INTERFACES

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HENRY RAND HATFIELD AND
ACCOUNTING BIOGRAPHY


Abstract: The paper reasserts the importance of biographical research in accounting history by reference to Stephen Zeff’s book on Henry Rand Hatfield. It illustrates that depth studies of individual actors offers compelling insights to the history of accounting theory, practices and institutions. Biography also has the capacity to reveal insights which have a bearing on modern day issues.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IN ACCOUNTING

We live in a world increasingly interested in its past. Public television in several countries offers a regular diet of historical programs, and cable television companies provide a channel devoted exclusively to what its producers believe to be history. Shelves of bookstores groan with the weight of newly-published historical texts and novels. Historians combine university employment with part-time careers as media-based presenters on wind-swept moors and ramparts or in water-logged archaeological trenches. The brightest and the best of graduating classes in history are full-time researchers who can write best-selling historical texts. Thus, at least in the developed countries of the English-speaking world, an obvious appetite for history exists despite increasing concerns about the quantity and quality of history education in schools.