

QUANTITATIVE HISTORICAL MATERIALS ON THE WEB: A WORK IN PROGRESS  
Part I

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Quantitative sources have are available for both Western and Non-Western societies long before the modern statistical age in Western European History, which is usually considered to begin sometime in the period of the Renaissance. The Chinese government was counting population before the Christian era and the entire quipu mnemonic record keeping of the Incas in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was based on careful quantification of population and resources. In Western European society late medieval population counts and land (or cadastral) surveys were relatively common in Italy and by the time of the Council of Trent in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the Roman Catholic Church systematically began to collect enormous amounts of data on its members from birth to death at the parish level. The empires created by Europe generated large sets of quantitative information on trade, taxation and population and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century the modern census era had begun. But empires created by all other societies were equally as quantitative. The Ottoman empire, for example, was a major producer of statistical information. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century almost all colonies and independent republics in the world were generating quantitative data on their populations, economies and governments. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these materials were finally being generated for the entire world by international agencies. In 1950 the world had its first complete census which was sponsored by the United Nations, and many countries in the world only began their modern census taking with this mid-20th century census. Finally, in the past 10 years much of these more modern quantitative materials have finally become available on the Internet.

There is little question that the best historical material currently available on the Web is of a quantitative nature. Most of this material is produced by national and international governmental organizations for use by governments, private organizations and the public. The quality of this material is often of the highest standards and can be considered to be extremely reliable. In contrast, most of the qualitative historical materials currently available on the Web are of uneven quality, given that a large proportion of them were produced by individuals with little control over quality.

But there are limits to the current availability of materials. Most Web sites provide data for only the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the current century. Very few materials exist for earlier periods. There are exceptions to this (see below) and the amount of available material is growing. But for the moment the best sources for quantitative history involve work in the post 1950 period, except in terms of demographic history, were the materials often go back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the Scandinavian countries and are available on the Web.

To use these materials, one must be familiar with some tools of quantitative history, the most important of which is a spreadsheet program. In the earlier period of personal computing the dominant program for this purpose was LOTUS 123, and currently the standard program is

EXCEL. Most statistical producing agencies will make their data available in various formats - in the older sites it will be in LOTUS, and the more recent sites will use EXCEL. But they will often also make data available in a generic format called CSV (which means ASCII data with a comma separated format), or as an HTML Web page, both of which can be read into any word editing document and/or any spreadsheet. It is essential when obtaining research materials on the on the Web that one must have some language ability. While most foreign government Web sites offer the ability to search in English, the data itself most often will be in the original language of the country. There is, however, the possibility of relying on English alone when dealing with comparative historical data. Thus one could study world trade, or the evolution of population growth rates, or the spread of diseases across many nations by using data provided by the United Nations, the World Bank and or other international data producing agencies which have such data prepared in English. But if one wishes to study the French economy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then ability to read French is essential. The same would occur for data provided by national agencies for virtually any country in the world whose primary language is not English.

In the following section I have prepared a preliminary list of materials for searching for quantitative historical materials in social and economic history. In this first part I am concentrating on non-USA materials. In subsequent essays I will examine in particular, Brazil and the United States and their sources of quantitative materials.

To begin searching the Web for materials, a good place to start is with these general introductory links:

#### I: General Statistical Sources:

##### 1. For all UN centers producing statistical reports:

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/sd\\_intstat.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/sd_intstat.htm)

##### 2. For all National Statistical Offices and Census Bureaus on line in the world:

[http://www.census.gov/main/www/stat\\_int.html](http://www.census.gov/main/www/stat_int.html)

[http://home.earthlink.net/~gkheilig/Links/links\\_2f.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~gkheilig/Links/links_2f.htm)

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/sd\\_natstat.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/sd_natstat.htm)

<http://www1.oecd.org/std/others1.htm>

##### 3. National Publications and Statistical Yearbooks by all governments:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/refs3.htm>

#### 4. History of World Agriculture from ca. 1950 to the present

<http://apps.fao.org/cgi-bin/nph-db.pl?subset=agriculture>

[http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/complete\\_files/default.asp](http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/complete_files/default.asp)

#### 5. Links to National Health Related Websites

[http://www3.who.int/whosis/national\\_sites/national\\_sites.cfm?path=whosis,national\\_sites](http://www3.who.int/whosis/national_sites/national_sites.cfm?path=whosis,national_sites)

#### 6. Demographic History

An excellent detailed source for 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century age, sex, birth, death and life expectancy tables for many European and American countries will be found at The Human Mortality Database which is maintained by the Department of Demography of the University of California, Berkeley and the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research. Registration is required, but access is free and the material is easy to use. The site is

<http://www.mortality.org/>

There are several sources, especially UN and US Bureau of the Census sites for obtaining some world census materials. A particularly well organized site, though in French, is done by INED, the French Demography Statistical Bureau, which can generate large numbers of tables on vital statistics of the major developed and developing countries of the world from 1950 to the present. An English version of this site is promised in the near future. See

<http://www.ined.fr/bdd/demogr/menu2.php?lan=F>

The University of Texas Population Research Center also maintains an excellent site linking to all the major demographic producing agencies, public and private

<http://www.prc.utexas.edu/cis/links.html#europe>

Finally a general site for all things demographic is that found at:

<http://demography.anu.edu.au/VirtualLibrary/>

Several of these sites will get students into the large genealogical databases which are available on the Web, especially from the Scandinavian countries and which include nominal listings of censuses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These contain detailed listings by name of individual and location from numerous historical censuses. All these listings are in the original languages. For a good beginning place to start searching for such genealogical listings from all types of documents, see the links page of the Family Search website maintained by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

[http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/WebSites/frameset\\_websites.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/WebSites/frameset_websites.asp)

To give just one example of this material, the country of Denmark has been particularly active in making available its census materials. For an introduction to the census categories in English, see:

<http://www.rhd.uit.no/nhdc/michael02.html>

The search of the Norwegian censuses of 1865, 1875 and 1900 can be done by parish and by name - but is essential to realize that this is an individual search and to produce large datasets for analysis one would have to search by common names, or some other criteria which will produce more than one listing. For this census material see

[http://draug.rhd.isv.uit.no/rhd/folketellinger\\_engelsk\\_britisk.html](http://draug.rhd.isv.uit.no/rhd/folketellinger_engelsk_britisk.html)

#### 7. International Economic Statistics by Country and Region from the World Bank:

<http://www.worldbank.org/data/>

#### 8. . US sources on Other Countries:

a: State Department Foreign Country Guides & Background Reports:

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

b: Bureau of the Census Information on World Population

<http://landview.census.gov/ipc/www/world.html>

<http://landview.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html>

c. USDA (Department of Agriculture) Foreign Agricultural Service.

Information is given by crop and by country on world agricultural production from the late 1940s to the present day.

[http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/complete\\_files/default.asp](http://www.fas.usda.gov/psd/complete_files/default.asp)

9 . World Political & Voting Statistics:

For quantitative analysis of voter turnout, voting, and list of political leaders and parties, the following websites offer a useful introduction:

<http://electionresources.org/>

<http://psephos.adam-carr.net/>

<http://www.idea.int/vt/index.cfm>

<http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/>

<http://ssdc.ucsd.edu/lij/>

<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/index.html>

II Other Historical Collections of Statistics:

**Latin American Colonial Historical Statistics.** Put together by Professor Richard L. Garner this collection of very important colonial price, taxation and mining data from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century will be found at:

<http://www.laceh.com/>

**ICPSR (INTER-UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIALRESEARCH)** University of Michigan.

This is open only to universities which subscribe to its service, but it does have many useful collections of national and foreign historical statistics. The center can be found at:

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>

**IPUMS\_International** (University of Minnesota)

This cite provides public use samples of non-US censuses (that is a 1% to 5% sample of individuals from a given census ) from a wide variety of countries in a format ready to process in SPSS or SAS formats. An introduction to the International collection of samples of individuals from world countries is found at:

<http://www.ipums.umn.edu/international/index.shtml>

The listing of currently available samples from foreign countries is found at [http://www.ipums.umn.edu/international/microdata\\_inventory.shtml](http://www.ipums.umn.edu/international/microdata_inventory.shtml)

**Asian Historical Statistics Project - Japan - Hitotsubashi University**

<http://www.ier.hit-u.ac.jp/COE/English/index.html>

which has some interesting historical statistics in English covering "AHistorical National Accounts of the Peoples's Republic of China 1952-1995" and another dealing with changing GDP as well as Estimate of Long-Term National Accounts Statistics for Taiwan for the period 1912-1990.

**Nineteenth Century Brazilian Provincial Governor Reports**

The annual governors reports from the Brazilian provinces in the 19<sup>th</sup> century contained major appendices of statistics on all types of economic and social questions. These have been indexed (in English) and are on-line (in their

Portuguese original versions). They can be found at the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) website - at

<http://www.crl.uchicago.edu/info/brazil/pindex.htm>

### **Nederlands Economisch Historisch Archief**

This site contains good links to the major European archival sources for historical research.

<http://www.neha.nl/links/statistics.html>

### **Great Britain Historical Database Online**

The University of Essex in England maintains this site for which registration is required. There appear to be restrictions on access even after registration, but this site contains the best available material on the Webb on social, economic and demographic conditions in England from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is found at:

<http://hds.essex.ac.uk/gbh.asp>

### **Historical Statistics of Canada.**

The Canadian government has made available the Historical Statistics of Canada. The complete set available for download will be found at

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-516-XIE/sectiona/toc.htm>

### **The Atlantic Slave Trade**

A good collection of this data can be found in the following website:

<http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/slavedata/>

### **Japanese Post WWII Economic and Trade Statistics:**

To obtain the necessary data start at the national statistical bureau of Japan English <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/index.htm> which has a large number of sources. Then select the Japan Statistical Yearbook and go to the chapter on foreign trade <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/1431-12.htm> There you will find a series of tables on Japanese trade history from 1975-2001. An overview of trade will also be found in a Statistical Handbook 2002 <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/c03cont.htm> which also provides an overview of the economy. Finally to get the relative comparative statistics one should look at the World Trade Organization site for world trade, in which Japan's role is clearly delineated from 1948 to the present one can go to the following website - see [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/its2002\\_e/its02\\_longterm\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2002_e/its02_longterm_e.htm)

A great deal of information can also be obtain from the US Bureau of the Census, especially those dealing with foreign trade, see: <http://www.ita.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/usfth/tabcon.html>