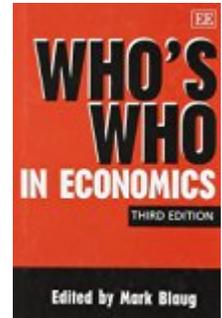


Mark Blaug, ed. *Who's Who in Economics*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar, 1999. xx + 1237 pp. \$350.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-85898-886-3.



Reviewed by Robert Whaples

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"I have learned a great deal about our profession from editing this book and I cannot help feeling that even a casual reading of some of the pages will convey a vivid sense of the amazing scope and spread of interests among practising economists" (p. vii), writes Mark Blaug in the preface to the third edition of this valuable reference book. Taking up Blaug's challenge, I sat down to browse.

The volume includes short sketches on over 1000 living and 500 deceased economists. The alphabetically listed entries contain data on date and place of birth, current and past posts, degrees, offices and honors, editorial positions, principal fields of interest, publications and principal contributions. Most of the entries for the deceased economists were written by Blaug and have been carried over from earlier editions. The entries on living economists rely on information provided by entrants themselves. Some entries cover about a page and a half. Most are shorter. The principal decision made by the editor was who to include and who to leave out. Following the procedure used in the second edition, Blaug has adopted a

thoroughly objective method for choosing the living economists in this volume. Those included come from a list of the 1082 most frequently cited economists publishing in about 200 economics journals over the years 1984 to 1996. After all, "citations are the coinage of reward in academia" (p. viii). This selection mechanism is a strength of the work, but also, as Blaug acknowledges, potentially a weakness, since it overlooks those whose contributions lie elsewhere.

Such an inviting book. Whose entry should be read first? Pondering this question, I read the multiple prefaces and noted the appendices, which organize the entries by principal field of interest, country of residence and country of birth. Finally, I decided that I would begin with Edwin Gay, whom Arthur Cole once called "the first real American economic historian." Gay (1867-1946) was the first president of the Economic History Association and a president of the American Economic Association. He was known for his research on enclosures and was the dissertation advisor to a raft of notable economic historians (including at least four who became presidents of

the EHA). Unfortunately, I was disappointed to learn that *Who's Who in Economics* has no entry for Edwin Gay. In fact, only three of the first eighteen presidents of the EHA (Harold Innis, Herbert Heaton, and Alexander Gerschenkron) have entries. Perhaps this entire generation of economic historians fell through the cracks because they were not quite well enough known to make the deceased economists' list and not eligible for the widely-cited living economists' list either. Checking the other end of the list -- the more recent presidents of the EHA -- I was disappointed again. Many of the recent presidents of the EHA are missing as well. These include Richard Sutch and Gavin Wright, whose papers and books appear so frequently on course American Economic History course syllabi that they merited inclusion in *Historical Perspectives on the American Economy: Selected Readings* (1995, edited by Dianne Betts and myself).

One should not overstate the omissions, however. *Who's Who* includes biographies of about one-third of EHA's presidents (including North, Cameron, Landes, Fogel, Easterlin, Engerman, David, Abramovitz, Morris, Williamson, Temin, McCloskey, and Goldin). It also contains entries for Adelman, Aldcroft, Bordo, Deane, Decanio, Feinstein, Finegan, Fishlow, Ford, Furtado, Gallaway, Genovese, Habakkuk, Hannah, Harley, Heston, Kindleberger, Lal, Langlois, Lazonick, Leff, Lindert, Maddison, Mayer, Mayhew, Meyer, Mokyr, Officer, Pincus, Pomfret, Rosovsky, Rostow, Schwartz, Sowell, Wrigley, and, I'm sure, a few others with substantial interests in economic history whom I have overlooked. Four economic historians (Calomiris, Chandler, Eichengreen, and Hatton) would have been included but failed to reply to the editor. Moreover, the entries on the most widely-cited economic historians are generally very informative, especially when the entrant's response extends to a page or more, as in the case of Richard Easterlin, Jeffrey Williamson or Claudia Goldin.

Still, one should not understate the omissions either. There is clearly a need for a reference work that performs the same function as *Who's Who in Economics*, but focuses on economic historians, especially those of past generations, like Edwin Gay, who are in danger of being forgotten. Such a resource would be considerably strengthened if it were searchable and available online.

Thumbing through the entries in *Who's Who in Economics* does give a unique insight into the concerns and findings of the world's leading economists, so I'll close with some wise and/or provocative words, that may be of special interest to economic historians. (I stumbled across these while browsing and note that these comments are somewhat atypical in comparison to the fact-filled entries submitted by most).

Martin Bronfenbrenner (1914-94) who had considerable interests in economic history (especially the development of Japan) and the history of economic thought, wrote the following concerning his own "principal contributions." "My principal apology for the shallowness of my footprints on the sands of time, professionally speaking, is that I never intended to become a professional economist. Rather I am a perpetual student flitting between fields, sufficiently pessimistic about the real world to accept Academia as the best available refuge therefrom, but regretting my failure to get started in economic journalism. I maintain that there is no such thing as a pure economist. Economics is adulterated on one side by the keeping up of facts, statutes and court decisions, and on the other side by applied mathematicians and computerologists 'all dressed up with no place to go'. I spent the first half of my forty academic years as a 'what does it all mean?' theorist among the factmongers and the second half as a historian among computer-jockeys simulating 'obfuscation functions (pp. 161-62)."

Michael Lovell, who teaches at Wesleyan University, has published broadly beginning with work on the role of the Bank of England as a

lender of last resort in the eighteenth century and moving to topics including the methodological problems of pre-testing bias, seasonal adjustment and data mining; the determinants of inventory investment; rational expectations; teenage unemployment; the effects of an endogenous money supply on the business cycle and forced saving; product differentiation; spending on public education, the production of economic literature and the rate of depreciation of journal articles; and the use of citations to predict the selection of Nobel Laureates and rank journals, articles and departments. He closes his entry by noting, "I believe that the range of topics reflects in large measure the inquiring nature of the students whom I have been privileged to teach but from whom I have learned more than I have taught."

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