

Some Useful Sources for Economic History Research

While this guide was written with a specific focus on American economic history, many of the sources are useful for economic history in general. Those resources that are not typically have an equivalent for whatever country or region you are researching.

- **EH.net – The Economic History Services website**

URL: <http://eh.net>

EH.net is a economic history website with several useful resources for beginning your research. The encyclopedia section of the site offers very readable articles on a variety of economic history topics written by experts in the field. These articles contain a list of the key journal articles and books written on the particular topic that provide an excellent starting point for your research. The website also has a useful section title “How Much is That?” This section provides a variety of calculators to compare prices over time. These calculators allow you to convert nominal prices into real prices over a much longer range of years than other standard price indices. One final useful feature of EH.net is its links to various databases containing historical economic data.

- **Historical Statistics of the United States**

URL: <http://hsus.cambridge.org/HSUSWeb/HSUSEntryServlet>

This is a very thorough collection of data on the United States from colonial times to the present. Statistics are grouped into intuitive categories (population, work and welfare, economic sectors, etc.) and cover a wide range of topics. Data can be presented in table or graph form on the site and can be downloaded for manipulation in Excel or a statistical software package. In addition to the statistics, the site provides essays on various aspects of the history of the US economy.

- **Google Books**

URL: <http://books.google.com>

Google Books is one of the more recent Google products and it is becoming more and more useful and Google scans more books. It is a search engine for books, allowing you to search not just the title and authors but the text itself. What makes Google Books particularly useful for the economic historian is that it contains a large number of academic press books and

many historical documents. For the historical documents, full text versions are often available. These historical documents include books, government reports, congressional records, textbooks, pamphlets, and a variety of other interesting sources of unique information. Limiting searches by publication date offers a simple way to find interesting primary sources.

- **Google Scholar**

URL: <http://scholar.google.com>

Google Scholar is one of the easiest ways to search for academic articles. Beyond being a very thorough index of journal articles, Google Scholar has a couple of additional features that make it particularly useful. It links to multiple versions of articles, making it easy to track down a pdf version or confirm that you are getting the most recent revision. It provides citations for all of the articles in bibtex and other formats. Also, it provides links to all of the papers that cite a particular article which is very useful for making certain that you are keeping up with the current state of the literature on a topic.

- **Integrated Public Use Microdata Series**

URL: <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>

The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) provides historical census data. It has an easy-to-use interface for searching for available variables by census year and then creating a dataset containing the variables and years you choose. The data can be packaged for several different statistical software programs. The IPUMS cite also links to other data projects including the NHGIS project which covers historical geographical data for the United States, IPUMS-International covering international data, and IPUMS-CPS which offers perhaps the best interface for downloading samples of Current Population Survey data.

- **The United States Census Bureau**

URL: <http://www.census.gov>

The official census website offers a wide range of reports summarizing census data and offers some basic data tools for creating your own descriptive statistics. Reports and data tools cover both recent and historical census data. The main page offers links for finding information by topic (income, poverty, etc.) but given the large number of reports and tables available, it

is often easiest to use the sites search feature if you already know the type of data you are looking for. The census site also provides useful geographical data. It provides a variety of maps of census data and offers free shapefiles for use with a Geographic Information System (GIS) and whatever data you may have containing location information.

- **The Bureau of Labor Statistics**

URL: <http://www.bls.gov>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics is the best place to go for detailed unemployment and inflation data. The site has the most recently released unemployment and price index data and a variety of published reports covering US employment and prices. The databases and tables section of the site offers a variety of ways to view and download BLS data. It is a great way to get time series for any employment or inflation variables you are interested in.

- **The National Archives - Access to Archival Databases (AAD)**

URL: <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/>

The National Archives offer electronic access to several archival databases. You can search the databases or browse them by subject or time span. The databases cover a wide range of record types and topics. Databases include collective bargaining agreements, military records, photographs, banking records and a wide range of other topics. These are not the traditional types of data found on the census website or on IPUMS but they do offer a wealth of unique, rich data sources. The ability to download complete datasets is somewhat limited but you can typically order complete records on DVD from the National Archives for a small charge.