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The Future of Economic History

Paul Rhode and Ann Carlos, Editors

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Economic History Association and the *Journal of Economic History*, we convened a panel of journal editors (past, present, and future) to address the future of economic history.

Forecasting is easy, do so accurately is hard. Several apt quotations come to mind. When asked where jazz music would be in ten years, trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton famously remarked: "If I knew where jazz was going, I'd be there already." And computer pioneer Alan Kay added "The best way to predict the future is to invent it." But in line with the models of technological diffusion, author William Gibson noted: "The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed."

Giving their takes on the future of economic history are panelists: William Collins (incoming *JEH* editor, former *EEH* editor); Kris Mitchener (*EEH* co-editor); Ran Abramitzky (*EEH* co-editor); and Naomi Lamoreaux (former *JEH* editor). To provide a venue for others to contribute their voices, we have set up a Facebook page, www.facebook.com/EBHSNews. It is important to recognize that a major challenge facing our profession is to encourage participation of a diverse group of scholars.

We thank President Robert Margo for hosting the panel and Martha Bailey for organizing it.

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Looking Forward: Positive and Normative Views of Economic History's Future

William J. Collins

Upon agreeing to serve on the panel, my first impulse was to gather data on trends in economic history research—information on topics and methods, geographic areas studied, co-authorship rates and networks, and so on. From such data, one might hope to project a plausible course for the field, perhaps suggesting deviations from trend due to certain innovations or policy imperatives. That seemed like a suitably sober approach on the occasion of the Economic History Association's 75th anniversary. Yet I was also reminded that writers of science fiction are sometimes the best "imaginers" of the future

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