**UPDATE 4/7/2020**

**Aim of the project**: This project looks at the impact of eye-glasses on productivity in early-modern England. Our starting idea is that as eye-glasses became more accessible in the 17th and 18th centuries, they increased productivity in certain jobs.

Below I detail the sources we have collected. All the datasets are available on dropbox.

**Apprenterships and Masters**

Data available in: Dropbox/Datasets/London's livery companies

From the Livery Companies (i.e. the old trade associations and guilds), we have collected the details of apprenticeships and masters. For a review on historical guilds, etc. see, for instance, “Clans, Guilds, and Markets.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

A first dataset comes from the Records of London’s Livery companies ([here](https://www.londonroll.org/)). This dataset compiles data for 11 companies. The dataset includes the apprentice’s name and place of origin, the father’s name and occupation or status, and the master’s name, company, and date of binding. Sometimes there are additional details (e.g. if the apprentice’s father was deceased, etc.). Data shared by Jonathan Blaney (jonathan.blaney@sas.ac.uk).

A second dataset is from the paper “Networks in the Premodern Economy.” Same kind of data and, this time, the dataset compiles data for 65 companies (including the Spectacle Makers’ Company). Data shared by Chris Minns (c.minns@lse.ac.uk)

Work we need to do: We need to see how we can make use of the data, clean it, and probably geocode all the locations.

**Stamp Duty payment**

The Stamp duty payment on apprenticeship contracts was introduced in 1710. The Commissioners of Stamps recorded the name, payment, address, and trade of masters, as well as the name and sometimes the family background of the apprentices, and the date of indenture. For details, see the papers “The Price of Human Capital” and “The Wheels of Change.” Data shared by Chris Minns (c.minns@lse.ac.uk)

Work we need to do: Same as before. We need to see how we can make use of the data, clean it, and probably geocode all the locations.

**Patents**

In 1854, Bennet Woodcroft created an “encyclopedia” of all patents issued in England from 1617 to 1852. The original individual records are stored in the British Library.

Data available in: Dropbox/Datasets/Patents/ - Woodcroft, Titles of patents of invention, chronologically arranged 1617-1852, 1854 (1 and 2).

Work we need to do: (a) Use OCR software in order to translate the information from the pdfs into an Excel matrix. Despite there is a lot of information on the patentee and the product, we don’t have the details of the age of the patentee. Therefore, we need (b) to link these individuals with the census records and obtain the age at which they created the patent or, alternatively, the year of birth. (c) We also need to classify the patents into different groups.

**Scientific Exhibitions**

In these big events, inventors from all places presented their new products. Similar to patents, we have the details of the inventor (only name and surname) and product. I’m aware of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, and that the precursors were the Great Exhibitions of 1798 and 1849 (both organized in Paris).

Data available in: Dropbox/Datasets/ Great Exhibition 1851/ - Great Exhibition 1851 (parts 1-5).

Work we need to do: (a) We need to use OCR software and translate the information of the pdfs into a matrix. Despite there is a lot of information on the inventor and the product, we don’t have the details on the age of the inventor. (b) We need to link these individuals with the census records and obtain the age at which they created their product, or the year of birth. (c) We also need to classify the inventions into different groups. (d) We also need to find the details for the Great Exhibitions of 1798 and 1849 and see if there were any before.

**British Book Trade Index (BBTI) database**

Data available in: http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/

The BBTI contains biographical and trade details on all those who worked at the English and Welsh book trades from *c*. 1600 to 1851. BBTI includes not only details on printers, publishers and booksellers, but also other related trades, such as stationers, papermakers, engravers, auctioneers, ink-makers, etc. I think that this dataset is based on a range of sources (see “further information” on the website).

Work we need to do: (a) We need to download the dataset. I’ve sent a couple of emails to the BBTI, but with no replies so far. (b) We also need to know how the dataset was constructed and (c) to see whether the individual sources could be of further help (I’ve seen something on apprenterships, etc.).

**Other sources**:

Despite they are not a top priority at the moment, other sources that I’ve identified and could be of use in the future are: (a) the Early Engine database (“Dropbox/Datasets/Early engine database”), (b) the Robin Alston Library History Place Index (we need to find the list somewhere), (c) the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers ([here](https://about.proquest.com/products-services/House-of-Commons-Parliamentary-Papers.html#resources)), and (d) the UK Red Database ([here](http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/explore_contributing.php)).

**Prices**

We’ll take the details of prices from the catalogues stored in the College of Optometrists. We’ll need to speak with Neil Handley (neil.handley@college-optometrists.org), and see the best way we can go to London and take pictures of the catalogues, so we can transcribe the data in Barcelona.

1. All the references I list in this document are in Dropbox/Literature. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)