



Twenty years of *Cliometrica*

Claude Diebolt¹

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This editorial marks the twentieth anniversary of *Cliometrica*.

It was conceived not as a celebration of numbers, but as a reflection on meaning, on what it has meant, for two decades, to sustain a dialogue between history and economics, between quantification and interpretation.

When *Cliometrica* was founded, the field of cliometric research stood at a cross-roads. The “new economic history” had already transformed our understanding of the past, yet the bridge between theoretical rigor and historical sensibility remained fragile. The journal’s quiet ambition was to make that bridge durable, to create a space where data, theory, and context could meet as equals.

Twenty years later, this vision endures. The articles that have appeared in our pages reflect a remarkable diversity of methods, geographies, and perspectives. Yet they share a common ethos: respect for evidence, clarity of thought, and humility before complexity.

In the pages that follow, I offer not an institutional chronicle, but a meditation on the spirit of *Cliometrica*, the evolution of its field, and the enduring conviction that rigorous economic history remains one of the most humanistic of sciences.

1 A quiet conviction

When *Cliometrica* was founded two decades ago, it was not born of noise, nor of institutional design, nor of the ambition to conquer a niche. It was born, rather, of a quiet conviction, a belief that the most enduring ideas in scholarship often begin in silence. The journal emerged not from a committee’s deliberation, but from a simple, stubborn thought: that history and economics, if allowed to converse on equal terms, could illuminate one another in ways neither discipline could achieve alone.

This editorial is based on my presentation of *Cliometrica* delivered on 30 July 2025 at the World Economic History Congress in Lund, Sweden.

✉ Claude Diebolt
cdiebolt@unistra.fr

¹ BETA/CNRS, University of Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France

I remember that conviction clearly. It was not the excitement of novelty, but the patience of persistence. Economic history had long lived in the shadow of two traditions, one narrative and particular, the other formal and general. Between *Verstehen* and *Erklären*, between understanding and explanation, there existed a fertile, yet under-cultivated terrain. *Cliometrica* was meant to inhabit that in-between space, not as a compromise, but as a meeting ground.

In fact, the intuition behind *Cliometrica* reaches back to the 1990s. The Nobel Prize awarded to Robert W. Fogel and Douglass C. North in 1993 did more than honor two eminent scholars; it signaled, quietly but unmistakably, that economic history could stand at the center of the social sciences without surrendering either rigor or historical sensibility. In the years immediately following my doctoral thesis (1994), my exchanges with Peter Temin and Robert Fogel helped give sharper form to an idea I was already carrying: the need for a dedicated venue where theory, measurement, and historical context could meet on equal terms. It mattered to me, then and ever since, that such a journal should not merely publish results, but cultivate a way of thinking. I remain grateful that, very early on, Fogel and Temin were among the first to encourage me to turn that intuition into something concrete.

From its very beginning, the journal was guided by a sense of duty: to safeguard a dialogue that was always fragile, always in need of renewal. There were moments of uncertainty, of course. Would such a journal find its audience? Would scholars trained in different idioms recognize each other's language? Could a publication so explicitly interdisciplinary avoid the twin perils of superficiality and sectarianism?

Those questions, I think, have been answered, not by assertion, but by endurance. Twenty years later, *Cliometrica* stands as a living testimony that rigor and reflection are not adversaries. I have learned, and I believe our community has learned, that numbers, when contextualized, can speak with warmth; that theory, when humble, can serve understanding; that the past, when measured, remains alive.

2 The spirit of the journal

The soul of *Cliometrica* has never been definable by a single method, region, or period. From its first issue, the journal has aspired to something broader: to offer a home to all work that combines historical depth with theoretical ambition. It is, in essence, a generalist journal in economic history, but with a distinctive ethos, an insistence that quantification and interpretation are not separate acts, but complementary gestures of inquiry.

When we first formulated the journal's scope, we chose inclusiveness not out of indecision, but out of conviction. We refused to believe that precision belongs only to economists, or that meaning belongs only to historians. The strength of *Cliometrica* lies precisely in its refusal to choose between them. It seeks instead to weave together their sensibilities: the historian's attention to texture, context, and contingency, with the economist's search for structure, mechanism, and measurement.

In an age increasingly defined by specialization, this stance has required a certain quiet courage. It is always easier to narrow than to open, to define a boundary than to hold a dialogue. But as the years have passed, that courage has been vindicated.

Submissions have come from all corners of the world, from the empirical and the theoretical, from the micro-historical to the macro-structural.

Many young scholars have found in *Cliometrica* a place where they could publish work that did not fit neatly elsewhere, papers that were too data-driven for historical journals, too historically sensitive for economic ones. That, I believe, is one of our proudest achievements. The next generation of cliometricians, in choosing *Cliometrica*, has affirmed that rigorous interdisciplinarity is not an anomaly, but a standard worth defending.

The spirit of the journal is, at its core, dialogical. Every article, however technical or abstract, participates in a broader conversation, one that transcends period, geography, or topic. The diversity of our content reflects not a lack of direction, but a belief in pluralism as a form of intellectual honesty. History is vast; so too should be the ways we approach it.

We have resisted the temptation to privilege one method over another. Formal models, econometric studies, archival reconstructions, and theoretical essays all find a place in our pages, provided they share the same underlying attitude: respect for evidence, clarity of exposition, and an awareness of history's complexity. That balance, between openness and rigor, defines the ethos of *Cliometrica*.

Above all, the journal has sought to cultivate a tone of seriousness without solemnity, of ambition without arrogance. The best articles in our pages are those that combine intellectual precision with moral humility, works recognize that every dataset, every regression, every model is also a fragment of a human story.

That, ultimately, is what we mean when we say *Cliometrica* is not just a journal of methods, but a journal of meaning.

3 Twenty years of inquiry

Looking back over two decades of *Cliometrica* is to revisit a quiet revolution, not one of slogans or schools, but of gradual transformation. The field of economic history today is neither the one we inherited nor the one we imagined. It has changed, often imperceptibly, through the slow accumulation of better data and sharper questions, accompanied by an increasing awareness of complexity.

When *Cliometrica* began, we stood at the confluence of two long currents. On one side, the legacy of the "new economic history," with its promise that theory and measurement could illuminate the great arcs of historical change. On the other, the renewed appreciation for narrative, institutions, and the irreducible texture of the past. Between these, *Cliometrica* sought not to arbitrate, but to invite conversation, to be a place where rigor could meet reflection without losing its soul.

Over the years, the journal's pages have mirrored the evolution of the discipline itself. What began as a dialogue between historians and economists has matured into a conversation among equals. The questions have broadened, from the determinants of growth to the structures of inequality, from the measurement of productivity to the understanding of culture, from demographic transitions to technological revolutions. The empirical tools have multiplied, but the curiosity remains the same.

This broadening of questions was not merely thematic; it was also intellectual and methodological. From its earliest volumes, the journal gave room to reflective pieces about what *Cliometrica* is and what it should be, texts that treated economic history not simply as an application domain, but as a mode of inquiry with its own epistemic demands and responsibilities. That willingness to combine programmatic reflection with technical work has remained a distinctive feature of the journal's identity across volumes and generations.

Over time, *Cliometrica* also became a forum where influential debates could be revisited, clarified, and sometimes reframed, not through polemic, but through careful reasoning and historical depth. Several contributions illustrate this role particularly well.

Reflections on the position of economic history within economics itself have been central. Robert A. Margo's essay on the integration of economic history into economics offered more than a disciplinary assessment; it invited scholars, especially younger ones, to reflect on the conditions under which economic history can remain both analytically rigorous and institutionally relevant. In a similar spirit, Paul A. David's work on path dependence revisited a foundational concept not as a slogan, but as a living analytical framework, one whose power lies precisely in its historical grounding and its openness to reinterpretation.

Methodological innovation has been another constant thread. Terence C. Mills's analysis of trends and cycles in historical time series reaffirmed the importance of a dialogue between econometric technique and historical sensibility, reminding us that technical sophistication gains meaning only when anchored in long-run historical perspective. From a different angle, Philippe Mongin's game-theoretic analysis of the Waterloo campaign demonstrated how formal models, when used with care, can illuminate historical narratives rather than flatten them, showing that abstraction and storytelling need not be adversaries.

The journal has also accompanied, and critically reflected upon, the digital turn in economic history. Lino Wehrheim's work on topic modeling within the *Journal of Economic History* illustrated how computational tools can be mobilized not to replace close reading, but to guide it, to reveal patterns of attention, silence, and transformation within the discipline itself. More recently, network-based approaches, such as the study of Bourbon Spain's road system by Pablo-Martí, Alañón-Pardo, and Sánchez, have shown how concepts from complexity theory and network analysis can enrich our understanding of historical connectivity, state capacity, and economic integration.

Substantive debates have been equally central. Long-run perspectives on inequality, such as Guido Alfani's work on the rich in preindustrial Europe, have reconnected contemporary concerns with deep historical roots, reminding us that inequality is neither new nor historically uniform. Research on demographic change, notably Oded Galor's analysis of the demographic transition, has exemplified how ambitious theory can be confronted with historical evidence and refined through it. Studies on health, education, and institutions, including work by Moehling and co-authors on medical education reforms, have demonstrated how micro-historical data can speak directly to enduring questions of access, regional inequality, and the unintended consequences of institutional design.

Finally, the growing dialogue between economic history and environmental history has underscored one of the field's most important lessons: That economies are embedded not only in institutions and cultures, but also in natural systems. Contributions on climate variability and grain prices in early modern Europe, such as those by Ljungqvist and collaborators, have shown how environmental forces have long shaped markets, welfare, and vulnerability, often in ways that resonate powerfully with present concerns.

Alongside these conceptual and methodological developments, the journal has also played a quieter, but essential, role in building the infrastructure of the field: the careful construction, reconstruction, and consolidation of historical datasets that become common reference points for subsequent research. Long-run price indices and comparable macro-historical series are not "supporting material"; they are, in a deep sense, part of the discipline's collective memory, what makes cumulation possible.

Taken together, these contributions do not define a school, nor do they point toward a single methodological path. What they share is something more modest and more demanding: a commitment to asking historically grounded questions with analytical discipline, and to using theory and method as instruments of understanding rather than as ends in themselves. In that sense, they exemplify what *Cliometrica* has sought to cultivate over the past 20 years, not a doctrine, but a way of doing economic history.

The first decade of *Cliometrica* was, in many ways, a period of consolidation. The pioneers of cliometrics had already shown that history could be quantified without losing its meaning. Our task, as an editorial community, was to extend that insight: to demonstrate that the cliometric spirit was not a moment but a method. We published works that built databases from forgotten archives, that re-estimated old conjectures with new techniques, that revisited canonical debates in light of better evidence. It was a period of testing: could the promise of the cliometric approach survive the passage of time? The answer, we discovered, was yes, provided that its practitioners remained humble before the evidence.

The second decade was one of expansion. Digital archives, large datasets, and computational advances opened new horizons. Scholars could now trace the contours of change over centuries, connect local realities to global movements, and move seamlessly from micro to macro. *Cliometrica* became a repository of that ambition. It published studies that measured, but also studies that interpreted, works on human capital, on the persistence of institutions, on the geography of opportunity and the transmission of inequality. Slowly, the journal came to embody a broader idea: that economic history is not a subsidiary field, but a laboratory for understanding society itself.

And yet, even as the field has grown more sophisticated, one lesson has become clearer: progress in knowledge is not always progress in certainty. The deeper we quantify, the more we recognize the complexity of what we study. Economic history resists final answers; it teaches patience. Each generation of cliometricians learns anew that our models are scaffolds, not monuments.

In that sense, the last 20 years have taught us humility, methodological humility, but also human humility. To measure the past is to be reminded of how provisional

all measurement is; to model history is to glimpse the limits of model-building itself. *Cliometrica* has thrived not because it offered definitive answers, but because it created space for honest questions.

There is something profoundly humane in that. A journal, like a civilization, endures by cultivating doubt as much as conviction. The true legacy of *Cliometrica* lies not in any single article or result, but in the cumulative ethos it has nurtured, an ethos of curiosity disciplined by evidence, of rigor tempered by respect.

If I were to summarize these 20 years, I would say they have been an education, not in econometrics or theory alone, but in the art of intellectual coexistence. *Cliometrica* has become a place where differences in approach, and the deliberate combination of *Verstehen* and *Erklären*, are not obstacles but opportunities. That, I believe, is what scholarship at its best should be: a conversation without end, conducted in good faith, and renewed by each generation that joins it.

4 Cliometrics as a way of thinking

Cliometrics is often described as a method, but I have always thought of it as a disposition, a way of thinking about the relationship between evidence and explanation, between number and meaning.

To practice cliometrics is to believe that history, if studied carefully, can yield patterns, not mechanical laws, but intelligible regularities that link cause and consequence. It is also to accept that such patterns are never self-evident. They must be inferred, tested, doubted, and reinterpreted. That dual posture, confidence in structure, humility before complexity, defines the cliometric mind.

In the popular imagination, quantification is often associated with certainty. But the true cliometrician knows that numbers are not ends in themselves; they are languages. They clarify our reasoning, discipline our imagination, and sometimes reveal what words alone cannot. Yet they also conceal as much as they reveal. The choice of variables, the availability of data, the construction of counterfactuals, each bears the mark of interpretation. Measurement, therefore, is not the negation of history's subjectivity; it is its disciplined expression.

One of the quiet triumphs of *Cliometrica* has been to sustain that delicate awareness. The best articles we have published are not those with the most sophisticated regressions or the largest datasets, but those in which quantification serves understanding rather than replacing it. They remind us that an equation, properly used, is a form of narrative, it tells a story about how the world might have worked, what could have been different, and why the past continues to echo in the present.

Over time, I have come to think of cliometrics less as a technical apparatus and more as a moral stance. It demands honesty about uncertainty, patience with complexity, and respect for the dead, the awareness that behind every data point lies a human life once lived. It also demands courage: the courage to ask big questions, to risk precision, to test intuition against evidence.

The cliometric imagination is both analytical and historical. It looks for general patterns, but it never forgets that every generalization rests on particular lives. It models causality, but it knows that causality in history is fragile, contingent,

conditional, and often reversible. It draws graphs and equations, but it sees in them echoes of the same human dramas that historians describe in prose. That tension, between abstraction and empathy, is what gives the field its peculiar beauty.

In recent years, as computational power and data availability have expanded, there has been a temptation to equate cliometrics with “big data history.” Yet the true cliometric spirit predates, and transcends, the digital age. It is not the size of the dataset that matters, but the quality of the question. The pioneers of the discipline did not seek more information; they sought more insight. In that sense, every cliometric project, however modern, is also a dialogue with the past, not just the historical past it studies, but the intellectual past that made such study possible.

What makes cliometrics enduring is its balance of opposites. It is at once empirical and imaginative, skeptical and hopeful, precise and humane. It affirms that understanding the past requires both measurement and meaning, and that to exclude either is to impoverish both.

Cliometrica, I believe, has embodied that balance. It has welcomed the modeler and the archivist, the econometrician and the essayist, not because we seek eclecticism for its own sake, but because truth in history is many-voiced. The task of the editor is not to impose uniformity, but to harmonize diversity, to make room for disagreement, to encourage curiosity, and to preserve the dignity of the scholarly exchange.

In the end, the cliometric way of thinking is an ethics of inquiry. It teaches that knowledge is cumulative but never complete; that the past resists closure; that the work of understanding is endless. To think cliometrically is, therefore, to live intellectually with humility, a humility born not of weakness, but of respect for the complexity of human experience.

5 Reflections on method and meaning

To speak of method in economic history is to speak of a double fidelity, fidelity to fact, and fidelity to meaning. The one without the other is barren. A regression without context is mere arithmetic; a narrative without discipline is mere eloquence. The work of *Cliometrica* has always been to remind us that explanation in history must honor both.

There is, in truth, no history without theory, whether economic or otherwise. Every act of historical reasoning carries within it an implicit framework, a set of assumptions about how societies evolve, how individuals decide, how institutions endure or decay. To reject theory is not to escape it, but merely to leave it unexamined.

From its inception, *Cliometrica* has insisted that theory is not the enemy of history, but its companion. Without theoretical perspective, the past becomes a collection of anecdotes; without empirical grounding, theory drifts into abstraction. The journal’s mission has always been to keep the two in conversation: to use theory not as a cage, but as a compass, guiding inquiry, not confining it.

Method is, in its deepest sense, a moral choice. Every technique carries within it an implicit philosophy of what counts as evidence, of what can be known and

what must be acknowledged as unknowable. To select a model is not simply to choose a tool; it is to declare a vision of causality, of agency, of structure and chance. For that reason, methodological reflection has never been peripheral to *Cliometrica*, it is its very core.

Over the years, the journal has published works that stretch across the methodological spectrum. Some articles use the formal precision of econometric identification, others rely on careful comparative reasoning. Some build counterfactuals that test the limits of plausibility, others reconstruct forgotten datasets from archives. Together they reveal that there is not one cliometric method, but many, united not by technique but by temperament.

What, then, is that temperament? It is the refusal to accept either naïve empiricism or ungrounded speculation. It is the awareness that causality in history is never pure, never isolated, never eternal. It is the conviction that measurement is an act of interpretation, that every number, however carefully constructed, bears the imprint of the scholar's judgment.

The cliometrician thus lives with paradox. We seek precision, knowing that history will always elude it. We model causality, knowing that human affairs are never linear. We test hypotheses, knowing that our instruments are fragile. And yet we persist, not out of illusion, but out of faith, faith that disciplined imagination can bring us closer to understanding.

Over time, the field has become more technically sophisticated, but sophistication is not the same as wisdom. The temptation to replace interpretation with technique is real. The task of *Cliometrica* has been to resist it, to insist that methods are servants, not masters; that the elegance of an equation must never outweigh the coherence of the historical argument it supports.

This insistence has made the journal something rare: a space where method and meaning coexist in dialogue, where equations stand alongside narratives, and where the reader is invited not merely to believe, but to think. In every good article, the analysis is transparent enough to be tested, but subtle enough to be debated. That balance, between the replicable and the interpretative, defines the spirit of scientific history.

It is perhaps this commitment to dialogue, rather than dogma, that has allowed *Cliometrica* to thrive. Our authors know that peer review is not a gate but a conversation, that rigor is not severity but respect, respect for the reader, for the data, for the discipline itself. In that sense, the journal has been a small republic of letters, bound together by trust: trust that arguments matter, that evidence matters, and that progress, though slow, is real.

At the end of the day, method in economic history is not about perfection but about proportion. It teaches us that every model is partial, every dataset incomplete, every interpretation provisional. What endures is not certainty, but the habit of honesty, the courage to revise, the grace to admit error, the willingness to listen.

If I have learned anything from editing *Cliometrica*, it is that intellectual rigor and human humility are not opposites. They are allies. They define, together, the nobility of our craft.

6 Moments of change, lessons of continuity

Every anniversary invites a double gaze, backward, toward the path already walked, and forward, toward the terrain still unseen. As I reflect on two decades of *Cliometrica*, I am struck by how much has changed, and how much has not.

Change is everywhere. The landscape of scholarship today would have been unrecognizable in 2006. The digital revolution has transformed our tools, our archives, our communication. Entire datasets have been born out of nothing, scanned, coded, shared, replicated. We now trace human mobility through centuries, reconstruct inequality from tax records, map innovation through patents, follow education through parish registers and censuses. The historian's craft, once defined by scarcity, now contends with abundance.

And yet, abundance is not understanding. Data, however vast, do not interpret itself. It requires the same qualities that have always distinguished great scholarship: curiosity, skepticism, and empathy. In this sense, the continuity of the discipline is as profound as its transformation. Beneath every new algorithm lies an old question: how do human beings adapt, persist, and change? What endures when institutions collapse? What fails when progress accelerates too quickly?

The 20 years of *Cliometrica* have coincided with an extraordinary flowering of global perspectives. Economic history is no longer the history of a few nations, but of a connected world. Comparative studies have expanded, regional approaches have deepened, and the voices contributing to the field have multiplied. Submissions now arrive from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. The conversation has become genuinely global, and with it, richer, more complex, more humane.

This cosmopolitan expansion is, I believe, one of the great achievements of our time. It reflects not only the democratization of knowledge, but the realization that economic history belongs to everyone. Each region brings its own archives, its own questions, its own sensibilities. The dialogue among them is not always easy, but it is always enlightening. *Cliometrica* has sought to nurture that pluralism, to be a bridge among perspectives, not a tribunal of orthodoxy.

Another profound change has been the integration of micro and macro history. Where once the two were seen as distinct, the former descriptive, the latter analytical, today they inform each other. The micro-data revolution has shown that aggregate trends are built from individual lives, while macro-models remind us that local behavior unfolds within global structures. This dialogue between scales has enriched the discipline, giving it both texture and coherence.

At the same time, *Cliometrica* has remained faithful to its founding principle: That history, however complex, can be studied systematically; and that systematic study, however technical, must remain historically informed. This balance between innovation and tradition, between novelty and continuity, is the secret of endurance.

If there is one lesson I draw from these years, it is that the progress of a field is rarely linear. Paradigms shift, methods evolve, fashions come and go. What persists, and what truly matters, is the spirit in which we work. In that sense, continuity is not inertia; it is integrity. The same quiet conviction that guided *Cliometrica* at its birth continues to guide it now: the belief that rigorous scholarship, conducted in good

faith, can deepen our collective understanding of how economies, and the people within them, change through time.

There are moments, of course, when one doubts, when the world's noise threatens to drown out the patient rhythm of scholarship. Yet those are the moments when continuity proves its worth. The act of research, of editing, of reading, these are small gestures of persistence, but taken together, they constitute a form of resilience.

It is in that sense that *Cliometrica* has endured. It is not the loudest journal, nor the largest. It has never sought to chase fashion or metrics. Its strength lies in something quieter, in its refusal to confuse attention with impact, visibility with value. It endures because it serves a community that still believes in the slow, demanding work of understanding.

And so, as we mark this anniversary, I find myself thinking not of change or continuity as opposites, but as partners in a long conversation. Change gives us energy; continuity gives us meaning. Between them lies the rhythm of scholarly life, a rhythm that *Cliometrica* has, in its modest way, helped to sustain.

7 On the human side of scholarship

Every journal, no matter how rigorous its standards or sophisticated its methods, is ultimately a human enterprise. Behind each submission lies not only data and theory, but aspiration, the scholar's hope to be understood, to contribute, to belong to a community of inquiry.

Over the past 20 years, *Cliometrica* has become precisely that: a community. Not a club, but a network of minds united by curiosity and respect. The names on our masthead and in our pages may change, but the ethos remains the same. What binds us together is not conformity, but conversation.

I have always believed that the tone of a journal reflects the character of its contributors. The tone of *Cliometrica* has been serious but generous. Our authors argue with passion, but never with disdain. Our reviewers critique with precision, but rarely with hostility. Our readers engage critically, but with the expectation of fairness. This culture of respect is not accidental; it is cultivated. It grows from the recognition that intellectual progress depends not only on insight, but on civility.

In an age when scholarly communication is increasingly accelerated, even transactional, I take pride in the slower rhythm that *Cliometrica* continues to uphold. The process of submission, review, revision, and publication is not a mere formality. It is a form of apprenticeship, a quiet pedagogy in which each generation teaches the next how to think carefully, write clearly, and disagree honorably.

That rhythm may seem archaic to some, but it is, in truth, a form of preservation. It protects the dignity of scholarship against the impatience of the age. It reminds us that understanding takes time, and that time is a gift worth defending.

As I reflect on two decades of correspondence with authors, reviewers, and readers, I am reminded that the most meaningful exchanges are rarely about results. They are about curiosity, perseverance, and mutual encouragement. There is a deep humanity in the act of reviewing a colleague's work, of suggesting an alternative

interpretation, of sharing in the joy of discovery. It is a form of collective craftsmanship, where knowledge is built not by competition, but by dialogue.

That is why *Cliometrica* has always resisted the cult of metrics. Impact factors and citations may measure reach, but they cannot measure spirit. The true impact of a journal lies in the conversations it sustains, the trust it earns, the standards it upholds. The worth of a field cannot be captured by algorithms; it is reflected in the integrity with which its members pursue truth.

The community that has grown around *Cliometrica* embodies that integrity. Early-career scholars bring energy and innovation; senior colleagues bring perspective and generosity. Together they form a continuum of mentorship that keeps the discipline alive. I have often been struck by the generosity with which established scholars review the work of their younger peers, not as gatekeepers, but as stewards of a shared tradition.

In the end, that is perhaps the greatest achievement of *Cliometrica*: not any single article, not any single discovery, but the patient cultivation of a collective ethos, an ethos that values thought over speed, substance over style, and cooperation over vanity.

For me personally, the privilege of editing this journal has been less about managing manuscripts than about witnessing the quiet beauty of scholarly life: the moment when a reviewer's careful comment turns a good paper into a great one; the moment when a young author, uncertain at first, finds confidence in constructive dialogue; the moment when an idea, once obscure, begins to resonate across disciplines and continents.

Scholarship, like history itself, is built from such moments. They are small, but they endure.

8 Horizons for the future

Looking ahead, I see not an end, but a beginning, not a culmination, but a renewal. The twentieth anniversary of *Cliometrica* is not a point of arrival; it is a vantage point from which to see further.

The world around us is changing faster than at any time in living memory. New technologies have altered the way we research, communicate, and even think. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, digital archives, these are transforming our craft. Yet the essential questions remain timeless: how do societies grow and decline? How do institutions endure or collapse? How do inequality and innovation, cooperation and conflict, shape the long arc of human experience?

In this shifting landscape, *Cliometrica* has a vital role to play. Our task is not to chase novelty for its own sake, but to preserve depth amid speed, and clarity amid abundance. We must remain the journal where ideas mature, where method meets reflection, and where history speaks not in whispers of nostalgia but in lessons for the present.

The challenges ahead are many. Data will grow larger, but so too must our interpretive imagination. Models will grow more intricate, but so too must our capacity for doubt. The danger of the digital age is not ignorance, but superficial certainty, the

illusion that with enough computation, we will no longer need judgment. Against that temptation, the cliometric tradition stands as a quiet reminder: measurement is powerful, but meaning remains indispensable.

In the coming years, I hope *Cliometrica* will continue to expand its global reach, bringing in new voices, new archives, new questions. Economic history must speak in many languages and from many vantage points. The lessons of the past belong to no single continent. The journal can serve as a meeting ground, not only between disciplines, but between generations and cultures.

Equally important is our commitment to ethical scholarship. As we embrace new tools, we must also preserve the values that define our craft: transparency, replicability, respect for sources, and humility before complexity. The historian's duty is not only to interpret the past, but to preserve its integrity against the distortions of ideology or haste.

I am often asked what I see as the next frontier for cliometric research. My answer is simple: the frontier is not technological, but human. It lies in our willingness to ask better questions, to collaborate across boundaries, and to remain open to surprise. The best discoveries in this field have always come from scholars who saw what others overlooked, who read between the lines of dusty archives, who questioned accepted wisdom, who dared to connect data with imagination.

To nurture such curiosity is the journal's enduring mission. If *Cliometrica* continues to succeed, it will not be because of algorithms or metrics, but because of minds that refuse complacency.

As we prepare new editions, new issues, and the forthcoming fourth edition of the *Handbook of Cliometrics*, we do so with the same spirit that animated the founding: a belief that the past can still speak, that the dialogue between economics and history can still surprise us, and that the quiet conviction that began this journey still holds true.

9 Coda—to continue, not to conclude

Every story of endurance ends not with a conclusion, but with a continuation. So too with *Cliometrica*. Twenty years after its birth, the journal is less an institution than a living conversation, a current of thought sustained by many voices, shaped by time, and guided by conviction.

When I look back to those early days, the first proposals, the cautious optimism, the sense of stepping into the unknown, I am struck by how fragile the project seemed. There was no guarantee that it would succeed, no certainty that a dialogue between economists and historians could find a stable rhythm. What sustained it, I think, was faith: a faith not in outcomes, but in intentions. The belief that intellectual honesty, pursued steadily, creates its own future.

The years that followed confirmed that belief. The journal found its authors, its readers, its reviewers, and through them, its voice. Not a loud voice, but a steady one; not a doctrinal voice, but a reflective one. The voice of a community that understands that truth is not declared but discovered, not imposed but earned.

I have often thought of *Cliometrica* as a bridge, but perhaps it is more accurately a harbor, a place where different traditions, languages, and temperaments can anchor for a while before setting sail again. The journal does not seek to contain the field, but to give it coherence; not to prescribe direction, but to offer perspective. In its pages, the historian and the economist meet not as strangers but as companions, united by curiosity and humility before the evidence of the past.

What I find most moving, after 20 years, is not any particular article or statistic, but the continuity of spirit. Scholars who published with us as young researchers now serve as mentors, reviewers, and editors. Students who once discovered cliometrics in our pages now teach it to others. Ideas that began as tentative explorations have become frameworks for a new generation. The journal, in this sense, is not merely a repository of knowledge, it is a chain of gratitude.

To be part of that chain is an honor. To have witnessed its growth is a privilege. But the deeper satisfaction lies in knowing that the journal will continue, not because of any individual, but because of the collective strength of its community. *Cliometrica* belongs to all who believe that the careful study of the past can enlighten the present and ennoble the future.

As I write these lines, I am mindful of the world beyond our pages, a world where certainty is cheap, where speed often replaces reflection, and where data are abundant but understanding scarce. In such a world, the quiet persistence of scholarship is an act of resistance. To study patiently, to question honestly, to write clearly, these are not small things. They are gestures of hope.

For ultimately, *Cliometrica* is founded not on methods or metrics, but on hope, the hope that knowledge, pursued in good faith, can bring light to the complexities of human existence. The hope that dialogue between disciplines can widen, not narrow, our understanding. The hope that by examining how societies have evolved, we might learn to navigate the challenges of our own time with a little more wisdom, and a little more grace.

If there is a lesson in these 20 years, it is that scholarship, like history itself, advances not through noise but through perseverance. Quiet conviction endures longer than certainty. Humility, paradoxically, outlasts pride. What matters most is not the speed of progress, but the integrity of the pursuit.

And so, as *Cliometrica* enters its third decade, I offer no grand conclusion, only an invitation. To those who measure, model, and reconstruct: continue to ask why and how. To those who narrate and interpret: continue to look beyond the surface of events. To all who care about the long arc of human societies: continue to bridge, to question, to listen. The future of the field depends not on unanimity, but on the generosity of its conversations.

For my part, I remain grateful, to every contributor, every reader, every colleague who has walked part of this road with us. The journal we built together is more than paper and code; it is a community of trust, a testament to what collaboration and respect can achieve.

The journey continues. There will be new questions, new data, new generations of scholars who will see further than we did. And that is as it should be.

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