

H-Net Reviews

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Historical Statistics of the United States: Bicentennial Edition. Cambridge University Press.

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Availability of these data on CD-ROM is a great asset to those who use data from the printed version of *Historical Statistics of the United States from Colonial Times to 1970*. Electronic access makes it easier to use these data than when one must transfer data by hand from the book to a computer before performing statistical analyses. Previous users of the printed version of *Historical Statistics* will soon realize that a few changes have been made, mostly to enhance the ease with which the data can be accessed in an electronic text. For example, all data have been placed in column form for easier access for spreadsheet users. Footnotes are numbered sequentially for an entire table, no matter how many pages the table may occupy. When new columns or rows have been added to accommodate situations where data appeared in combinations of columns or rows, footnotes were added in square brackets, [], to indicate the specific change. Errors noted on the Errata sheet dated February 1977 for the printed text have been corrected in the electronic version. However, the few errors that were subsequently discovered in the printed version have not been corrected. A few tables and series do not appear in the electronic version because these were in copyright and permission could not be obtained to include them. The DynaText program that allows one to read the text and data from the CD-ROM is easy to install and use, once you have read the manual to familiarize yourself with the workings of the program. As someone who uses a PC (desktop or laptop computer) primarily for word processing, I found the instructions easy to follow and clearly written in terms that someone who is not a "techy" would understand. Having loaded the DynaText program into my laptop, I began searching data series by first examining the Notes sub-category for Prices and then the series sub-categories. Text of the notes to the series was easy to access and to read on screen. The data series that one can

view on the screen at one time are limited to five columns on a twelve inch laptop screen or a fourteen inch screen. Using the View option to reduce the font size and expand the range of columns observed makes the data illegible. This is not really a major problem since most users will most likely not wish to see a larger number of columns of data at one time. That is, I would expect that most users will know the data series they wish to access and will not need to see each series before down-loading the data to a file. One is able to easily use the Table of Contents with the mouse and the scroll bar. Using the Table of Contents along with the Notes button provides all the information that one would want regarding the data. Once one has decided which series to look for it is easy to access the data series by clicking on the desired series. If one chooses, one can access the general series category and then use the Find bar at the bottom of the text screen to find the series you wish by typing in the name of the series or some part of the name. For example, typing in Wholesale Prices would move you to the next part of the text where the phrase Wholesale Prices appears. It would also list the number of times the words 'wholesale prices' appeared in each of the Chapters and Notes sections. By accessing the Book pull-down menu one can search either text or tables for particular words or phrases. Annotations and Bookmarks can be inserted at desired points for future reference. One can use hyper-links to connect various series or a series and the notes that apply to the particular series. These hyper-text links can be set as either one way or two way which makes it an easy matter to navigate from one point to another that is frequently accessed in conjunction with the first. Downloading data to your hard drive, a floppy disk or elsewhere is relatively easy because it is all menu driven. One need only use the hypertext links at the top of each table, 'Lotus 123' or 'Text file.' (By going to the root level of the CD-ROM one can either access Lotus 1-

2-3 files or tab-delimited text files from the LOTUS123 or TEXT directories, respectively, without first opening the electronic book.) The Lotus 1-2-3 files can be accessed directly from nearly any type of spreadsheet program. If one has a spreadsheet program that will not download the Lotus 1-2-3 files, then it will most likely download data from the tab-delimited text files. These files can be renamed and saved onto the hard drive or a floppy disk. If one is using DynaText on a network, then data can be saved to another location as desired. <p> When viewing a data series, the Scrollable Table option is very handy because it allows one to see additional columns and move down the columns faster than when one is scrolling down a series in the standard screen. One can also use the Find bar while in the Scrollable Table mode which enables the user to move to a new series with ease. <p> Use of the Journal option is very helpful if you need to repeatedly access a number of series or texts and series. Recording in a Journal sets up a group of locations to which one can move with ease by using the commands on the Journal bar. I did encounter difficulty when I attempted to use the Snapshot option for adding lines to the Journal. An “Er-

ror in Program” message kept appearing on the screen, making it necessary to reboot the computer in order to continue work. I am not sure if this is a problem with the particular CD or a problem with the program in general. It would definitely make work easier if the snapshot option in the Journal menu worked as described in the manual. <p> DynaText can be customized to fit the individual user’s preferences by accessing the Preferences command under the File menu. One can alter the settings for the various operations that DynaText performs while accessing Historical Statistics. <p> One can also access the coding used to construct the electronic form of the book, if highly sophisticated searches are necessary. The average user would not need to take advantage of this possibility. <p> Those who have contributed to producing this CD-ROM version of <cite>Historical Statistics of the United States from Colonial Times to 1970</cite> have provided a great service to the economic history and history professions alike. We can only wish them luck with the Millennium edition of <cite>Historical Statistics</cite>. <p>

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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