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Classroom, Research, and Public History: An Integrated Approach

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AT A TIME when popular interest in history appears to be high, the historical enterprise seems unnecessarily fragmented. Classroom teachers, public agency officials, and research scholars—with their specialized functions in teaching, public programming, and research—have too little interaction with each other. This lack of vital integration results in part from the tendency to separate teaching from research, the classroom from the local context, and academic from local history. In too many cases it has led to scholarship with little connection either to the classroom or to the public, classroom learning that students find unrelated to their experience, and public programming isolated from an academic research and teaching base. One resolution to this impasse may be an approach which uses research methods from the new social history, combining a statistical data base with a variety of other documentary sources to make the classroom a living history laboratory and the local historical agency or museum an integral constituent in the educational process.

The new social history draws upon a wide variety of sources, including statistical data from census and other vital statistics records, to pro-

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vide information on *all* individuals in a particular time and place.¹ In contrast to more traditional approaches to history, which have tended to study the leaders of society, the new social history seeks to uncover the experience of ordinary as well as extra-ordinary people, including those ethnic, racial, economic, and gender groups which have left few of the more standard records. Often new social history studies emphasize quantifiable sources, in part because these are the only records which vast numbers of people have left. More traditional sources, such as letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, photographs, and oral histories—which might be considered more qualitative, because they are subject to a wider range of interpretation, or more selective, because they exist for some persons but not for others—are used to give specific and concrete illustrations to the generalizations and interpretations made about the whole group, as well as to answer questions raised by the statistical data which that data cannot answer.² The result has been a fuller, more inclusive view of the American past, which not only provides the means for a new historical understanding, but also offers historians a key to integrating their work as researchers, teachers, and communicators to the public.

The basis for our contention is our work as a research consultant team for the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County in Ithaca, New York, as participants in the National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute, “Historians, Universities, and Communities.”³ In its effort to reorient itself to reach out to a wider constituency, the DeWitt recently produced two exhibits—one on the Greek community and one on the life and work of a gifted Italian immigrant artisan. Spurred by positive reception of these efforts, the society planned to mount an exhibit on the Italian community and requested that we undertake a preliminary research survey. After examining the previous exhibits (which were well done, but lacked evidence of a solid social history research grounding) and surveying documentary sources, we decided to produce a social historical statistical data base, drawn from the New York State

1. For discussion and interpretation of the new social history as it relates to community study, see Kathleen Conzen, “Community Studies, Urban History, and American Local History,” in Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 270–91; James Henretta, “Social History as Lived and Written,” *American Historical Review* 84 (December 1979), 1293–1333; Michael Frisch, “American Urban History as an Example of Recent Historiography,” *History and Theory* 18, no. 3 (1979), 350–77; Richard Beeman, “The New Social History and the Search for ‘Community’ in Colonial America,” *American Quarterly* 29 (Fall 1977), 422–43.

2. See Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), for a particularly fine example of the fusion of quantitative and qualitative data to illuminate the lives of ordinary citizens of the community of Concord, Massachusetts.

3. We appreciated the opportunity to work on this project with the staff of the DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County and extend special thanks to its staff, including Craig Williams, director at the time of the project; Susan Eleuterio-Comer, educational specialist at that time; and Margaret Hobbie, the current director.

manuscript censuses of 1905 and 1925, which the DeWitt could use as a guide for further exploration through oral, written, and visual sources. We came away from the experience convinced that such preliminary research in statistical social data could be of immense value for historical agencies in their effort to communicate history to the public and that such work had a real place in the classroom as well.

A small city in upstate New York with a population which grew from 13,136 in 1900 to 20,708 by 1930, Ithaca was part college town (home of Cornell University), part regional governmental and commercial center, and part industrial city (the largest enterprises being Ithaca Gun and Morse Chain). Predominantly WASP in tradition and social structure, it nevertheless included a sizable minority who were foreign born or native born of foreign (or mixed) parentage, constituting 27 percent of the total population in 1910, 32 percent in 1920, and 28 percent in 1930. Among this minority, those of Italian descent had been eclipsed by other nationality groups in size (most notably the Irish, English, and Germans) in the early decades of this century, but by 1930 Italians were the largest group among the foreign born. Preliminary examination of the data from the 1905 and 1925 state censuses regarding the Italian-descended yielded a number of significant observations. First, the social structure and family type of the Italian community shifted considerably during the period; while single men composed a substantial portion of the group in 1905, by 1925 the family unit prevailed. Second, in 1905 and 1925 Italian settlement was dispersed throughout the city (with the exception of high-income and professional sections, such as “East Hill,” site of Cornell), but by the latter year clustering was evident in one of the working-class districts (the North Meadow and Cascadilla Streets area, located on the flat lake plain of the city, not far from the railroad tracks). Third, over the period 1905–1925 most Italian men continued to work in blue-collar jobs. The nature and status of their employment changed significantly, however. While in 1905 most were working as day laborers, in 1925 those in more regular and predictable industrial employment predominated. Nevertheless, in the latter year very few had managed to enter the ranks of entrepreneurs, and none were professionals. And fourth, Italian women continued in 1925, as in 1905, to work within the home, providing both for large families and numerous boarders; virtually no single adult females lived alone. Our concern in this essay will not be as much with these actual research findings as with the way in which such social history data may facilitate the integration of the historian’s three roles.

Making the Classroom Connection

Most history teachers have confronted—at least on occasion—blank stares of student indifference. Peering out into this atmosphere of ap-

athy, one senses that each is saying, like Poe's raven, "Nevermore, nevermore!" What may be needed to break through such responses is something easier to preach than to practice: the active involvement of the student in the learning process, as described by such educational and developmental theorists as John Dewey and Jean Piaget.⁴ The use of social statistical data, which students must discover, analyze, and interpret, not only should arouse student interest, but, most importantly, should lead to an understanding of the process by which historical learning takes place. The following comments on how the data and approach of the Ithaca project might be used to involve students more fully in the process of historical conceptualization are drawn from our own experience teaching local materials in the classroom in the diverse institutional and regional settings which each of us represents.⁵

Effective use of such primary documents as census manuscripts requires students to play an active role in the classroom. Where students can relate the research to their own experience in a local area, the benefit is enormous. A student of Italian descent might suddenly realize what life may have been like for her grandfather, who came alone from Italy to Ithaca in 1905 to work as one of ninety-five day laborers on construction projects for the railroad or the nearby reservoir, living in a district on the edge of town designated by the census enumerator only with the intriguing address of "Klondike," or why her grandmother, who came later from an Italian village to join him and form a family, never worked outside the home and expressed scorn for the women of other

4. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1961 [first published in 1916]), and Richard E. Ripple and Verne N. Rockcastle, eds., *Piaget Rediscovered* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1964).

5. Two of the authors teach courses specifically on local history: Lois Nettleship offers Local and Kansas History at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas, and Edward Orser teaches Community in American Culture at the University of Maryland Baltimore County; the other two authors, Anne Webb of Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota and Bill Gibbs of New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell, include local research materials in American social history courses and American history surveys. Each has introduced specific approaches inspired by the HUC project into those courses. In Lois Nettleship's Local and Kansas History course, recent student projects have examined statistical sources for such diverse topics as the impact of railroad development upon Kansas towns, the degree of economic hardship in Kansas farming communities during the Great Depression, and discrimination during World War I against the German born. In the latter instance, the student was profoundly moved by locating the name of her grandfather as an "enemy alien" on a governmental form. Edward Orser has developed a set of social history documents for classroom use pertaining to one block of Baltimore's harbor district between 1850 and 1910. Drawn from the federal manuscript censuses, city directories, tax records, and maps, the documents illustrate the heterogeneity of urban neighborhoods in the period of the "walking city" (the street, for instance, was all white; the alley all black) and the trend toward greater neighborhood specialization in the era of the "streetcar city" (as the racial segregation of street and alley persisted, but the general neighborhood became more clearly defined as working class). These materials have been used in the Community in American Culture course, and presented in workshops to Baltimore City and County social studies teachers for inclusion in U.S. history courses in the secondary schools.

nationality groups who did.⁶ But even when the data does not immediately touch a student's own family or community, the active engagement in the learning process afforded by this approach offers immense promise for historical pedagogy. The questions raised by quantifiable data send students to other source materials, such as oral history interviews, photographic collections, and other sets of written records, for answers to illustrate points made through statistical analysis.

An aroused interest in local history data also can be used as a bridge to the national scene. In the U.S. history survey class, students often complain that the information presented seems far removed from their own experience and expertise. In contrast, the student presented with the manuscript census records for the Italians of Ithaca would have to figure out why immigrants in this locale tended to live in scattered settlements rather than in the tight ethnic ghetto districts which the popular view associates with large urban centers (though recent scholarship points to considerable dispersion there as well);⁷ or how the immigrant quotas of 1921 and 1924 affected an ethnic group whose numbers had begun to rise precisely at the time period when those restrictions on new immigration were imposed. Indeed, local historical social data test the myths and realities of the American experience at the national level. The modest degrees of occupational and residential mobility experienced by the Italian group during this two-decade period need to be measured against both the popular rhetoric of the day, which espoused faith in social improvement through individual perseverance, and the subsequent experience of the group itself. Why, the student might wonder, did so many of the single men from 1905 move onward—some even returning to Italy? While such data and the suggested conclusions regarding particular groups and particular locales are indeed “parochial” and not sufficient alone to construct a comprehensive historical picture of the national experience, they nevertheless enable the student to raise broader questions for further inquiry and provide a grounding for consideration of larger historical trends and processes, just as they also challenge the “boosterism” often associated with local historical understanding.

If students of history often feel themselves to be passive consumers of facts, their own learning unrelated to a real world, perhaps we should

6. On occupational patterns among Italian immigrants in a larger urban context and on the ethic of women not working outside the home, see Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), especially chapter 7, “Like the Fingers of the Hand: Patterns of Work and Family Organization.”

7. In her research on Philadelphia, Caroline Golab has documented the tendency for late-nineteenth-century immigrants from eastern and southern Europe to “cluster” rather than immediately to establish spatially defined enclaves. See *Immigrant Destinations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), especially chapter 6, “The Geography of Neighborhood.”

consider involving them in one further way in an active learning process. Why not let them present the fruits of their research and analysis to the local historical society or museum or communicate their findings directly through an exhibit or other public medium? By doing so, students may experience the integration of classroom, research, and public history functions which is vital for all engaged in the historical enterprise.

If there are compelling reasons for involving students directly in the compilation and interpretation of quantifiable social history data, how can it be done? Here our own experience as a research team may provide an instructive model. Making use of the New York State censuses housed in the Tompkins County Courthouse, we worked in pairs, compiling data according to codes we had devised to correspond with the essential types of information available: name, address, relation to head of household, sex, age, nativity, years in the United States, citizenship, occupation, and employment status. Since the number of occupations listed was relatively small, we developed a code of our own, but coding systems for historical research regarding occupation are available in several sources.⁸ We encountered many methodological problems which would be profitable for students and teachers to confront as they test working assumptions in relation to the data. For example, we scanned the census pages and selected information on persons living in households in which at least one member had been born in Italy. For the time period we were examining, recency of immigration and the limited degree of social assimilation made this a reasonable procedure, though it might not have been so if we were looking at data from a later period. For larger population groups than our research involved, students could profit from being introduced to sampling techniques.

Once we had gathered and coded our data, we entered it into the computer, using a standard format (SPSS), and devised relatively simple processing procedures to try to provide answers to some of the questions the research had generated. Ideally, students might enter the data themselves, a particularly useful approach when they have been learn-

8. Peter R. Knights in *The Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860: A Study in City Growth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Michael Katz in *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975) both provide relatively simple classification systems for occupations, though both are primarily appropriate for nineteenth-century cities prior to industrialization. More complex and more generally applicable to the period of industrialization, but still limited to the nineteenth-century context, is the "Occupation Dictionary Codebook" designed for the Philadelphia Social History Project, discussed and listed in full in Theodore Hershberg and Robert Dockhorn, "Occupational Classification," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 9 (March/June 1976), 59-98. However, for projects making use of other records (state censuses, city directories, etc.) in the post-1910 period the most readily available, useful, and widely accepted occupational classification system is the U.S. Bureau of the Census *Alphabetical Index of Industries and Occupations*, available for relevant decades in libraries or (for the most recent) from the U.S. Government Printing Office.

ing computer skills in other courses. Further, students need to be involved actively in determining what information they want to gain from their data. Their conclusions would then be used to design specific computer processing procedures. Given our data, we used the computer to compare the two census periods, analyzing the mean and distribution for family size, age, and occupation.

The availability of findings from the statistical social history data base opens up new questions and provides a framework for investigating other types of sources: local statistical records, oral history interviews, local newspapers, records of churches and ethnic or community institutions, maps and photographs, letters and diaries. Such investigation, however, grows out of a context; it should not serve as an isolated foray into unfamiliar territory. Oral interviews may glean insight into how people feel in retrospect about the nature of occupational opportunity (to be compared with evidence of actual occupational patterns) or about marriage outside the ethnic group (to be compared with data on actual marriage patterns).

Asking students to confront social history data allows them to study material related to their own communities and, therefore, to their own lives. It exposes them to the excitement and frustration of historical investigation. Because students are “doing” history themselves, they will “own” the results. In compiling a statistical data base and considering the questions such data raise, they learn the methodology of historical research: how to ask the right questions, where to find historical documents, which primary sources may have answers to the questions asked, how to select historical data, how to interpret historical facts, how to organize historical research, and how to analyze and synthesize historical information for particular types of audiences. In helping them to end their own alienation from the learning process, perhaps we may help to end our own as well.

Making the Public History Connection

The statistical social history data base can also be used in the second dimension of the historian’s job: communicating historical knowledge to a wider public. Increasingly, historical societies and other agencies of public history are bringing portions of the history of previously neglected groups to the attention of a wider audience. In this enterprise, the teacher-scholar has an important role to play. Broad, statistical research can supply the general context in which to ground the particular and anecdotal history found in other records. It also can furnish the framework for understanding and interpreting individual artifacts. For instance, while an earlier exhibit at the DeWitt Historical Society effectively portrayed the life and work of an Italian-American worker of

exceptional craft, it provided little sense of how his experience related to the much more typical occupations in which others of Italian descent were engaged—skilled and unskilled labor and domestic housework. With the statistical data afforded by the research survey on these more typical occupations as a base, artifacts, photographs, and written records could be sought and exhibited to make a presentation on occupation more complete. Even in the presentation of idiosyncratic roles (the skilled iron worker) or the challenging of stereotypical ones (contrary to the common expectation, for instance, no Italian owned a restaurant in 1925 and few even worked in such establishments), interpretive labeling and graphic displays can make the larger context clear. By bringing the statistical data of social history to bear on traditional preconceived ideas regarding occupation and mobility, the historian can explore the mythology of American history and offer the public more factual information.

Involvement of students in such projects further cements the interrelationship argued for here. Traditionally, students have communicated their knowledge to teachers in the form of research papers and exams. Using the information gained through statistical research, students can participate actively in the process of communicating historical knowledge to the public at large through the preparation of exhibits or other media displays. Much, of course, depends upon the relationships between educational and public history institutions and upon the availability of trained public historians to assist in the process. Historical societies and museums often have educational program staff members whose expertise would be well spent in such collaborative endeavors with students and teachers. In smaller towns, local historical societies may be eager to offer space and assistance for displays and exhibits. In larger cities, neighborhood centers or local merchants may offer similar outlets, while urban or regional historical institutions may be willing to provide professional help. In both cases expenses may be shared. If the research data base is deposited with the local historical society, their cooperation may be even easier to obtain. Exhibits can also be displayed in store windows, bus stations, public squares or parks, bank lobbies, and shopping malls, as well as on campuses or in historical societies or museums.⁹

9. Lois Nettleship, who has established the Johnson County Community College Center for Local History since participating in the HUC summer institute, encourages students completing exemplary community history projects in her class to publish them in pamphlet form through the auspices of the Center. Edward Orser's involvement in the HUC institute led him to introduce a senior course, Research Seminar on Community Studies, in the spring semester, 1984. Students worked as a research team to investigate the history of the West Baltimore streetcar suburb of Irvington at the turn of the century, compiling data from the 1910 federal manuscript census and examining such other documentary sources as family photographs, maps, city directories, and oral history interviews. The students then designed a twenty-panel exhibit, "Documenting a Community's History: Irvington," which was displayed at a series of neighborhood events, in area churches, and in the university's library gallery. Richard Lieberman of LaGuardia Com-

Through such involvement students will confront the problem of conveying historical knowledge to various groups, considering how those problems differ when the audience is the teacher, other history students, the academic community, an ethnic group (particularly if it is not one's own), and the public at large. In so doing, they may have to decide how to tell their neighbors a story which sometimes differs drastically from the one they wish to believe. Those of Italian descent in Ithaca, for instance, might not want the community to be presented with evidence of their lack of individual social mobility in their early decades in the community.

In mounting a public exhibit, teacher, student, and public agency official must focus upon history as change over time. Facing the problems of communication to the public challenges us all to present history as a dynamic process of causes and effects. An exhibit of domestic artifacts of Italian women could be placed within the cultural framework of this immigrant group, which insisted that women not work outside the home, a relatively static norm during the early decades of this century. However, it also should show changes that occurred in the households of Italian-descended families over time, resulting from such factors as intermarriage with non-Italians (evident in the early years only in instances when Italian men married non-Italian women, never in the reverse), socialization to dominant mores and values, and changes in technology.

Public history institutions in many cases have made extremely sophisticated use of artifacts and visual documents, and in recent years they have taken an increasingly important lead in the collection of oral history documents. Adding the perspectives of the new social history to these developments, there is a greater likelihood that past preoccupation with anecdotal stories and with the artifacts of the few will be replaced by a presentation of the diverse life styles of all members of the community. One approach is to exhibit the life cycle of typical individuals, using statistical graphs and charts based upon information from two or more time periods to indicate the number of children in families, the ages of school attendance, the proportion of native-born and foreign-born population by age, the proportion of nonworking parents living with children, the percentage of persons in specific occupations by sex or race, and changes in work by age. Photographs, artifacts, and oral interviews can be used as illustrations. Indeed, how different was the experience in 1905 of Mlle. Marie Albenga, nursemaid in the home of President Andrew White of Cornell University, with her French title and Italian name, from that of Jemerosa Santroelli, whose husband was

munity College (Queens, New York), one of the HUC staff scholars, has developed the highly innovative Community History Program which includes such nontraditional means of communicating local history as subway poster exhibits and subway station seminars; annual local history calendars on such themes as work, leisure, family, and transportation; and seminars and discussions in workplaces, leisure centers, and churches.

a day laborer, and whose household included four children between the ages of 6 and 14 and two boarders, aged 31 and 35? And in 1925, how different was the experience of Frank Bell (age 67, 33 years in the U.S., a railroad worker) along with his wife Mary (62, 24 years in this country, a housewife), whose son's family of four resided in the same household, and who had appeared as residents of Ithaca in 1905 (even then their name spelled in the Anglicized form), from that of Samuel and Algira Romania, ages 47 and 36 respectively, he a building laborer and she a housewife, both 11 years in the U.S., with 11 children ranging in age from less than a year to 20?¹⁰

Our argument suggests the potential benefit of closer collaboration between the teacher-scholar and the public history institution. But how useful is such collaboration for the historical agency or society? Here our particular case is limited by the fact that the census data base prepared for the DeWitt Historical Society could not lead to further on-site consultation and cooperation, since the research team members are all from distant institutions. Ideally, the model being suggested involves students, scholars, and public history staff members in a given geographic area, working in continuing collaboration. Nevertheless, the DeWitt's subsequent preparation for the exhibit on the Italians of Ithaca, *Brava Italia: Italians in Tompkins County, 1880s–1980s*, which opened in July 1984, is instructive.¹¹ First, the report provided a sound starting point for the historical society's new education director, who was assigned responsibility for the initial planning for the exhibit shortly after the report had been completed. Second, it raised questions which she and others used as the basis for further investigation through additional sources. A careful survey of the Ithaca newspaper from 1908 to 1920 yielded significant references to early Italian settlement and to the response it generated in the rest of the Ithaca community. In 1912, for example, a story reported a proposal by the county sheriff that Italians be limited to the "colony" in the Klondike and not be permitted to settle in rooming houses on the West Side where they would be in greater proximity to family-oriented neighborhoods. This story reflected the growing concern about the large number of single Italian men working as day laborers. Oral history interviews also yielded substantial additional information regarding the early stages of Italian settlement, including the experience of one man who came to Ithaca in 1903, sub-

10. The details regarding these individuals are taken from the 1905 and 1925 state censuses.

11. Local Ithaca historian Carol Kammen reviewed our report shortly after its completion and commented on the potential usefulness of the statistical data study for the public history program envisioned by the DeWitt Historical Society, writing in the *Ithaca Journal*: "When this type of information [letters, diaries, newspaper articles, oral histories] is allied with the data the research team gathered, we will have our first accurate examination of one segment of Ithaca's population. The work of the Cornell [HUC] historians will prove to be an important basis for further work to be undertaken by the historical society." Carol Kammen, "Researching the Origins of Ithaca's Italians," *Ithaca Journal* (August 28, 1982), 11.

sequently worked for three years as a laborer in the Klondike, and then, unlike most of his coworkers who moved on from the area in search of work elsewhere, settled in Ithaca and lived there for the rest of his life, dying this past year. Cooperation with local Italian-American groups, such as the Sons of Italy, led to the contribution of over one hundred photographs, which the society was permitted to copy for exhibition purposes.

The DeWitt's current director, Margaret Hobbie, reports that the census data base, together with the other documentary sources, informed the conceptualization of *Brava Italia*, which focused upon the changing nature and image of the Italian community in Ithaca by emphasizing three episodes in the historic experience. First, it focused on the early scattering of Italian immigrants, pointed to in the 1905 census data by those few residents whose tenure dated to the latter years of the previous century and who lived in dispersion in sections of the town, with little evidence of an Italian-American community and very low visibility among other Ithaca residents. Second, it explored the story of young male workers, such as those recorded in the 1905 census as living in the Klondike and in boxcars in the railroad yards in the west end, who were considered social undesirables and whose residence usually proved quite temporary. Finally it traced the period of family settlement. Family groups (including houses with boarders) represented only a small number in the 1905 census, but a substantial presence in the 1925 tally. Their roots in Ithaca deepened and their image improved as early clustering in the low-income sections of the west end gave way to the growth of an identifiable Italian presence in the North Meadow and Cascadilla Streets area, eventually considered Ithaca's "little Italy" neighborhood, and to further dispersion in other parts of the city, particularly in the vicinity of Morse Chain and Ithaca Gun, two important industrial employers of Italian-American workers in the 1920s and subsequently. The exhibit featured historic photographs, but its wide use of the social history data base and of such other sources as newspaper accounts and oral history interviews made it a much more complex statement about the Italian-American experience in Ithaca than a recounting of individual "contributions."¹²

12. Margaret Hobbie, who began work on the project as the new educational specialist at the DeWitt shortly after the report was completed and subsequently became director of the Society, wrote us recently:

The research on which the report was based, the review of the 1905 and 1925 censuses and mapping of residences within the City of Ithaca, saved us hours of research. Amongst other things the information helped us to analyze changes in immigration patterns and to identify neighborhoods with heavy concentrations of Italians. We followed up with examination of the 1935 and 1945 censuses, cross-checking with Ithaca City Directories from those years, to see how neighborhood patterns changed. We also interviewed people who had grown up in these neighborhoods.

The report itself was extremely valuable, especially the questions posed on

Indeed, this particular case of collaboration does suggest that uniting the activities of the teacher or scholar and the public history arena affords a helpful model for ending the isolation all too common in the history profession.

Connecting All Three

In our role as history scholars, we must admit that many of us live schizophrenic lives. We teach the ill-prepared many while doing our scholarly research for the chosen few. Often we convey watered-down ideas to students who lack the background to understand our scholarship or contribute to it. This serves to exacerbate the split between the teacher and the scholar. The use of local statistical data in the classroom and in scholarly research certainly is no panacea for resolving this dilemma, but it can help bring together the work of each. Since the material includes concrete information about ordinary people, students can readily understand it. As they become increasingly conversant with the data, the teacher can guide them toward the more demanding questions of methodology and interpretation. At this point the teacher can talk with students about ideas which arise from their common work with similar data. Thus, to a larger extent than usual, the scholarship can inform the teaching, while the teaching can generate ideas for the scholarship.

The use of local statistical source material in the classroom and for the historical society or museum can help overcome the isolation of the academic historian. By teaching our students how to use local statistical data, and by involving them in the public presentation of historical findings, we put them in touch with information which pertains to their own community history, and we connect the study of history to their everyday lives. By working with local historical agencies and similar groups, making statistical data available as the basis for public programs and exhibits, we bring together public and academic history, and we provide a firm foundation for conclusions about the past which can begin to dispel the public prejudices which abound in the absence of solid research. Finally, by bringing research on statistical data into the classroom, we integrate scholarly research into teaching.

Perhaps the most important benefit of the statistical data associated

pages 5-8 [for exploration in the research and exhibit]. Our chief method of research was oral history, and we worked many of these questions into our interview outlines.

Our staff researcher . . . has read through the *Ithaca Journal* for the years 1908-1920, seeking out references to local Italians (and to Italy). The research report helped us decide what to look for and helps us place the information gathered into a larger context.

Letter to Edward Orser, December 9, 1983; quoted with permission.

with the new social history is intellectual. It enables historians in the classroom, in the public agency, and in the research archives to anchor conceptual processes in a solid factual base, to fit the inquiry to the quantitative data. Literary, visual, and oral sources take on new significance when placed in a broad context and examined in the light of specific demographic issues. The data base keeps us on course as we follow the vicissitudes of our imagined past.