Research Assistant Job Description
Professor Richard Hornbeck, University of Chicago, Booth School of Business

Timeframe: Summer 2019 (potentially beginning Spring 2019)

Students working for Professor Hornbeck will carry out a range of tasks across three papers in progress: (1) *Railroads, Reallocation, and the Rise of American Manufacturing*; (2) *The Financial Wealth of African-Americans after Slavery and its Intergenerational Impacts: Evidence from the Collapse of the Freedman’s Bank*; and (3) *Where Does History Matter? Evidence from Ancient Ports*. Work on these projects will provide exposure to empirical research in applied microeconomics (particularly at the intersection of economic history and development), and will give insight into how research projects come together in various phases.

*Railroads, Reallocation, and the Rise of American Manufacturing*

This project analyzes productivity growth in American manufacturing from 1860 to 1900, when the United States became a global economic power. The goal of the project is to decompose American productivity growth into gains in technical efficiency (counties becoming more productive) and gains in reallocative efficiency (more resources being allocated to counties that are more productive on the margin). This framework is then used to study how railroad network expansion impacted these sources of productivity growth using establishment-level data from the Census of Manufacturers.

The main tasks involve: (1) checking whether numerical data are internally consistent (as entered by our data entry contractor); (2) cleaning and categorizing textual data; (3) contributing to the design, improvement, and implementation of machine-based data cleaning methods.


This project analyzes the intergenerational consequences of low African-American wealth following emancipation from slavery. We will estimate the impacts of wealth lost due to the 1874 bankruptcy of the Freedman’s Bank, which was created after the Civil War to provide an outlet for savings of freed slaves. We are matching Freedman Bank dividend records to the 1870 Census of Population and later waves of the Census.

The main tasks involve: (1) entering and cleaning data on financial losses of depositors; (2) cleaning Population Census data in preparation for data matching; (3) contributing to the design, improvement, and implementation of machine-based data matching methods.

*Where Does History Matter? Evidence from Ancient Ports*

This project examines variation in economic activity around the Mediterranean, where ancient ports once provided refuge for small sailing ships and created local clusters of economic activity. We are exploring where economic activity has persisted, and where it has fallen away, to better understand when early economic investments generate sustained economic activity.

The main tasks involve: (1) collecting information on ancient harbors using modern satellite images; (2) cleaning data prepared by our data entry contractor.

**Logistics**

The job pays $15/hour with a flexible work schedule, though we are looking for at least 10 hours per week during terms (and 30-40 hours per week during the summer). To apply, please email Stephen Lamb (Stephen.Lamb@ChicagoBooth.edu) with a short cover letter, resume, and unofficial copy of your transcript.