

*Sisters in Arms: Demographics on Women Ancient Historians<sup>1</sup>*

If there were a deity worshipped by acquiring editors at scholarly publishing houses, it would likely be a god of statistics and demography. Editors spend quite a bit of time considering evidence for emerging fields and subfields, stagnant vs. developing graduate programs, and above all the people, the individuals, who are involved.

I consider prospective authors and referees by descriptors such as areas of scholarly interest and ability, academic affiliation, seniority or iuniority, success of prior publications, nationality, and gender, among others. The idea in some cases might be to make sure potential referees are qualified to evaluate a work. In other cases it might be to ensure that a field has a reasonable representation of authors, that is to say a reasonable representation of scholarly approaches to an issue. In an ideal world, a given subfield would have a diverse population studying it, as a way of ensuring that a suitable diversity of views and approaches would be used.

However, it has in my observation long been true that ancient historical studies has fewer women, by which I mean fewer scholars, fewer authors, and fewer referees. I think it is clear that from a modern social-historical point of view, this numerical difference is a bad thing.

The absence of women in ancient history is also bad in another sense, having to do with book publishing. Other things being equal, books on historical topics tend to sell slightly better than books on philological topics, because the target market is slightly broader. Better sales mean I can offer better contract terms to a potential author. In other words, authors writing on historical topics are likely to make slightly more money than philological authors, and have slightly greater visibility. If mostly or only men are working in that area, then mostly or only men will benefit from those advantages of visibility and revenue.

Recently I began surveying some APA data, to investigate whether women were indeed underrepresented in ancient history, and if so, by how much.

The data I used came from the APA's "completed dissertations" listings published (in theory) each June. I chose these because the June listings on one hand contained the vast majority of data for a given year, and on the other because it also meant that I had something like a consistent sample.

I focused on the oldest available data, from 1999, 2000, and 2001. My thinking was that people who are now some nine or ten years from their doctoral defense are likely to have reached a tenure-track or tenured position, if they are ever going to do so. In addition, those who have reached tenure are likely to have converted their dissertation to a book, if they are ever going to do that. In other words, people who are that far out are likely a permanent part of the classical landscape, and also likelier to have produced the book necessary for job retention.

As Table 1 below shows, the numbers of total completed dissertations in these three years fell within the norm for the APA. See Table 2 for the typical numbers of dissertations completed per year for the last ten years. The data in Table 6, at the end below, are the source data for Table 2: Table 6 shows completed dissertations broken out by institution and year, 2002-2010, according to the "June" APA newsletters.

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**Table 1 -- Statistics on completed dissertations, 1999-2001**

	1999		2000		2001		Tot	Conclusions?
	<i>nbr</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>nbr</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>nbr</i>	<i>% of total</i>		
<b>number of dissertations</b>	75		62		50		187	each total completed is about annual avg; see Table 2
<b>all diss. by women</b>	37	49%	23	37%	23	46%	83	women wrote fewer than half of all these diss.
<b>all diss. in history</b>	27	36%	15	24%	11	22%	53	roughly a quarter of diss. annually were in history
<b>history diss. by men</b>	20	27%	11	18%	9	18%	40	
<b>history diss. by women</b>	7	9%	4	6%	2	4%	13	women wrote under 10% of history diss.
<b>authors not found*</b>	5	6%	3	4%	6	12%	14	fewer than 10% of PhDs vanished from the field
<b>men not found</b>	4	5%	3	4%	3	6%	10	
<b>women not found</b>	1	1%	0	0%	3	6%	4	<i>women vanished at lower rate than men</i>
<b>authors not professors in 2010**</b>	18	24%	16	25%	11	22%	45	about a quarter of population left professorhood; most stayed in vicinity - see Table 3
<b>men not professors in 2010</b>	10	14%	13	21%	7	14%	30	
<b>women not professors in 2010</b>	8	10%	3	4%	4	8%	15	<i>women left at lower rate than men</i>

\*Not found = not listed as APA member, not visible in simple web search, and/or not otherwise findable

\*\* Not professor = not employed as teacher at accredited college or university: see Table 3.

**Table 2 -- Numbers of dissertations listed as completed in "June" APA newsletters, 2002-present**

Newsletter Date	# Completed Dissertations	Newsletter Date	# Completed Dissertations
June 2002	73	June 2008	91
June 2003	57	Aug 2009	71
June 2004	45	Summer 2010	59
Aug 2005	62		
Aug 2006	58	<b>Total, 2002-2010</b>	<b>569</b>
Aug 2007	53	<b>Average per year</b>	<b>63</b>

But note that data are erratic. Just a few examples:

- Some schools report at intervals: in 2008, Columbia reported 2006-2008, and in same year Texas reported inclusively 2006-2007
- Some schools list data by sub-department, sometimes not: Berkeley, UCLA, Penn, Bryn Mawr, and Michigan all did this at some point, e.g.
- Data are published erratically, on honor system, so some people are simply missing from the count.

As Table 1 shows, men wrote more than half of the dissertations, which I think reflects the greater percentage of men in graduate school in that period. Men also wrote more historical dissertations than women did. In fact, women wrote fewer than 10% of the historical dissertations in those three years. In other words, women writing dissertations on historical topics represent a very small segment of the total dissertation-writing group in that period.

Two issues are worth considering at this point. First, in many of these cases, the absolute number and percentage are so small as to make specific claims difficult. However, in most cases even the very small percentages bear out things we all might expect, so it seems reasonably safe to identify some trends based on these numbers.

Second, the definition of "historical dissertation" needs thought. Under "historical" I have included dissertations on historical authors, historical topics, and historiographical questions, and on a few other individual topics that seemed more historical than not. I generally excluded works on literary authors, literary genres and topics, on archaeology, and the orators in most cases. In a few ambiguous cases I took into consideration the doctoral advisor, on the theory that a dissertation overseen by, e.g., Theodor Mommsen is more likely to have a historical flavor than a dissertation overseen by, e.g., Wendell Clausen. But all this said, it is not so straightforward as I would like to figure out which are which: some overlap, some are likely unhelpfully labeled, given what I know about many authors' habits with prospective book titles, and short of reading abstracts or full works for each of the 187 dissertations involved, precision is difficult to reach.

Table 1 thus suggests that indeed, few women write historical dissertations, and therefore they write few historical books. However, I also found I had two mistaken assumptions about causes for the small number of women's historical monographs. I had previously assumed that women likely left academia altogether at greater rates than men -- these are the men and women I have flagged as "not found" on Table 1. And I had also assumed that women would move from academic to non-academic jobs at greater rates than men. (See data on these issues in the lower half of Table 1.)

Regarding the "not found," most people who completed their dissertations during this period turned up pretty easily. Search engines generally give priority to web sites that are academic or educational, and also those that involve bookselling and publishers. So it is typically not too difficult to find the majority of these 187 people. A few of the not-found I could probably have turned up by contacting their institutions, or in some cases by asking around among friends or professional contacts, but I was trying to keep everyone on a level playing field, and not use special information I had in some cases but not others.

So, of the 187 total dissertators, only 14 cannot be found easily by search engines, constituting roughly 2/3 men (10 total), and 1/3 women (4 total).

**Table 3** -- Those who left professorship (both genders)

<b>Field</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bus/Law/Tech	2	2	2	<b>6</b>
Higher Ed Admin	2	1	0	<b>3</b>
Library	3	0	0	<b>3</b>
Museum/Art/ASCSA/ICR	3	2	2	<b>7</b>
Pub/Priv Sec School	8	7	5	<b>20</b>
Other	0	4	2	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>45</b>

Now consider Table 3: of those 187 people who had finished, after ten years 45 people, or some 24%, had moved to positions that were neither tenured, nor tenure-track, nor adjunct, at a college or university: these are the positions I have thought of as "neighborhood" jobs. Typically they involve knowledge or skills acquired in a doctoral program but are not professor-jobs -- my own job as acquiring editor is one such. And of the 45 people in this group, two thirds were men, and only one third were women. So, in fact, fewer women than men move off the professor track.

I had expected one source of absent women ancient historians to be that sort of professional fall-off in numbers, but that seems not to be an especially large problem in this cohort. The upshot is that women ancient historians do not seem to be disproportionately represented among those who aren't professors, ten years on.

So, how do these dissertations translate into books?

Let's first consider the publication outcome from history dissertations by women over our three years of data.

Of the 7 history dissertations by women in 1999, 3 were published as books:

- one in 2007 with Duckworth
- one in 2008 with Oxford
- one in 2009 with Univ. Texas Press

Of the 4 women's history dissertations in 2000, one was published as a book:

- in 2006 with Univ. North Carolina Press

Of the 2 women's history dissertations in 2001, neither has been published so far.

So, of 13 historical dissertations completed by women, 4 became books. That's a 30% "success" rate among this group of women.

**Table 4** -- Publication fate of dissertations completed in 1999, 2000, and 2001

<b>A Publisher</b>	'99	'00	'01
APA monograph series			1
ASCSA			1
Brill (Netherlands)	4	2	
Univ. Calif. Press	1		
Cambr. Scholars (UK)			1
Cambr. Univ. Press (UK)	6	4	2
De Gruyter (Germany)	1		1
Duckworth (UK)	2	1	2
Ediz. Ateneo (Italy)			1
Gabalda (France)	1		
Ctr. for Hellenic Studies	1		2
J. Hopkins Univ. Pr.		1	
Univ. Illinois Press		1	

<b>B</b>	1999		2000		2001	
"in progress"	2	2%	2	3%	5	10%
other	10	13%	4	6%	3	6%
not published	32	42%	38	61%	25	50%
<b>TOT UNPUBLISHED:</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>66%</b>

<b>C</b>	1999	2000	2001
Men published	17	10	8
Women published	14	8	9
Men not published	17	26	16
Women not published	15	12	9

<b>Publisher (cont'd)</b>	<b>'99</b>	<b>'00</b>	<b>'01</b>
INSTAP		1	
Lambert	1		
Peter Lang (Switzerland)	1		
Lexington (div. of Rowman-Littlefield)	1		
Edwin Mellen			1
Univ. N. Carolina Pr.		1	
Ohio State Univ. Pr.	2		
Oxf. Univ. Press (UK)	4	3	2
Rowman/Littlefield	1		1
Routledge (UK)	3	2	
Scholars Press		1	
Steiner Verlag (Germany)		1	
Univ. Texas Press	1		1
Univ. Tor. Press (Can.)			1
Vandenhk/Rupr. (Ger.)	1		
(ttl dissertations)	75	62	50
<b>TOT PUBLISHED:</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>41%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>34%</b>

Table 4 is a survey of publishing outcomes for people who finished in this cohort.

- Section A is a breakout of the number of revised dissertations published each year, by publisher.
- Section B is a breakout of those not published, for the three years.
- Section C breaks out published and unpublished by gender, for the three years.

Section A is a pretty interesting list in its own right, in that almost half of the publishers are from outside the US and Canada, and that a number of presses with sizable relevant publishing lists are missing altogether.

I would like to note that my own press, Michigan, is also among the missing. During the years under discussion here I was not working at the press and classics as a field was not heavily pursued. I'm very pleased to say that's changed, and in a similar chart done in five years, expect to see titles from Michigan again.

Section B categories include "not published (or unpublished)," "in progress," and "other." "Not published" means I cannot find evidence of a book through search engines, WorldCat, or their own CV on departmental websites in a couple cases. "In progress" means people have indicated they are currently working on their ms., and/or in a few cases I have inside information they are at work. The category "Other" includes, e.g., people who have published a first book that isn't their dissertation, or an edited volume, or dissertations that were broken up into articles rather than a book, etc.

Several conclusions can be drawn from Table 4.

First, note in Section C that men and women publish about equal numbers of dissertations. Given more dissertations were finished by men than by women, this equality suggests women are slightly over-represented in the total count of published works: women are having slightly more success publishing their revised dissertations. Note also that the total number of dissertations published equals about a third of the total dissertations.

Next, in the bottom two lines of section C, note that among unpublished dissertations, men outnumber women not quite two to one. Given the proportions of the genders for those who completed their work, as shown in Table 1, this is roughly correct also.

The publication rate shown for dissertations overall is give or take about one third. In other words, the rate at which women historians are publishing their dissertations roughly matches the publishing rate for dissertations overall. Now incidentally this rate of publication, 33%, strikes me as low, but I think the issues related to that would be better served on a different panel about the current publishing landscape. There is a lot to discuss on that topic.

A rate of publication roughly equal between overall dissertation-to-book conversion and the conversion for women historians suggests that the scarcity of women ancient historians as authors and referees has other causes. If women get into this line of work, they are about as successful as classicists are in other lines of research. I think this means the challenge lies elsewhere, perhaps in encouraging women into ancient history in the first place, as my fellow panelists have noted.

In fact, a perusal of recent APA dissertation statistics suggests this may be the case. When I look at the 2009 listings of historical dissertations by women underway and completed as shown on Table 5, I see 9 completed, and 13 underway. These numbers for one year are greater than the women's historical dissertations completed in 1999, 2000, and 2001 together. I take this as a positive sign that the needle is moving toward a more balanced representation of the genders in ancient historical studies.

**Table 5** -- Ancient history dissertations by women, 2009 APA listings: 14 schools, 22 women

Completed: 9	Buffalo	1
	Colorado	1
	McMaster	2
	Ohio State	1
	Princeton	3
	Yale	1
In Progress: 13	Brown	1
	Berkeley	2
	Harvard	1
	Iowa	1
	Michigan	4
	Missouri	1
	Princeton	1
	USC	1
	Toronto	1

In conclusion, this sort of discussion would be greatly helped if the APA were keeping public demographic information of a sort kept by organizations like MLA and AHA. That kind of demographic tracking would also help address other important questions like minority participation, career choices for those not seeking professor posts, or the effect of economic downturn on Classics compared to other disciplines.

I would like to suggest that at a minimum the APA should track and publish these things:

- a) More complete and more accurate data from schools. This should include not just status of dissertations, and data on authors including minority status, but also things like a school's sub-program (like IPCAA and IPGRH at Michigan, the Ancient History Group at Berkeley, the Ancient/Near East group at Bryn Mawr). It would also help to track the super-field, like history or archaeology or philology, so we don't have to guess at it.
- b) The APA could track those who leave field for other employment, especially since some of those lines of work are at least in theory lucrative or involved with various kinds of helpful skills and contacts. Such resources on call could help further undertakings such as the Capital Campaign, and also help public outreach, another very important APA activity.
- c) It would be useful if the APA could somehow track the progress by individual from dissertation in progress through completed and then published. It is true that *L'Année philologique* does this to a small degree, as do the New Books listings in *BMCR*, but these data do not easily sort by rank of author, and in any case they are not linked to a larger demographic database that I know of.
- c) Last, it would help if the APA more comprehensively tracked those who earn tenure, promotion, or emeritus or emerita status.

For well or ill we're living in a time of bean-counting and quantitative analysis, and our ability to demonstrate a vibrant and involved discipline will be important toward our survival, whether we're historians or philologists or archaeologists.

Appendix: **Table 6:** No. of completed dissertations reported by school, 2002-2010, in "June" newsletters

School Name	Total per School	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Alberta	2	1				1				
Boston Univ.	6		1	2			1	1		1
Univ. Brit. Col.	6	3	2				1			
Brown	17	1	5	3		1		3	2	2
Bryn Mawr	10	1	1				2		5	1
Buffalo	5				4				1	
Calgary	2									2
Cal Berkeley	45	6	6	7		11	5	1	3	6
Cal SD/Irv/Riv*	6				1	2		1		2
Cal SB	3					2			1	
UCLA	14	1		3	1	2	2	1	2	2
Catholic Univ.	3				1				2	
Univ. Chicago	28	4	1	3	5	3	6	5	1	
Cincinnati	20	8	3		2	2		5		

School Name	Total per School	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
CUNY	2					1	1			
Colorado	5			1				3	1	
Columbia	22	2			2	7		11		
Cornell	13			3	1	3	1			5
Duke	11	3			4			3	1	
Florida State	3					1			1	1
Univ. Fla.	6							3		3
Fordham	5	1			1					3
Harvard	35	3	2	5	5	3	7	5	5	
Hopkins	12	2	3		4	1	1			1
UIUC	6	3						1	1	1
Indiana	22	1	2	2	5	2		2	4	4
Iowa	12	2	1	2	1		2	1	2	1
Loyola - Chicago	1		1							
McMaster	9			1	2	3			3	
Michigan	37	2	1	3	4	7	2	4	5	9
Minnesota	1				1					
Missouri	2						2			
NYU	5	1	2			1		1		
UNC-Chapel Hill	21	3	3	2	5		5	1	2	
Northwestern	4	2	1	1						
OSU	12						1	4	5	2
Penn	15	7		2	2		2	2		
Univ. Pittsburgh	5	1	3						1	
Princeton	25	5			1	3	3	5	8	
Rutgers	7		1					4	1	1
Univ. So. Cal.	6			2	1			3		
Stanford	15		4					8		3
Texas	20	3	4		3		2	3	5	
Toronto	13	2	1	2	1		1	1	1	4
Virginia	10		1			1	2	2	2	2
Univ. Wash.	17		5		3	1	3	3	2	
Wisc.- Mad.	8	2	1	1			1	2	1	
Yale	14	3	2		2			2	2	3
York Univ.	1								1	
<b>TOTAL ALL SCHOOLS</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>59</b>

\*U. California at Irvine, Riverside, and San Diego merged departments / resources at faculty request