

Evolving Trends in Modern History Writing: A Comprehensive Overview

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Abstract

History is the study of human civilization across various cultures, geographical locations, and historical eras. It covers various occurrences, movements, conflicts, discoveries, and relationships that have contributed to the development of the modern world. The practice of writing history has undergone significant transformations over the years, shaped by evolving methodologies, technological advancements, and changing perspectives. Modern history writing is a dynamic field that encompasses a wide range of approaches, from traditional narrative histories to the incorporation of interdisciplinary methods. This article explores the key trends in modern history writing, highlighting the diverse methodologies employed by historians and the impact of technological innovations on the field focusing on the need for accurate documentation and transmission of history. The paper uses qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, conversations with historians, academicians, university professors, and library research.

Keywords: History writing, global change, challenges of history & modern methodology.

Introduction

Since its inception in the fifth century BC in Greece, historiography has changed, with historians now emphasizing both philosophy and fact. A fresh viewpoint was presented in the 20th century by the Italian historian Cronje, who emphasized the analysis of historical events in light of contemporary issues (Mishra, 2060 B.S.). Herodotus, the Greek philosopher, connected history to inquiry and discovery, but in the twenty-first century, his concept gained universal acceptance. Scholars such as Machiavelli tried to link politics with history, and European events like the Renaissance and Reformation had an impact on traditional historiography (Mishra, 2060 B.S.).

Historiography underwent a radical transformation in the eighteenth century as interpretation gave way to critique. Idealist philosophy was used by historians like as Hegel, Newer, Ranke, and Marx to alter conventional methods; class theory and materialist philosophy provided a fresh perspective. Due to Max Weber's connection between sociology and history, history in Germany eventually became sociology. With the advent of scientific historiography in the 20th century, notable historians such as Toynbee, J. H. Robinson, Collingwood, and Spengler pioneered the field. With the advent of these three main viewpoints- materialist, idealist, and naturalist—the art of historiography was born (Ghimire, 2022).

The topic of writing history has been widely introduced by Tirtha Mishra, while the chronology of Nepali history has been tackled by Dil Bahadur Kshetry. In a similar vein, although Rajesh Gautam, Arjun Bhandari, and other academics have done groundbreaking work on the issue, they haven't highlighted the criticisms levelled at the historical creation process or the limitations of Nepali historiography. Bharat Jangam did not address the comprehensive approach to Nepali history, despite his critique of how historical events and facts are interpreted in the country. While he has raised a few contentious concerns, the scientific topic posed by his study was not addressed. The research question raised in this work is not addressed by the academics and other researchers.

This paper focuses on specific topics that have not been addressed by previous studies. The study attempts to address the following questions:

- To evaluate the trends of history writing practice.
- To discuss the challenges of writing history.

Method and Methodology

The basis for this study is a qualitative analysis. This work employs an explanatory, descriptive and analytical approach. Primary sources of information are used in this paper. An informal interview was done using an open-ended questionnaire to get firsthand knowledge about the subject. The entire topic described above has been arranged for more broad conversations. Conversations with academics, historians, and university professors have been planned. The primary strategy used to get the data was conversation. There were official and informal discussions with the interested parties. Although certain historical references are included when appropriate, the majority of the material in this study comes from the current situation. Generally speaking, the library research approach is applied to secondary material. Proper use has been made of pertinent books, journal articles, websites, and related publications. For this study, all of the data that was gathered has been categorized, condensed, and examined, and some reflection has been done. This paper aims to highlight the modern trends in history writing practice and the challenges faced by historians. This article evaluates the historical analysis and doesn't cover social, political, legal, economic, and other facets of history writing practice.

Discussion

Traditional Narrative Histories

Historically, the most common form of history writing has been the narrative approach, where historians craft a chronological account of events. This traditional method provides a coherent and linear storyline, allowing readers to follow the unfolding of historical events in chronological order. This form of history writing often relies heavily on primary sources, such as documents, letters, and eyewitness accounts, to reconstruct the past. One prominent example of traditional narrative history is "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" by Edward Gibbon, published in the late 18th century. Gibbon's work exemplifies the use of a linear narrative structure to convey the complex history of the Roman Empire (Bhandari, 2022).

Social History and Cultural Perspectives

In the 20th century, historians began to shift their focus from traditional political and military histories to explore the lives of ordinary people. Social history emerged as a distinct subfield, examining the impact of societal structures, cultural norms, and everyday life on historical developments. This approach seeks to understand the experiences of marginalized groups, providing a more inclusive and nuanced portrayal of the past. Natalie Zemon Davis's "The Return of Martin Guerre" is a seminal work in social history. By delving into the life of an ordinary 16th-century peasant, Davis reconstructs the social and cultural landscape of the time, offering a rich portrayal of everyday life (Ojha, 2023).

Interdisciplinary Approaches

Modern history writing increasingly embraces interdisciplinary methodologies, drawing on insights from fields such as anthropology, sociology, and literary studies. This interdisciplinary approach allows historians to explore a broader range of sources and perspectives, enriching the understanding of historical events. For instance, the "microhistory" trend, popularized by Carlo Ginzburg's "The Cheese and the Worms," involves the in-depth examination of a small, specific case or individual to reveal larger societal patterns. This approach combines historical research with anthropological methods, providing a more intimate and textured understanding of the past (Ojha, 2023).

Revisionist Histories and Challenging Narratives

As historical perspectives evolve, historians engage in the reinterpretation of established narratives. Revisionist histories challenge traditional viewpoints, offering alternative interpretations of historical events and figures. This trend reflects a growing awareness of biases in historical accounts and a commitment to uncovering hidden stories. Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States" is a notable example of a revisionist history that presents the American narrative from the perspective of marginalized groups. By centring the experiences of Indigenous peoples, slaves, and working-class individuals, Zinn's work challenges the dominant narrative of U.S. history (Chhetri, 2022).

Digital History and Technological Innovations

The digital age has revolutionized the practice of history writing, offering historians new tools for research, analysis, and dissemination. Digital archives and databases have made primary sources more accessible, allowing researchers to sift through vast amounts of information efficiently. Additionally, digital platforms facilitate the sharing of research findings with a global audience (Ghimire, 2022).

Projects like the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and Europeana provide online access to a wealth of historical documents, photographs, and artefacts, democratizing the research process. Historians can now collaborate across borders and engage with a diverse range of sources without physical constraints (Ojha, 2023).

Global and Transnational Histories

The recognition of interconnected global histories has led to the rise of transnational history as a prominent approach. Instead of focusing on individual nations in isolation, transnational histories examine the flow of ideas, people, and goods across borders. This perspective challenges the notion of fixed national identities and highlights the interdependence of global events (Chhetri, 2022).

Noteworthy works in this genre include C.A. Bayly's "The Birth of the Modern World," which explores the interconnectedness of global developments during the 19th century. By adopting a transnational lens, Bayly offers a comprehensive understanding of how historical processes transcended national boundaries (Karki, 2022).

Public History and Civic Engagement

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on public history, which seeks to make historical research accessible and engaging for a broader audience. Historians are increasingly involved in public outreach, contributing to documentaries, museum exhibits, and online platforms to disseminate historical knowledge beyond academic circles (Karki, 2022).

Ken Burns' documentary series, such as "The Civil War" and "The Vietnam War," exemplify the power of historical storytelling for a wide audience. These productions combine archival footage, interviews, and narration to present a compelling and accessible narrative of complex historical events (Chhetri, 2022).

Conclusion

Modern history writing is a dynamic and diverse field that reflects the evolving nature of historical inquiry. From traditional narrative histories to interdisciplinary approaches, historians employ a range of methodologies to uncover the complexities of the past. Technological innovations and a broader conceptualization of historical narratives have expanded the scope of historical research, making it more inclusive and accessible. As we move forward, the practice of history writing will continue to evolve, embracing new perspectives, challenging established narratives, and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of our shared human history.

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