

F D L P A C A D E M Y

PRICES AND WAGES BY DECADE: an overview

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Head, Government Information & Data Archives
University of Missouri Library
February 9, 2023*



University of Missouri

libraryguides.missouri.edu/pricesandwages

The purpose of this website

We want to answer this question...





Payroll line at a meat packing house, 1908

What was the standard of living?

How much money did they have? What could it buy?



**Sharecroppers,
1939**



TABLE 12.—Median wage and salary incomes

Year	Male		Female	
	White	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite
All persons with wage or salary income:				
1939.....	\$1, 112	\$460	\$676	\$246
1947.....	2, 357	1, 279	1, 269	432
1957.....	4, 396	2, 436	2, 240	1, 019
1958.....	4, 569	2, 652	2, 364	1, 055
1959.....	4, 902	2, 844	2, 422	1, 289
1960.....	5, 137	3, 075	2, 537	1, 276

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

*Achievements viewed in the context of difficult family finances
become especially meaningful*



**How much more or less
affordable have things become?**



**POWER
RETURN
CARRIAGE**

**ELECTRIC
REPEAT
KEYS**

**WIDE
12 INCH
CARRIAGE**

**SAVE \$10 on Smith Corona
Automatic Electric 12**
was 169.88 **159.88**

Save from Spring Catalog—repeat offer! 12-in. carriage returns, advances to next line automatically. 88 character keyboard—power repeat keys, underscoring, type continuous lines of —, —, xxx and space. Key set power tabulator. Visible Quick-Set margins. Page-Gauge® tells distance to bottom of page. Touch selector; impression control. Case incl. Script type uses 1-color ribbon only. Five Year Guarantee, see listing page. 110-120V, A.C. Act. wt. 26 lbs. Blue. Mailable. Shpg. wt. 42 lbs.

A55 J 4552—PICA type.....	159.88
A55 J 4554—ELITE type.....	159.88
A55 J 4555—SCRIPT type.....	159.88

Source: 1972 Spiegel Christmas catalog

POWER RETURN CARRIAGE

ELECTRIC REPEAT KEYS

WIDE 12 INCH CARRIAGE

SAVE \$10 on Smith Corona Automatic Electric 12
was 169.88 **159.88**

Save from Spring Catalog—advances to next line with power repeat keys under xxx and space. Key se margins. Page-Gauge® tell selector; impression contr ribbon only. Five Year G.A.C. Act. wt. 26 lbs. Blue. A55 J 4552—PICA type. A55 J 4554—ELITE type. A55 J 4555—SCRIPT type.

Tuition at a public university in 1972-1973 cost \$482, or about the same as three typewriters.

$$\$160 \times 3 = \$480$$

TABLE A2.--WEIGHTED AVERAGE UNDERGRADUATE CHARGES OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, ACADEMIC YEAR 1972-73

REGION AND STATE OR OTHER AREA	TUITION AND REQUIRED FEES			ROOM
	PUBLIC CONTROL		PRIVATE CONTROL	PUBLIC
	IN-STATE (2)	OUT-OF-STATE (3)	(4)	(5)
AGGREGATE U.S., TOTAL	482	1,292	1,898	477
THE STATES AND D.C.	485	1,295	1,913	476
NEW ENGLAND	471	1,642	2,327	544
CONNECTICUT	466	1,478	2,233	464
MAINE	481	1,546	2,260	531
MASSACHUSETTS	461	821	2,246	627

Basis and structure of the website

How we organize 22,000 links...



Prices and Wages by Decade: 1970-1979

Links to government documents and primary sources listing retail prices for products and services, as well as wages for common occupations.

Introduction

1600s-1700s ▾

1800s ▾

1900s ▾

2000s ▾

Wages in the United States, 1970-1979

Jump down to WAGES ...

by [RACE and SEX](#)

by [STATE](#)

by [OCCUPATION](#)

in [FOREIGN COUNTRIES](#)

WAGES - GENERAL SOURCES (all occupations and worker types)

- [Average annual wages and salaries across all industries - 1960-1974](#)
Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1976 edition.
- [Minimum wage set by federal law, 1938-2009](#)
Source: US Dept of Labor. Get [downloadable data](#) from FRED.
- [Minimum wage set by state laws, 1968-2016](#)
Source: U.S. Department of Labor.
- [Student jobs - Pay, 1977](#)
Shows what college students might earn for jobs in food service, child care, or as lifeguard, tutor, gardener, and more. Source: Kiplinger Magazine's *Changing Times*, May 1977.

Prices in the United States, 1970-1979

Food

Clothing

Household items

College

Entertainment

Communication

Gasoline & energy

Miscellaneous

More...

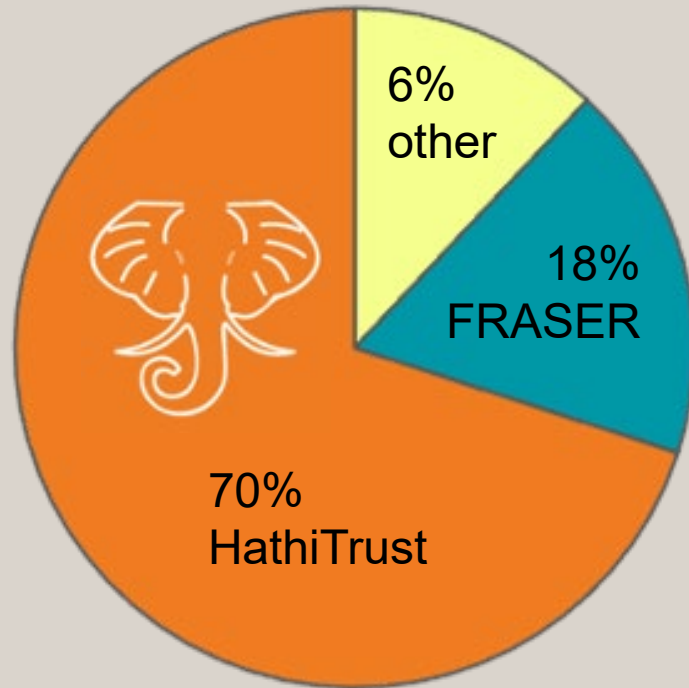
PRICES for FOOD and ALCOHOL, 1970s

- [Average retail prices of selected foods, 1965-1978](#)
Table shows average retail prices for various fruits and vegetables, corn flakes, canned peas, frozen broccoli, chicken soup, baby food, eggs, margarine, grape jelly and more.
- [Retail food prices by city, 1963-1978](#)
Shows detailed food prices with breakouts for 20 American cities.
- [Food price averages - Annual data, 1890-1970](#)
One-page table shows 80 years of average retail prices for bread, milk, eggs and other common food items. See p. 193 of this [source](#) for [explanation](#).
- [Beer, whiskey and wine prices - 1971](#)
Shows U.S. average retail price of a six pack of beer, whiskey, bourbon and wine. [Specifications](#) on each drink is provided. Scroll forward to see prices in 56 major U.S. cities.



Govt agent collects data for the Consumer Price Index in 1971

Our links point to freely available government documents and other primary sources found in:



- HathiTrust digital library
- FRASER (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis)
- Other:
 - Google Books
 - Internet Archive
 - Chronicling America
 - Live government websites
 - More



Some favorite government sources we use for page-level links:

- Bulletins from federal and state agencies:
 - Depts of Labor
 - Depts of Agriculture
 - Depts of Education
- Congressional Serial Set
- Census publications
- Statistical Abstracts



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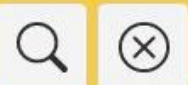
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TITLE:

Salaries in College and School Libraries, 1936-37

« PREVIOUS | NEXT »



   164 of 230   Automatic Zoom ▾



980

Monthly Labor Review—April 1938

In considering the increased spread in the distribution of earnings, it must be emphasized that there is a larger percentage at the relatively higher income levels. This is especially marked in the case of males in the North.



SALARIES IN COLLEGE AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES, 1936-37

IN COLLEGE and university libraries in 1936-37 the salaries of librarians ranged from \$1,615 to \$10,000; of professional assistants from \$600 to \$5,250; and of subprofessional assistants from \$480 to \$1,800. In small colleges, for the year covered, salaries of librarians ranged from \$900 to \$5,400; of professional assistants from \$660 to \$3,400; and of subprofessional assistants from \$420 to \$1,500. These and other salaries in college and school libraries are reported in the

Salaries in College and School Libraries, 1936-37

DATE: April 1938

PART OF:

- Monthly Labor Review : April 1938, Vol. 46, No. 4

AUTHOR:

- United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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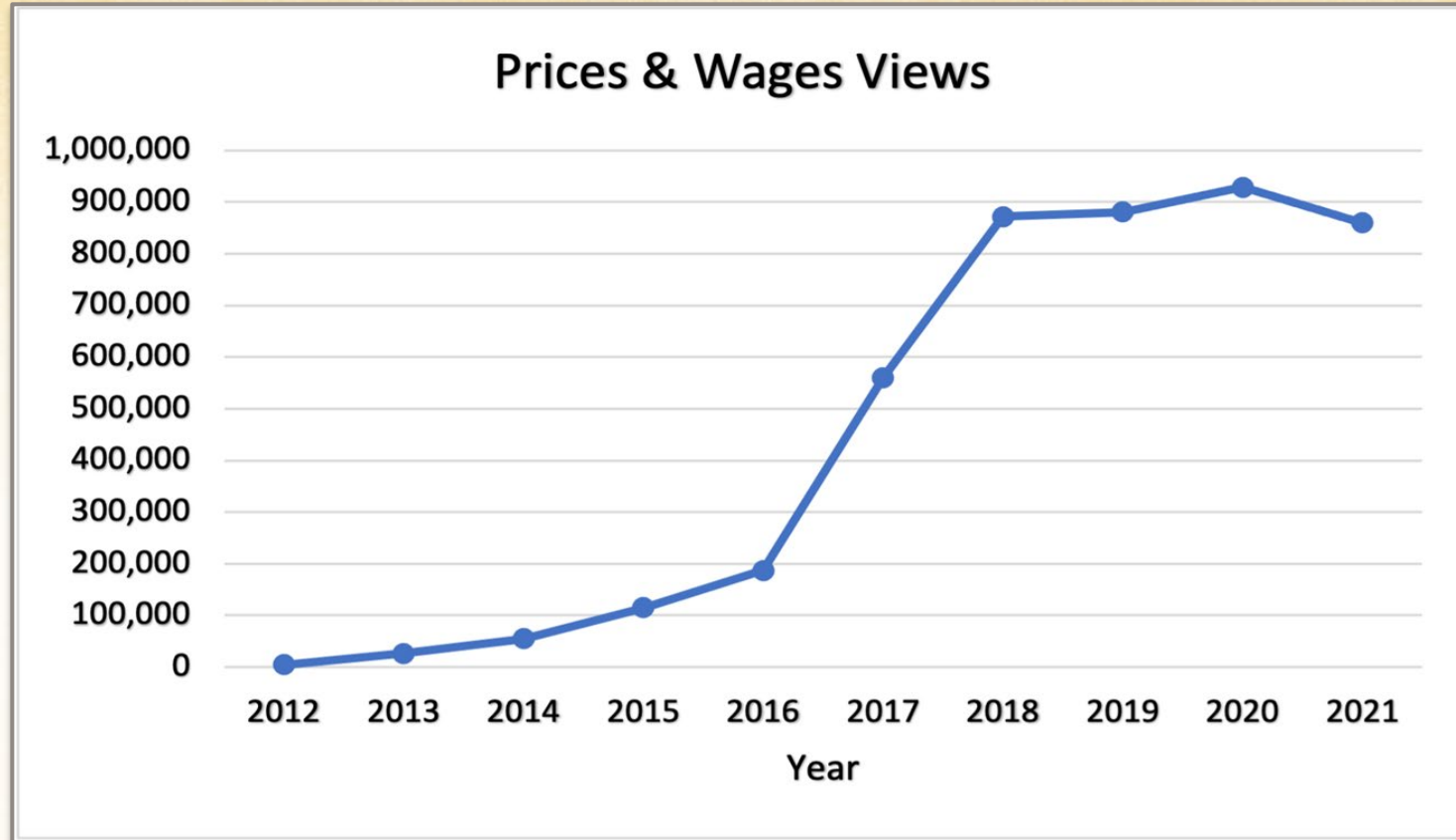
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Site usage

PRICES AND WAGES BY DECADE



Data source: LibGuides



45 guides, 79849 views, 1 months

Name	↕	2023-01
Prices and Wages by Decade		77133
Data Sets for Quantitative Research		982
Government Documents as Primary Sources		651
Missouri Historical Documents Browser		299
Government Documents by Type		150
Missouri Government		112
Census Data		99
Aerial Photographs		90
Columbia and Boone County Government Information		58
Government Information on Refugees		48

**Gov Docs
LibGuides:
Pageview
stats,
Jan 2023**

Page views on MU Library website: 2020-2022

Library web page	Page views	Share of views
Library home	1.2 million	14%
Databases gateway	0.4 million	5%
Prices and wages by decade	2.5 million	32%
All other pages combined	3.7 million	49%
TOTAL	7.8 million	100%

Data source: Google Analytics



*Government Information draws
about one third of all page views
on our library website.*

(Does not include catalog or database searches)



University of Missouri

What we know about our users

PRICES AND WAGES BY DECADE

85% of traffic to our site is referred by Google



list of prices and profession pay in 1872 england

price of silk per yard in 1800's

cost of living 1919 nyc

1897 hay prices

gas prices 1997

what was considered good pay in 1870

mcdonald wages in 1998

colonial america 1780 room and board

+list of old doctors in schenectady county in the 1970's

a pint of honey's price in 1870

what was the cost of living in 1919

what was the price or hotel rates for denver hotels in 1860's

what was average yearly income in us in 1760?

how much did people pay in the 1940s

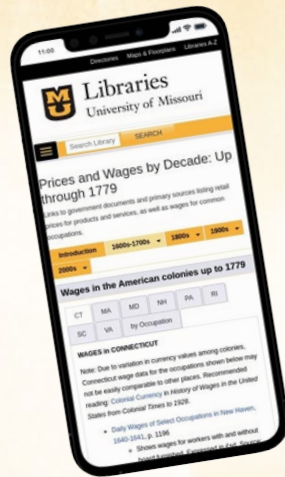
pay rate for coal and iron police 1920

in the 1920s, what was the price of mustard in stores?

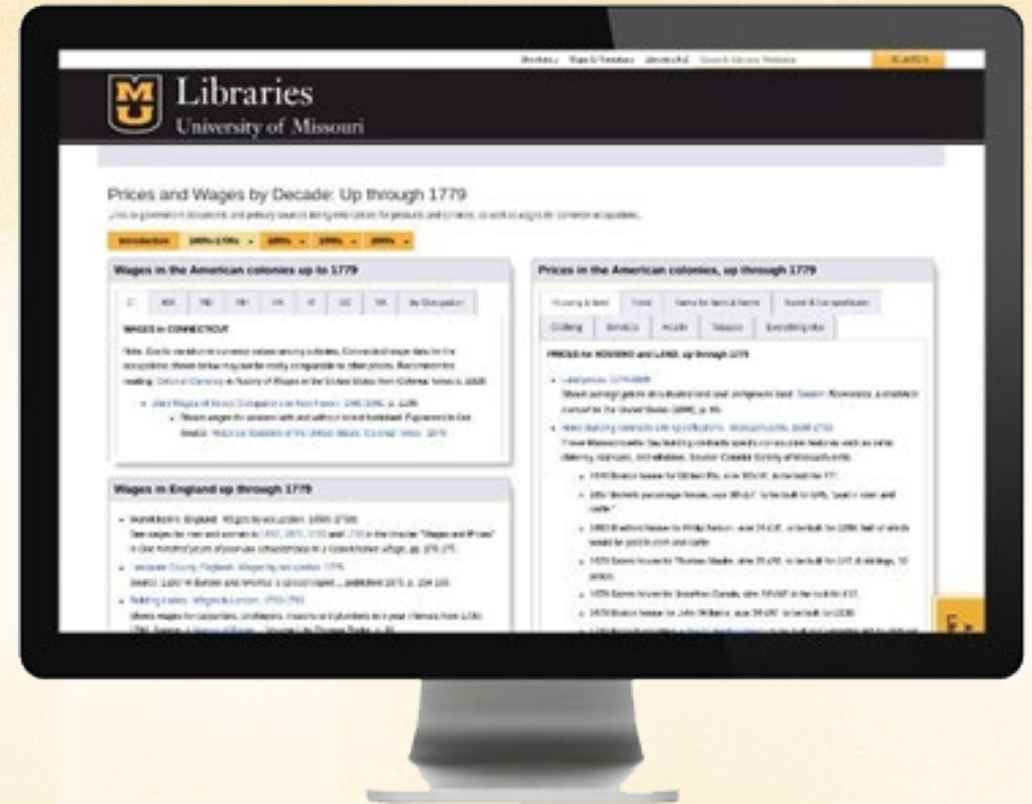
the cost of a pork ham in 1865



Most are mobile users

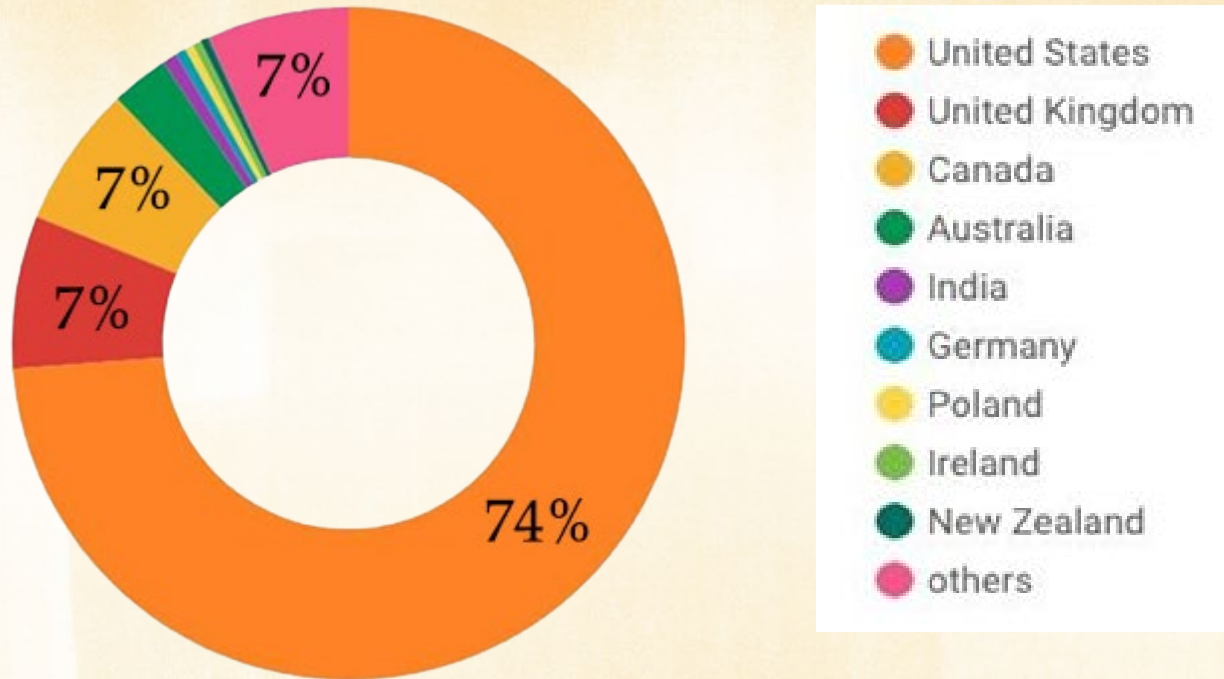


Mobile users: 51%
Trending up



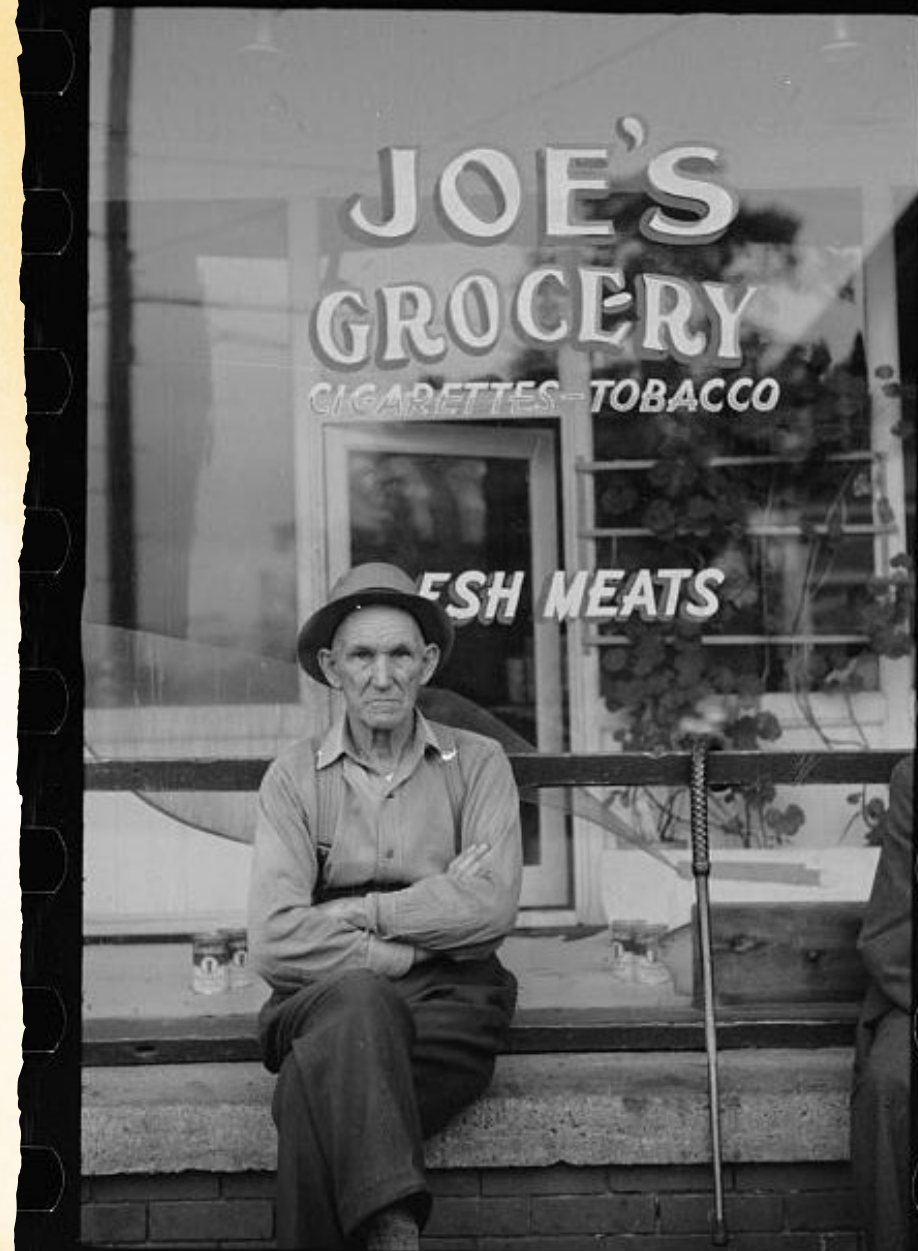
Desktop users: 46%
Trending down

Home countries of website visitors



PRICES AND WAGES BY DECADE

**Strategies for finding
historic data in
government documents**



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7554
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BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
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1790 – 1972

STATISTICAL
ABSTRACT of the
United States

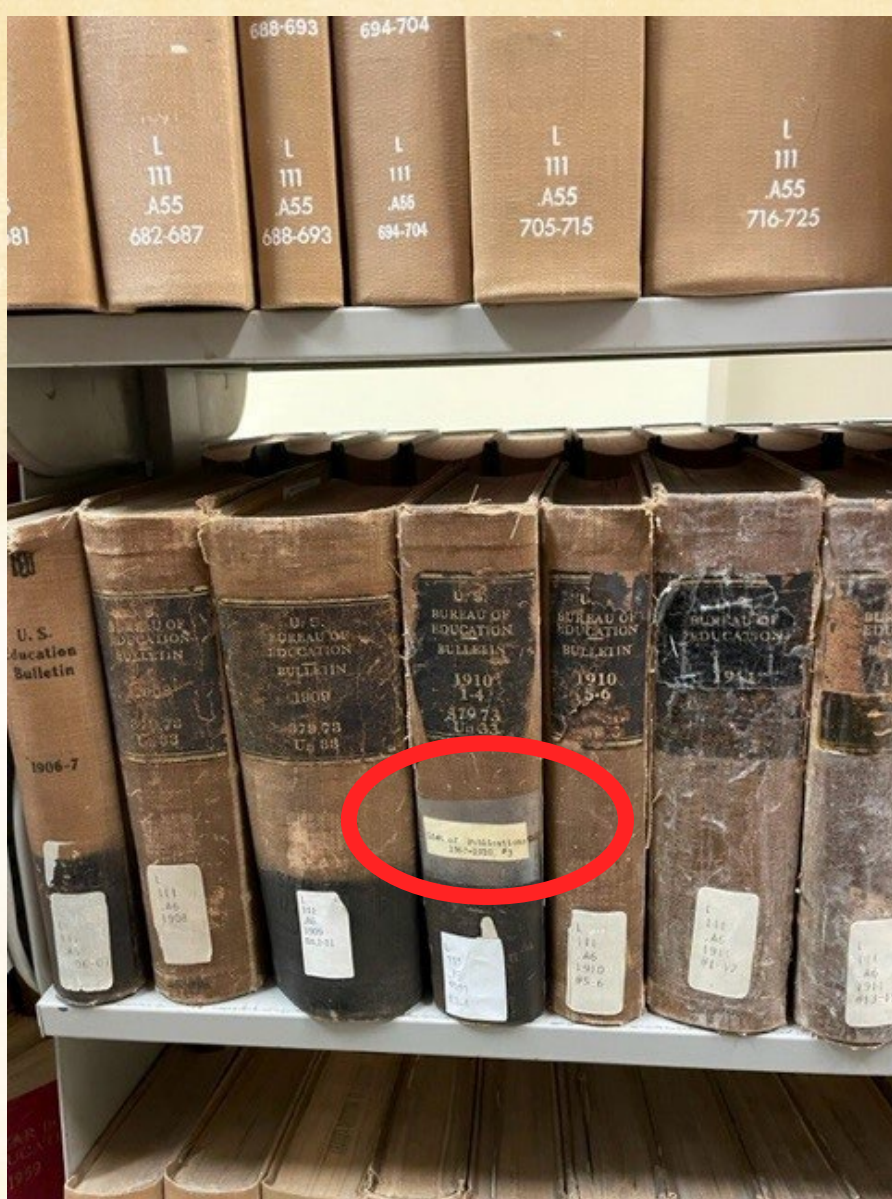
1967

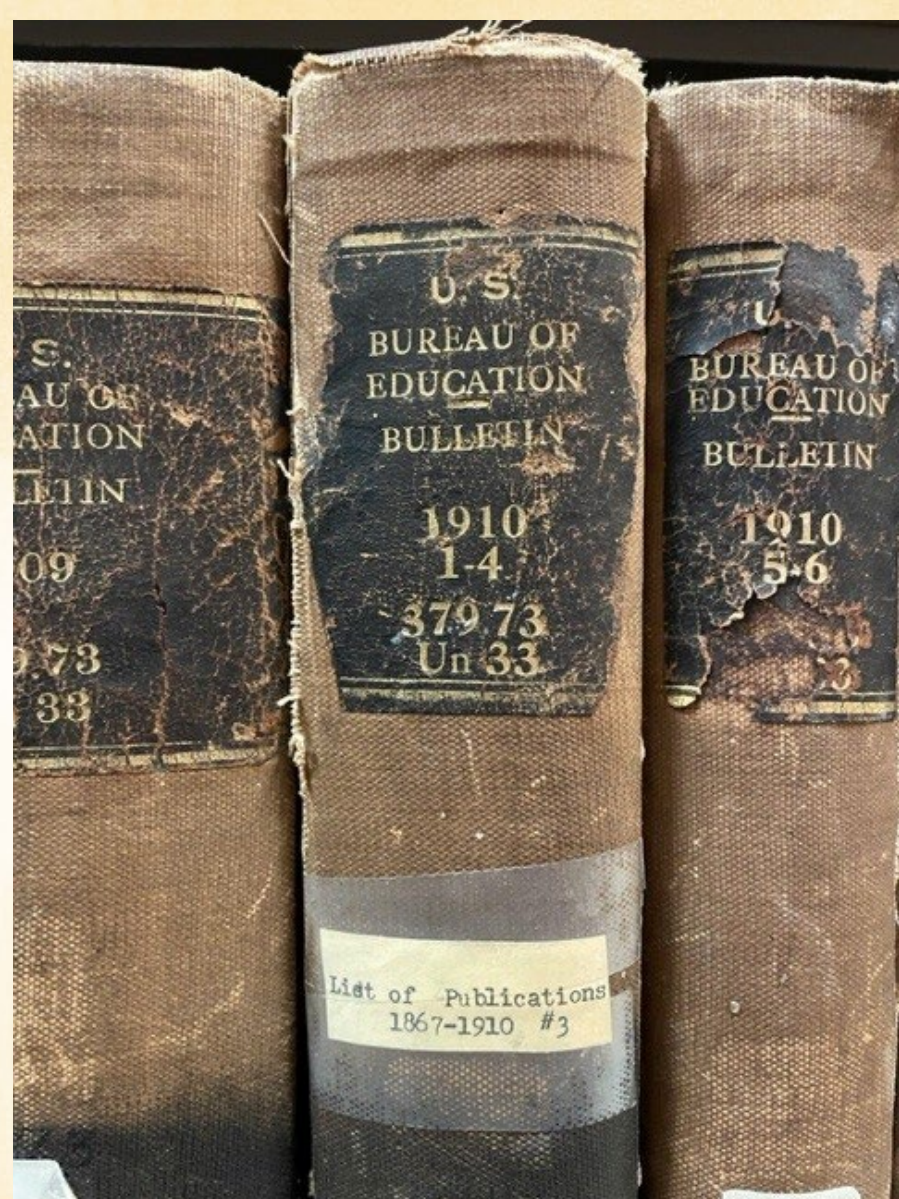
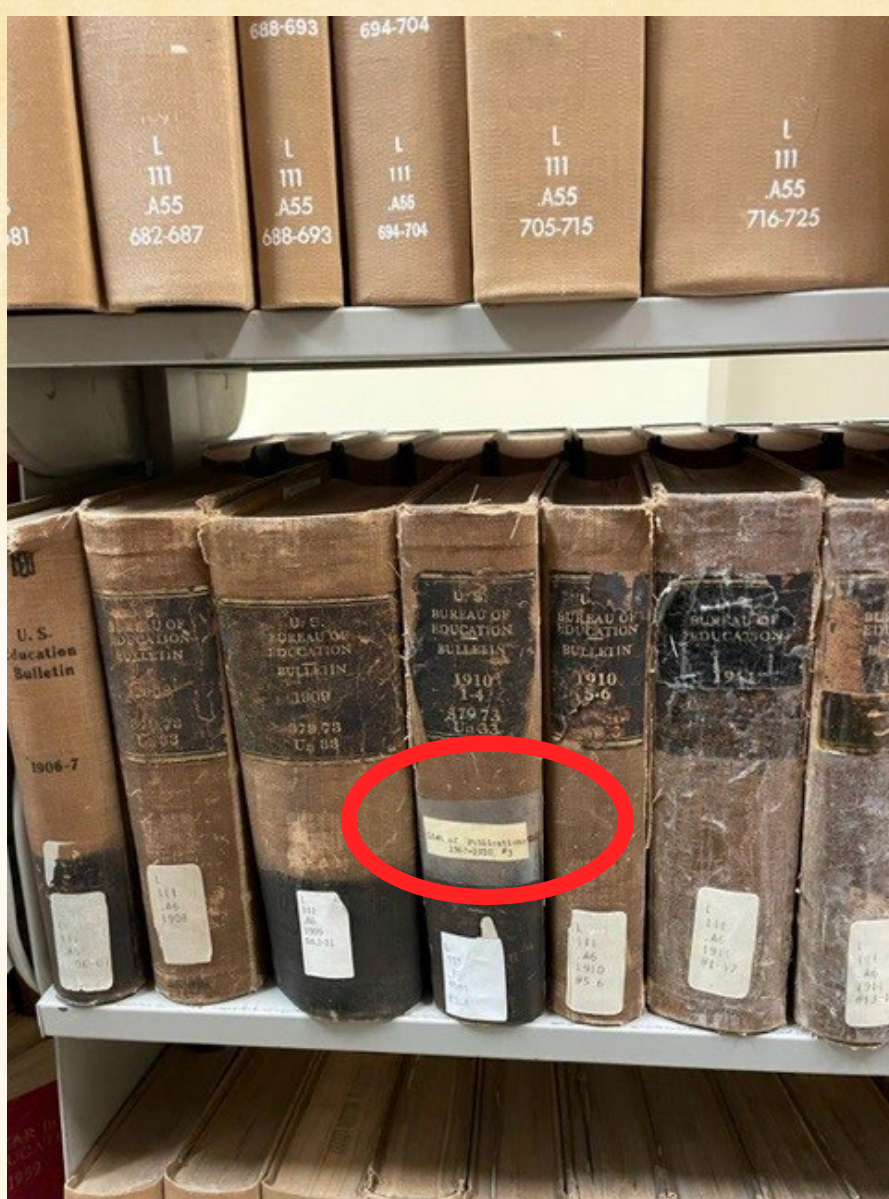




INDEX TO PUBLICATIONS
OF THE
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1901-1925

By
MARY A. BRADLEY, Assistant Editor of Indexes
Assisted by
MABEL G. HUNT, In Charge of Indexing Section
Division of Publications, Office of Information





Docs librarians often want to start with agencies.

POP QUIZ!

Let's test your knowledge of agencies...



Match the agency to the data, 1950s-1970s

PRICE DATA

- Average college tuition
- Average monthly rent
- Price of admission to movie theaters
- Price of gasoline
- Cost to get a tooth filling

AGENCY

- Dept of Agriculture
- Dept of Energy
- Dept of Labor / BLS
- Census Bureau
- Dept of Health, Education & Welfare



No. 442. AVERAGE COSTS OF SPECIFIED MEDICAL SERVICES, FOR SELECTED CITIES: 1958

[As of most recent month available in last quarter. Based on data collected primarily for calculation in Consumer Price Index; see text, p. 329. Cost differences among cities may be due to variation in quality of service priced]

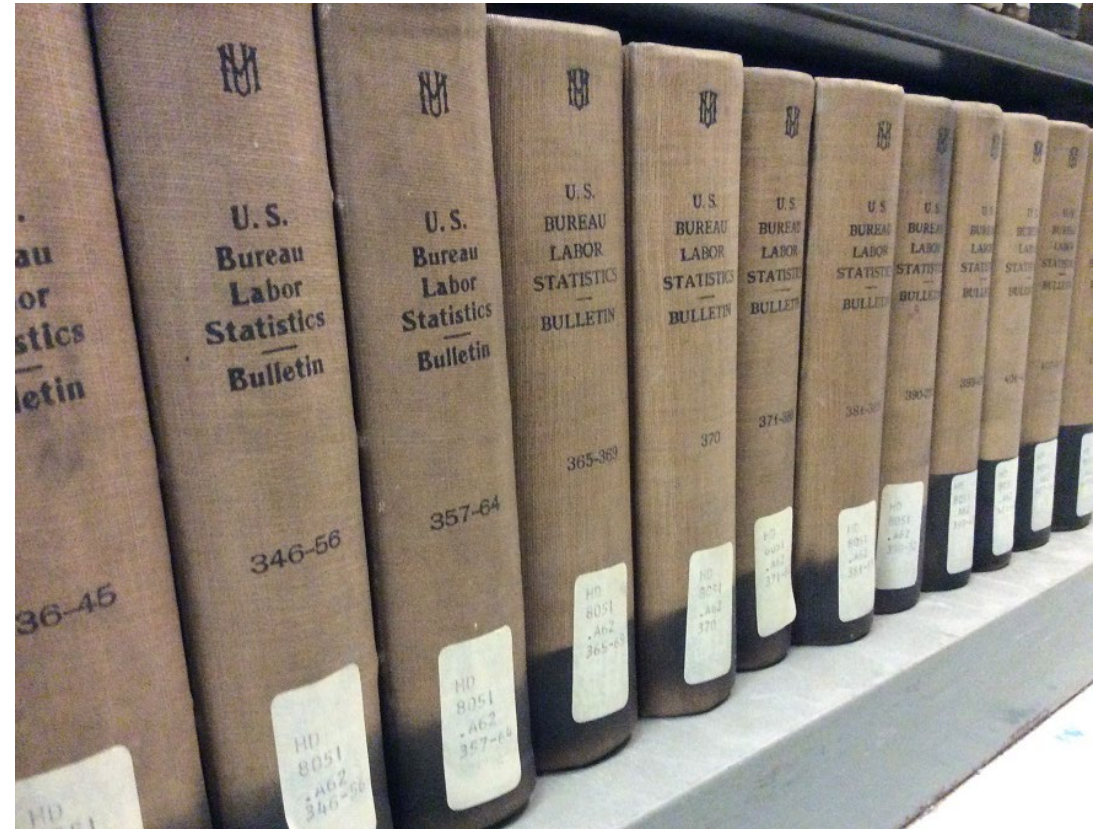
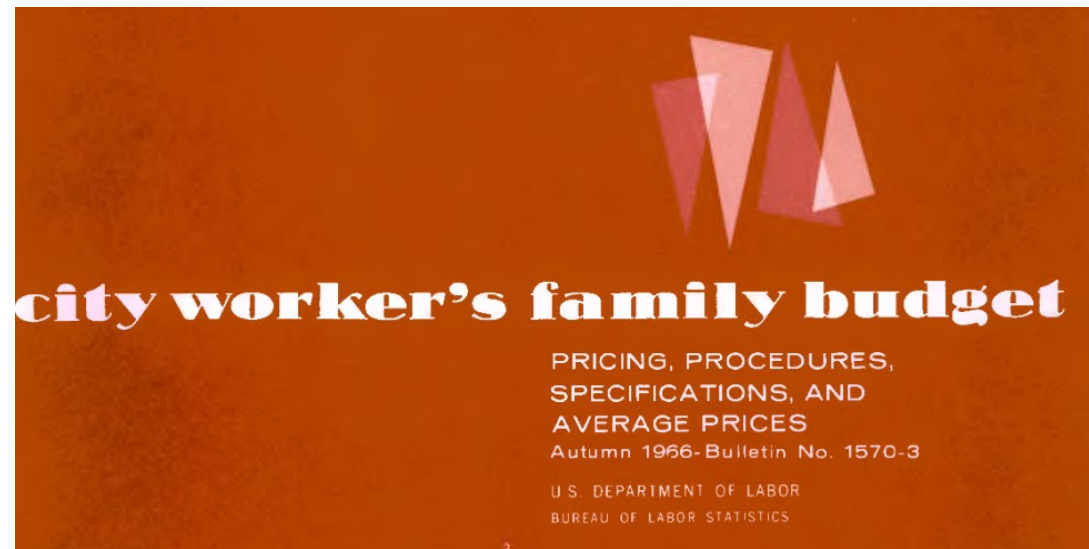
CITY	HOSPITAL COSTS PER DAY			GENERAL PRACTITIONER		Obstetrical case ¹	Appendectomy ¹	Tonsillectomy ¹	Tooth filling ²
	Men's pay ward	Semi-private room	Private room	Office visit	House visit				
Atlanta.....	\$11.25	\$13.50	\$16.50	\$4.17	\$7.75	\$155.83	\$150.00	\$79.17	\$4.33
Baltimore.....	14.25	15.62	18.75	3.25	4.83	170.00	129.17	56.67	4.17
Boston.....	22.25	25.38	28.38	3.43	5.14	138.17	170.83	65.83	4.83
Chicago.....	17.70	19.75	22.00	4.33	7.33	135.00	162.50	83.33	5.00
Cincinnati.....	11.75	15.62	18.88	3.33	5.67	104.67	150.00	67.50	3.67
Cleveland.....	³ 24.20	³ 27.42	³ 32.67	4.17	6.33	152.50	137.50	74.17	5.33
Detroit.....	18.31	20.31	24.31	4.00	6.17	112.00	154.17	71.67	5.58
Houston.....	10.50	13.00	16.50	3.17	7.14	150.83	175.00	69.29	5.00
Kansas City.....	11.75	14.25	16.75	3.00	6.17	121.00	143.75	59.17	4.42
Los Angeles.....	21.50	23.60	26.90	5.33	8.67	175.00	233.33	100.00	8.00
Minneapolis.....	19.25	20.95	23.25	3.17	6.00	114.17	164.29	52.00	4.33
New York.....	18.00	20.60	25.80	3.83	4.83	174.50	187.50	89.17	5.33
Philadelphia.....	13.32	18.00	21.00	3.25	4.17	148.33	154.17	64.17	5.83
Pittsburgh.....	13.00	15.60	20.70	4.00	6.75	143.00	154.17	66.67	5.00
Portland, Oreg.....	18.19	20.44	22.12	4.00	7.00	136.67	175.00	79.17	5.58
San Francisco.....	23.12	25.75	29.25	5.00	7.83	163.57	208.33	95.83	8.00
Scranton.....	11.00	13.17	16.67	3.00	4.83	78.50	166.67	51.67	4.00
Seattle.....	21.50	24.12	27.00	4.50	7.00	159.17	191.67	73.33	6.20
St. Louis.....	13.25	14.60	17.40	3.57	5.43	116.67	175.00	75.83	5.00
Washington, D. C.....	16.88	18.55	22.38	4.33	5.50	149.17	142.86	69.17	6.33

¹ Excluding anesthetic and hospital care. ² Amalgam, one surface.
³ Includes electroencephalogram, basal metabolism examination, transfusion service, and other specified tests.
 Source: Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 3. Average Retail Prices of Selected Commodities and Services for U.S. and 5 Benchmark ^{1/} Metropolitan Areas Used in City Worker's Family Budget, Autumn 1966—Continued

Item	Specification Number ^{2/}	U. S. Average ^{3/}	New York	Washington	Dallas	Chicago	San Francisco
<u>Reading and Recreation:</u>		Other Family Costs					
Newspaper, monthly subscription	53-810/811 (CPI)	\$ 2.71	\$ <u>5</u> /3.11	\$ 2.92	\$ 2.55	\$ 2.98	\$ 3.07
Radio	53-033/033A (CPI), 53-034.1 (CPI)	23.53	21.39	20.74	22.70	24.44	24.66
Television set (color) . .	53-001 (CPI), 53-018 (CPI)	441.37	455.49	444.77	436.21	441.36	440.87
Phonograph	53-082 (FB)	107.29	91.85	104.88	117.87	103.29	129.28
TV repair (including parts)	53-565 (FB)	60.02	55.72	65.27	59.01	58.27	67.34
Phonograph record	53-177 (FB-G)	4.04	3.74	4.11	3.77	3.99	4.17
Motion picture admission—adult	53-612 (CPI)	1.32	1.64	1.44	1.25	1.34	1.88
Motion picture admission—children	53-613 (CPI)	.50	.66	.59	.50	.55	.50





Round 2

Let's go back a hundred years...

Match the agency to the data, 1850s-1880s

PRICE DATA

- Price of land
- Price of opium
- Teacher wages
- Female domestic servant wages
- Price of men's heavy boots

AGENCY

- Dept of Interior
- Census Bureau
- Dept of State
- Dept of Agriculture
- Congressional Committee on Finance



**Tenth
Census,
1880**

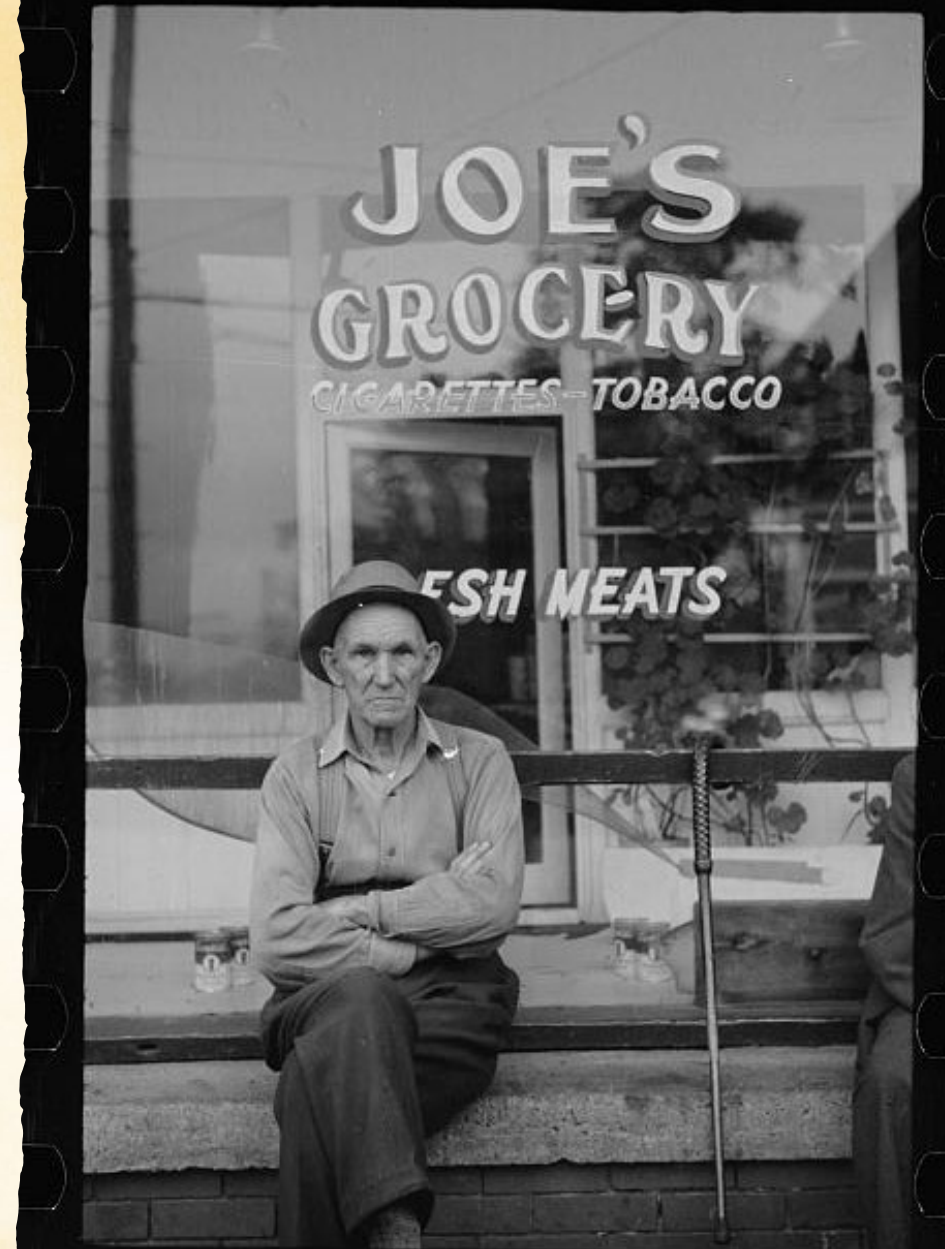
REPORT ON THE AVERAGE RETAIL PRICES
OF
NECESSARIES OF LIFE
IN
THE UNITED STATES,



PRICES AND WAGES BY DECADE

**You may not *really* need to know
all of these historic agencies.**

*Here's how I often
approach the most
challenging reference
questions...*



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Wages and prices are major factors in:

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Slide 4: [Line waiting for pay in an Indianapolis meat packing house](#). Aug. 1908. Wit. E.N. Clopper. Location: Indianapolis. Source: Library of Congress.

Slide 5: [Evicted sharecroppers along Highway 60](#), New Madrid County, Missouri. Source: Library of Congress

Slide 8, 9: [Smith Corona automatic typewriter](#), Spiegel catalog, 1972, p. 154.

Slide 21: Ellis Library, Columbia. Source: University of Missouri.

Slides 13 and 35: BLS Bulletin shelves. Photo credit: M. Concannon

Slides 26 and 39: [Man in front of grocery store](#), Elkins, West Virginia, 1939. Source: Library of Congress.

Slides 28-30: USDA and Dept of Education documents. Photo credit: C. Hutinett

Slide 42: [Interior of bank](#), Creedmore, North Carolina, 1940. Source: Library of Congress.

