

PROPOSAL: THE LOCATION OF INVENTIVE ACTIVITY IN U. S. HISTORY

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This project aims to explore three alternative views of the location of inventive activity using data for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S. One hypothesis is that inventors come up with new technological ideas when they confront actual problems in production or face competitive pressure to reduce production costs and so the location of inventive activity is largely determined by the location of production. Another is that inventors tend to co-locate in places like cities, where the environment is conducive to the exchange of technologic information and they are more likely to associate with people knowledgeable about developments on the technological frontier. The third is that inventors tend to concentrate in places where they are better able to secure financing for their creative work and better able to find buyers for their intellectual property.

The RAs task will be to help clean, extend, and analyze data sets on patenting activity and inventors' careers. For example, we are compiling industry-specific data sets that allow us to examine the extent to which inventive activity moves with production and the types of inventive activity that are more likely to move. We also have data on inventors' careers that enable us to track their migration decisions and look at type of inventive activity in which inventors engage in different settings. Finally, we have data that enable us to gauge the extent to which concentrations of inventors lead to spillovers of technological information.

At a minimum, the RA should have a facility with Excel. Once the data are collected and cleaned, if the RA also knows Stata, s/he will be able to participate more fully in the analysis, but there is much that s/he will be able to learn just from manipulating the Excel spreadsheets.