary. In addition, Henry's has a helpful glossary.

How do the two compare? Henry follows the existing historiography more closely, with chapters on such topics as 'The mechanical philosophy', 'Magic and the origins of modern science' and 'Religion and science'. Shapin, on the other hand, sets his own agenda to a greater extent, dividing his text into three chapters entitled 'What was known?', 'How was it known?', and 'What was the knowledge for?'. Some may find this helpful, but for those seeking an introduction to a densely researched field, the former approach is probably to be preferred. In addition, Shapin's book is a little self-indulgent and occasionally slightly convoluted, not least in a series of footnotes which seem to be intended to clarify matters but which sometimes complicate them. He also includes a number of quotations from contemporary sources, which are largely eschewed in Henry's succinct text. Yet Shapin is more restricted in his coverage than Henry, who manages to cover a phenomenal amount of ground in a balanced manner, not least in