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**Writing, Producing, and
Using College-Level
American History
Textbooks**

Editors' Introduction

Gary J. Kornblith & Carol

Lasser

[Article](#)

**Assessing the Place of
Textbooks in U.S. Survey
Courses**

Daniel J. Cohen

[Article](#)

**Reflections of a Longtime
Textbook Author**

Mary Beth Norton

[Article](#)

**An Interview with Alan
Brinkley**

[Article](#)

**Textbook Publishing: An
Ecological View**

Steve Forman

[Article](#)

By the Book: Assessing the Place of Textbooks in U.S. Survey Courses

Daniel J. Cohen

In a round table published in the *Journal of American History* four years ago, professors from ten different colleges and universities spoke of the thoughtful, creative ways they approached the design of their American history survey courses. Most suggested that the textbook was of secondary importance, mainly used to supply background information to students, and they highlighted the pedagogical role of additional readings. Yet a study of nearly eight hundred syllabi posted on the World Wide Web reveals that the round table discussion may not be representative of how the survey is taught at most colleges and universities in the United States. Many U.S. history instructors appear to take a more pedestrian, by-the-book approach. They depend heavily on a textbook, on a textbook-based course's favorite type of graded work-- the examination--and on the conventional ways of teaching American history that a textbook enshrines. Those findings lend a dark tone to the proclamation that Sara Evans and Roy Rosenzweig made in introducing the "Textbooks and Teaching" section of this journal in 1992: "Textbooks are the single most important written source through which college students learn about the past."¹

The proliferation of syllabi on the Web presents for the first time the possibility of gaining a comprehensive picture of how history survey courses are taught and how textbooks are used in them. Since all documents on the Web, including posted syllabi, use text that is machine readable--and thus swiftly locatable and searchable--we can now assemble and analyze a substantial collection of course materials through electronic means. To exploit that possibility, in 2002 I wrote some experimental software, now called the Syllabus Finder, to locate, scan, and store syllabi from the Web. Thus far the software has found and tagged over three hundred thousand syllabi--probably the largest set of syllabi ever cataloged. Freely available on the Center for History and New Media Web site, the Syllabus Finder allows one to look up courses on specific topics, narrow or broad, to examine how history is taught at

thousands of educational institutions, and to see which courses assign a certain primary or secondary source.²

To examine the role of textbooks in teaching the U.S. history survey, in early July 2004 I fed into the Syllabus Finder a list of forty-one titles that account for virtually all college-level American history textbook sales. The program located 792 different survey courses, taught at 462 different educational institutions, that used those textbooks. (A secondary, broader search estimated that only 5-10% of American history survey courses do not assign a textbook.) Multiple sections of the same course at a single university were cataloged as distinct courses when the section leaders designed their own syllabi using individually chosen textbooks. Multiple sections with identical syllabi and textbooks were pared down to a single record so as not to skew the data. Similarly, I cataloged only the most recent version of a syllabus when a course taught by the same professor appeared for multiple years. The syllabi range in time from a single 1995 course to 258 syllabi from the first half of 2004. (Although instructors have probably removed some older syllabi from the Web, the volume of course materials online has clearly exploded. My research shows that it has almost doubled each year since 1997.)

I transferred the 792 syllabi to a specially constructed database and indexed them for key words and other distinguishing properties. Since computerized methods can go only so far, each syllabus was manually double-checked and parsed to highlight additional elements, such as primary-source readers. Obviously, this study leaves out the numerous syllabi that are still paper only, as well as syllabi that reside behind the electronic gates erected by popular course-management software such as Blackboard and WebCT. If the age distribution of the instructors who have posted the syllabi (information that this study could not determine) mirrors the age distribution of creators of Web sites in general--a sensible assumption, though possibly countered by the growing number of universities that require professors to post their syllabi on the Web--then the dataset may tilt toward courses taught by younger faculty members. If so, this study provides a sense not only of the current state of the American history survey but also of where it is headed.

Regardless of the composition of the faculty who have posted the syllabi, the sheer number of them, along with the wide range of institutions with one or more courses identified, most likely means that the dataset is a decent, though certainly not complete, representation of how American history is taught at the introductory college level. Yet it is important to distinguish among different kinds of colleges and universities. Of the syllabi this study examined, four-year colleges accounted for less than 9% of the total, community and junior colleges for 31%, and universities for 60%.³

Across all types of institutions, the periodization of U.S. survey courses is exceedingly rigid, matching the design of two-volume U.S. history textbooks. Virtually all courses fall into one of four main categories: American history to 1865 (21% of the total); since 1865 (23%); to 1877 (24%); since 1877 (23%). Only 3% of courses cover the entire history of the United States in a single semester, while slightly fewer (2.5%) use a different dividing year (ranging from 1776 to 1918) than the most popular choices of 1865 and 1877. Since World War II, two-semester American history surveys have used the Civil War as a natural breaking point. It remains to be seen how many more decades can go by before more professors shift to a later year to split the survey more equally in two.

Unless many instructors are failing to list additional reading on their syllabi, the data show that fully one-third of U.S. history surveys in which a textbook is assigned use no other books, although a small minority of those courses also employ the primary-source reader that can be purchased with their textbooks. The kind of educational institution in which a course is taught largely determines the likelihood that a course relies exclusively on a textbook: 47% of U.S. history surveys taught at community and junior colleges in spring 2004 depended entirely on the textbook for readings, while another 8% added a primary-source reader. Thirty percent of four-year college courses depended solely on a textbook, while another 3% added a primary-source reader. Twenty-six percent of university courses depended completely on the textbook, while another 6% added a primary-source reader.

Though as a whole far less popular than unabridged editions, concise editions of textbooks appear to be more popular in

survey courses taught at universities than in survey courses at other types of schools, and their use seems to correlate with somewhat greater use of nontextbook works. Of the 50 courses the Syllabus Finder clearly identified as including brief versions of textbooks, almost three-quarters were at universities and almost all of the rest were at community or junior colleges. Only 23% of the courses using concise editions failed to assign either a primary-source reader or other books, while another 4% included just a primary-source reader. In other words, if one focuses just on supplementary books, 73% of U.S. survey instructors who select concise-edition textbooks assign additional books of their own choosing, compared to only 59% of instructors who use unabridged textbooks.

Among the 60% of courses that include books beyond the textbook and primary-source reader, there is considerable diversity in the additional volumes instructors assign. Thus, there are only 14 titles that appear on 1% or more of all the syllabi cataloged by the Syllabus Finder. Only 4 of the 14 are secondary works (1 of which is over forty years old). (See [table 1.](#))

Table 1

Most used supplementary books in U.S. survey courses,
ranked by course adoptions, 1995-2004

| <i>Author</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Number of courses</i> | <i>Percentage of courses</i> |
|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Frederick Douglass | <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> | 41 | 5.2 |
| Anne Moody | <i>Coming of Age in Mississippi</i> | 31 | 3.9 |
| James Davidson and Mark Lytle | <i>After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection</i> | 18 | 2.3 |
| Upton Sinclair | <i>The Jungle</i> | 16 | 2 |
| Thomas Paine | <i>Common Sense</i> | 15 | 1.9 |
| Harriet A. Jacobs | <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> | 12 | 1.5 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|----|-----|
| John Demos | <i>The Unredeemed Captive</i> | 11 | 1.4 |
| John Hollitz | <i>Thinking through the Past: A Critical Approach to U.S. History</i> | 11 | 1.4 |
| Harriet Beecher Stowe | <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> | 11 | 1.4 |
| Benjamin Franklin | <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> | 10 | 1.3 |
| Edmund Morgan | <i>The Puritan Dilemma</i> | 10 | 1.3 |
| Thomas Bell | <i>Out of This Furnace</i> | 8 | 1 |
| Henry Louis Gates Jr., ed. | <i>Narratives</i> | 8 | 1 |
| Malcolm X | <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> | 8 | 1 |

NOTE: $N = 792$ courses.

NOTE: For bibliographical information, see "[Appendix A: Most Used Supplementary Books.](#)"

Except in two classic works of early American history (by Edmund Morgan and John Demos) and in some primary sources that have been part of American history courses for decades (by Upton Sinclair, Thomas Paine, and Benjamin Franklin), the most obvious theme of the assigned books is the African American experience, especially under slavery. (See the books by Frederick Douglass, Anne Moody, Harriet A. Jacobs, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Malcolm X.) Many instructors apparently use one or more of those works to make up for a perceived deficit in textbook narratives. The historian Peter Kolchin has observed that few American history textbook writers are experts in the history of slavery, and only one of eight major textbooks he examined in the late 1990s addressed "the shift in historians' focus from slave treatment to the lives of slaves and 'the slave community,' a shift based on 'taking seriously firsthand accounts previously discounted as unreliable.'"⁴ Scores of history teachers evidently agree with

Kolchin's criticism and look to primary sources to fill in that textbook gap--and perhaps also to make up for their own perceived lack of authenticity when discussing African American culture.

Professors of American history survey courses use electronic resources sparingly, which most likely reflects a continuing skepticism about the quality and value of online historical materials.⁵ In an age of rapid expansion in the number of historical Web sites and Web syllabi, the use of the Internet to teach topics in U.S. history is growing at a far slower pace. Of the U.S. survey courses taught in spring 2004, 9% used the official Web site of a textbook publisher for additional materials, while only 6% ventured out onto the broader Web for supplementary primary and secondary sources--not much better than the running average of 5% for all syllabi from 1995 to 2004. Survey instructors eschew film as well: merely 3.5% of all survey courses in the study include one or more films, a rate that has held steady over the past decade.

If most U.S. survey instructors rely heavily on a textbook, they disagree about which textbook to assign. Syllabi for 258 courses taught in the spring 2004 semester show 27 different textbooks in use, with only one title assigned by over 10% of instructors. (See [table 2](#).)

Table 2

Most used textbooks in U.S. survey courses, ranked by course adoptions, spring 2004

| <i>Author</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Publisher</i> | <i>Number of courses</i> | <i>Percentage of courses</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Roark et al. | <i>The American Promise</i> | Bedford, Freeman and Worth | 31 | 12 |
| Nash et al. | <i>The American People</i> | Pearson | 23 | 8.9 |
| Davidson et al. | <i>Nation of Nations</i> | McGraw-Hill | 21 | 8.1 |
| Faragher et al. | <i>Out of Many</i> | Pearson | 21 | 8.1 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----|-----|
| Brinkley | <i>American History: A Survey</i> | McGraw-Hill | 14 | 5.4 |
| Divine et al. | <i>America, Past and Present</i> | Pearson | 14 | 5.4 |
| Tindall and Shi | <i>America: A Narrative History</i> | Norton | 12 | 4.7 |
| Goldfield et al. | <i>The American Journey</i> | Pearson | 10 | 3.9 |
| Henretta et al. | <i>America: A Concise History</i> | Bedford, Freeman and Worth | 10 | 3.9 |
| Boyer et al. | <i>The Enduring Vision</i> | Houghton Mifflin | 9 | 3.5 |
| Carnes and Garraty | <i>The American Nation</i> | Pearson | 9 | 3.5 |
| Norton et al. | <i>A People and a Nation</i> | Houghton Mifflin | 9 | 3.5 |
| Brinkley | <i>The Unfinished Nation</i> | McGraw-Hill | 8 | 3.1 |
| Murrin et al. | <i>Liberty, Equality, Power</i> | Thomson Learning | 8 | 3.1 |
| Ayers et al. | <i>American Passages</i> | Thomson Learning | 7 | 2.7 |
| Divine et al. | <i>The American Story</i> | Pearson | 7 | 2.7 |
| Maier et al. | <i>Inventing America</i> | Norton | 7 | 2.7 |
| Jones et al. | <i>Created Equal</i> | Pearson | 6 | 2.3 |
| Boydston et al. | <i>Making a Nation</i> | Pearson | 5 | 1.9 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------|---|-----|
| Lichtenstein et al. | <i>Who Built America?</i> | Bedford, Freeman and Worth | 4 | 1.6 |
| Berkin et al. | <i>Making America</i> | Houghton Mifflin | 4 | 1.6 |
| Henretta et al. | <i>America's History</i> | Bedford, Freeman and Worth | 4 | 1.6 |
| Carnes and Garraty | <i>American Destiny</i> | Pearson | 3 | 1.2 |
| Kennedy et al. | <i>The American Pageant</i> | Houghton Mifflin | 3 | 1.2 |
| Zinn | <i>A People's History of the United States</i> | HarperCollins | 3 | 1.2 |
| Carnes and Garraty | <i>A Short History of the American Nation</i> | Pearson | 1 | 0.4 |
| Carroll | <i>We the People</i> | Thomson Learning | 1 | 0.4 |

NOTE: $N = 258$ courses.

NOTE: For bibliographical information, see "[Appendix B: Most Used Textbooks.](#)"

Since courses do not have equal numbers of students, the figures in table 2 do not accurately represent the distribution of textbook sales--data that textbook publishers are loath to release. Yet by any measure of market share--whether it be the proportion of all volumes sold or the proportion of courses that have adopted a particular title-- it appears that no single textbook dominates the American history classroom. The 102 community college and junior college courses included in this analysis used 24 different textbooks; the 18 courses at four-year colleges used 11 different textbooks; the 132 university courses used 27 different textbooks. The kind of institution did influence textbook selection, however. Instructors at community and junior colleges preferred 2 titles

in spring 2004, while no single textbook was used in more than 10% of the university courses. (See [tables 3](#) and [4](#).)

Table 3

Most used textbooks at community and junior colleges, ranked by course adoptions, spring 2004

| <i>Author</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | | <i>of</i> | <i>of courses</i> |
| | | <i>courses</i> | |

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|----|------|
| Nash et al. | <i>The American People</i> | 18 | 17.6 |
| Roark et al. | <i>The American Promise</i> | 17 | 16.7 |
| Faragher et al. | <i>Out of Many</i> | 8 | 7.8 |
| Davidson et al. | <i>Nation of Nations</i> | 8 | 7.8 |

NOTE: *N* = 102 courses.

Table 4

Most used textbooks at universities, ranked by course adoptions, spring 2004

| <i>Author</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | | <i>of</i> | <i>of courses</i> |
| | | <i>courses</i> | |

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----|-----|
| Davidson et al. | <i>Nation of Nations</i> | 12 | 9.1 |
| Roark et al. | <i>The American Promise</i> | 12 | 9.1 |
| Faragher et al. | <i>Out of Many</i> | 11 | 8.3 |
| Brinkley | <i>American History: A Survey</i> | 8 | 6.1 |

Tindall *America:* 7 5.3
 and Shi *A*
Narrative
History

NOTE: *N* = 132 courses.

The diversity of the assigned textbooks masks growing concentration within the publishing industry. The publishing giant Pearson Longman supplied textbooks to 99 of the 258 spring 2004 courses in the database (38.4% of the total), followed by the Bedford, Freeman and Worth Publishing Group (49 courses, 19%), McGraw-Hill (43 courses, 16.7%), Houghton Mifflin (25 courses, 9.7%), W. W. Norton and Company (19 courses, 7.4%), Thomson Learning (16 courses, 6.2%), and HarperCollins (3 courses, 1.2%). Interestingly, the study reveals a significant divergence in the character of courses that use different publishers' textbooks. Instructors who assign works beyond the textbook are far more likely to use textbooks by Bedford than by other publishers. Only 25% of spring 2004 courses that used one of the four Bedford textbooks failed to assign additional books, while 53% of courses that used Pearson and McGraw-Hill textbooks did so. But hold the applause for professors using Bedford volumes for their willingness to move beyond the textbook. Courses using the *The American Promise*, the most popular textbook from Bedford--indeed, the most frequently assigned textbook in this study--also had on average some of the most exam-intensive grading schemes and assigned the least amount of writing and the fewest class projects. Almost three-quarters of the final grade in an *American Promise* class in spring 2004 typically came from tests, 15% from papers, and roughly 5% each from class participation and other assignments.

Those data match another finding of this study: courses using more popular textbooks tend to rely more heavily on examinations. In spring 2004, exams counted, on average, for 72.4% of the final grade in a class using one of the textbooks adopted by 10 or more courses nationwide. Courses using less popular textbooks tend to count papers and class discussion as a higher percentage of the final grade. On average, exams accounted for 64.5% of the grade in classes based on textbooks adopted by fewer than 10 courses nationwide. Both

of those percentages are quite high, of course--probably much higher than for a nonsurvey history course. Indeed, the U.S. history survey courses that the Syllabus Finder located overwhelmingly rely on tests and quizzes over assignments that allow students greater latitude, such as essays or class projects. Examinations constitute 67% of the final grade in an average U.S. history survey that uses a textbook. Papers account for 20%, class participation a mere 7%, and other assignments constitute 6% of the grade. Notably, however, those grade weightings vary significantly by the type of educational institution. Four-year college courses emphasize written work and class participation more than community college or university courses do. (See [table 5](#).)

Table 5

| Type of school | Examinations | Papers | Participation | Other |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------|---------------|-------|
| Community/junior college | 71.0 | 16.8 | 4.5 | 7.7 |
| Four-year college | 50.9 | 33.2 | 10.0 | 5.9 |
| University | 67.0 | 19.5 | 8.1 | 5.1 |

Table 5, along with statistics that demonstrate the centrality of textbooks to the courses that use them, reveals how textbooks give professors a relatively simple way to construct and teach a U.S. history survey course. Choose a popular textbook from one of the large publishers, throw in a few quizzes, a midterm, and a final, and instructors quickly have a ready-made course. While professional historians may complain about standardized testing in secondary schools and what it does to history education--the peril of "teaching to the test"--they should worry just as much about the "textbook and testing" character of so many American history survey courses at the college and university level--courses being taught in the classroom next door.

On a more hopeful note, this study suggests that we can improve our understanding of the teaching of history using digital resources such as the often overlooked and underappreciated course syllabus. Not surprisingly, the most creative history teachers seem to write much of the literature on teaching history, which may create a false impression of

current instruction. Given the wealth of data on the Web and advanced ways of analyzing them, discussions of curricular and pedagogical practices should become less anecdotal and less dependent on the close analysis of a small sample of courses. For instance, although there is much talk about the centrality of race, gender, and class in contemporary academia, and a corresponding complaint about the absence of religious history within survey courses, the words "religion" or "religious" appear on nearly 30% of the 2003 syllabi in the Syllabus Finder dataset, only slightly lower than the 32% garnered by "race."⁶ Educational specialists and historians will surely find more grist for the research mill as a higher percentage of course syllabi appear on the Web and as tools such as the Syllabus Finder become more refined and more widely available.

APPENDIX A: MOST USED SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKS (AS RANKED IN TABLE 1)

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845; Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York, 1968).

James West Davidson and Mark H. Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (New York, 1982).

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906; Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776; New York, 1986).

Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861; Cambridge, Mass., 1987).

John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York, 1994).

John Erwin Hollitz, *Thinking through the Past: A Critical Thinking Approach to U.S. History* (Boston, 1997).

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852; New York, 1952).

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1941).

Edmund Sears Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of*

John Winthrop (New York, 1958).

Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace* (1941; Pittsburgh, 1976).

Henry Louis Gates Jr., ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (1987; New York, 2002).

Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1965).

APPENDIX B: MOST USED TEXTBOOKS (AS RANKED IN TABLE 2)

The American Promise: A History of the United States. Second edition. By James L. Roark et al. (Boston: Bedford, 2002. xxxv, 1,183 pp. ISBN 0-31-239124-2.)

The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society. Sixth edition. By Gary B. Nash et al. (New York: Pearson, 2004. xxxii, 1,106 pp. ISBN 0-32-112524-X.)

Nation of Nations: A Concise Narrative of the American Republic. Third edition. By James West Davidson et al. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002. xlviii, 992 pp. ISBN 0-07-241772-2.)

Out of Many: A History of the American People. Revised third edition. By John Mack Faragher et al. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2003. xlvii, 991 pp. ISBN 0-13-098692-5.)

American History: A Survey. Eleventh edition. By Alan Brinkley. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003. xlvii, 951 pp. ISBN 0-07-242436-2.)

America, Past and Present. Revised sixth edition. By Robert A. Divine et al. (New York: Longman, 2003. xxxi, 1,014 pp. ISBN 0-32-109337-2.)

America: A Narrative History. Sixth edition. By George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi. (New York: Norton, 2004. xxii, 1,512 pp. ISBN 0-39-392426-2.)

The American Journey: A History of the United States. Combined volume, third edition. By David R. Goldfield et al. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2004. xlvii, 1,023 pp. ISBN 0-13-182553-4, ISBN 0-13-184761-9.)

America: A Concise History. Second edition. By James A.

Henretta et al. (Boston: Bedford, 2002. xxxii, 958 pp. ISBN 0-31-225612-4.)

The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People. Fifth edition. By Paul S. Boyer et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. xlv, 1,023 pp. ISBN 0-61-828064-2.)

The American Nation: A History of the United States. Eleventh edition. By Mark C. Carnes and John Arthur Garraty. (New York: Longman, 2003. xxiv, 528 pp. ISBN 0-32-110148-0.)

A People and a Nation: A History of the United States. Sixth edition. By Mary Beth Norton et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001. xxiv, 977 pp. ISBN 0-61-800551-X.)

The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People. Fourth edition. By Alan Brinkley. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004. xxxix, 948 pp. ISBN 0-07-256554-3.)

Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People. Third edition. By John M. Murrin et al. (Belmont: Thomson Learning, 2002. xlv, 1,115 pp. ISBN 0-15-508568-9.)

American Passages: A History of the United States. Second edition. By Edward L. Ayers et al. (Belmont: Thomson Learning, 2004. xxxii, 904 pp. ISBN 0-53-460741-1.)

The American Story. First edition. By Robert A. Divine et al. (New York: Longman, 2002. ISBN 0-32-109196-5.)

Inventing America: A History of the United States. First edition. By Pauline Maier et al. (New York: Norton, 2003. xxvii, 1,086 pp. ISBN 0-39-397434-0.)

Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States. First edition. By Jacqueline Jones et al. (New York: Longman, 2003. xlvi, 1,033 pp. ISBN 0-32-105296-X.)

Making a Nation: The United States and Its People. Prentice Hall portfolio edition. By Jeanne Boydston et al. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2003-2004. xvi, 768 pp. ISBN 0-13-111454-9.)

Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society. Second edition. By Nelson Lichtenstein et al. (Boston: Bedford, 2000.)

Making America: A History of the United States. Third edition. By Carol Berkin et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003. xxxii, 1,014 pp. ISBN 0-61-819066-X.)

America's History. Fifth edition. By James A. Henretta et al. (Boston: Bedford, 2004. li, 950 pp. ISBN 0-31-239879-4.)

American Destiny: Narrative of a Nation. By Mark C. Carnes and John Arthur Garraty. (New York: Longman, 2003. ISBN 0-32-110568-0.)

The American Pageant: A History of the Republic. Twelfth edition. By David M. Kennedy et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. xxiv, 1,034 pp. ISBN 0-61-810349-X.)

A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present. Third edition. By Howard Zinn. (New York: HarperCollins, 2003. 729 pp. ISBN 0-06-052842-7.)

A Short History of the American Nation. Eighth edition. By John Arthur Garraty and Mark C. Carnes. (New York: Longman, 2001. xxxii, 820 pp. ISBN 0-32-107098-4.)

We, the People: A Brief American History. By Peter N. Carroll. (Belmont: Thomson Learning, 2003. xxviii, 799 pp. ISBN 0-53-459355-0.)

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¹ Gary Kornblith and Carol Lasser, eds., "Teaching the American History Survey at the Opening of the Twenty-First Century: A Round Table Discussion," *Journal of American History*, 87 (March 2001), 1409-41; Sara Evans and Roy Rosenzweig, "Introduction," *ibid.*, 78 (March 1992), 1377.

² To create the Syllabus Finder, I downloaded several hundred syllabi from the Web, broke them apart into single words, and ranked those words by frequency, thus producing a statistical word profile of the average syllabus. The Syllabus Finder scans the database of Google with that profile and plumbs other databases of educational institutions and course materials at the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University; thus the software accurately locates syllabi. The Syllabus Finder takes advantage of a direct connection to Google's massive index of Web pages, available to researchers and software developers under a special program and license. (For more information about this program, called the Google Web APIs service, visit <<http://www.google.com/apis/>> [Nov. 8, 2004].) The supplementary algorithms and databases make the Syllabus Finder much more adept than Google alone is at locating courses across the Web. The software generally can identify the college or university where each course is taught and can pull out book titles and other features of individual syllabi. It can also find syllabi that are posted as Microsoft Word documents or in portable document format (PDF) in addition to regular Web pages. Simon Kornblith greatly improved the complex regular expressions, or text pattern-matching algorithms, for book titles. Center for History and New Media, *Syllabus Finder* <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/tools/syllabi/>> (Nov. 8, 2004).

³ The gap between community college and university instruction narrows if we look just at the numbers for spring 2004 (the most recent semester in the dataset): 7% of the courses were at four-year colleges, 41% at community or junior colleges, and 52% at universities.

⁴ Peter Kolchin, "Slavery in United States Survey Textbooks," *Journal of American History*, 84 (March 1998), 1435.

⁵ For more on skepticism about Web resources, see Kornblith and Lasser, eds., "Teaching the American History Survey at the Opening of the Twenty-First Century"; and David Jaffee, "'Scholars will soon be instructed through the eye': E-Supplements and the Teaching of U.S. History," *Journal of American History*, 89 (March 2003), 1463-82.

6 Paul Boyer, "In Search of the Fourth 'R': The Treatment of Religion in American History Textbooks and Survey Courses," *History Teacher*, 29 (Feb. 1996), 195-216.