

Banking data and research

Free information is now available to you

by Ruth Kobylecky Humphrey

Banking data and research, once available only through specialized government publications or by request from many sources, are now increasingly available through the Internet. Students, scholars, banking professionals, and public patrons can now more easily find many different levels of financial information, especially within the United States.

This article, which concentrates primarily on government sites that contain free data or association sites that offer assistance and information to their members, will help you:

- find a modified balance sheet (called a "call report" or "statement of condition") of any bank, FDIC insured thrift, or bank holding company within the United States. Or find basic financial information for individual branches of a bank—information that is not readily found in an annual report;
- use information (like deposits) in those branches to help determine the market share of financial institutions within a zip code, town, or state;
- look at assessments of both the banking and the real estate industries nationwide;
- look up many different banking-related indexes and rates for decades at a time;
- find out how much old savings bonds are worth, set up your own account to buy Treasury securities, and learn when the next T-bill auction will be held; and

- investigate banking and finance in other nations, as well as the means by which their economies are maintained.

Federal agencies

• National Information Center (NIC).

This site provides comprehensive information on banks and other institutions for which the Federal Reserve has a supervisory, regulatory, or research interest. NIC includes both domestic and foreign banking organizations operating in the United States. Organizational structure, even on a historical basis, is available. This is useful when investigating what bank merged or acquired another bank. Financial information is available for selected time periods. Banks can also be automatically ranked in size by various criteria. Access: <http://www.ffiec.gov/nic/>.

• Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council.

This interagency council, which outlines uniform procedures for the federal examination of financial institutions, serves as the site for NIC and also offers annual Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data in the aggregate, by census tract, and by metropolitan statistical area. Access: <http://www.ffiec.gov/>.

• Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

The FDIC operates a fine Web site with electronic versions of several important banking research publications. "The Data

About the author

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SITEMAP SEARCH HELP HOME

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

Loan Bank System, the FHFB main-

Book: Operating Banks and Branches" presents basic financial data by individual branch, as well as by bank. These figures can be ranked to show a bank's market share in a particular city or zip code. "Historical Statistics on Banking" and "Statistics on Banking" offers large amounts of data by state. "Quarterly Banking Profile" and "Survey of Real Estate Trends" provides excellent examinations of these industries both nationwide and by region. Entirely new is the FDIC's section listing specific online banks that are authorized to do business in the United States. Press releases containing warnings about questionable activities of online banks may also be helpful to the consumer. The institution directory will help a searcher identify a bank and then see its call report data, which includes material not seen in NIC. Also of note is the FDIC Library page, listing commercial firms that buy the call report information from the government and offer their own ratings (for a fee) of the safety and soundness of commercial financial institutions. *Access:* <http://www.fdic.gov/>.

• **Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC).** Established in 1863 as a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the OCC charters, regulates, and supervises all national banks. It also supervises the federal branches and agencies of foreign banks. This site has a good explanation of how to track down data



Comptroller of the Currency
Administrator of National Banks

on a specific financial institution when you don't know who regulates it. The OCC is also blunt about some call report data still being only available in paper upon request. *Access:* <http://www.occ.treas.gov/>.

• **Office of Thrift Supervision (OTS).** The OTS, the primary regulator of all federal and many state-chartered thrift institutions (including savings banks and savings and loan associations), provides access to cost of funds data and other series of statistics and figures about thrifts on its site. *Access:* <http://www.ots.treas.gov/>.

• **Federal Housing Finance Board (FHFB).** The regulator for the Federal Home

System, the FHFB maintains many detailed surveys of interest rates, loan terms, and house prices by loan type and by institutional lender type. *Access:* <http://www.fhfb.gov/>.

• **National Credit Union Administration.** This is an independent federal agency that supervises and insures federal credit unions and insures many state-chartered credit unions. The Web site offers call report information on individual credit unions. *Access:* <http://www.ncua.gov/>.

• **The Bureau of the Public Debt.** This agency's name describes its function very well. The site has detailed results of previous auctions of Treasury bills, notes and bonds, lists upcoming auctions, and gives information on establishing Treasury Direct accounts to purchase such government securities (even online!). Much savings bond information is also available here. *Access:* <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov/>.

• **Financial Management Service (FMS).** The FMS, a Treasury Department bureau, calls itself the U.S. government's financial manager and accountant. Navigate to the full text of the major publication "Treasury Bulletin," with its detailed accounting of the nation's currency, securities, and other financial instruments. *Access:* <http://www.fms.treas.gov/finman.html>.

• **FinCEN.** Part of the U.S. Treasury, the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network site discusses money laundering and other financial criminal activities in much detail. *Access:* <http://www.ustreas.gov/fincen/>.

• **General Accounting Office (GAO).** Browse through the site of Congress's investigative watchdog for critical investigations of many current and emerging topics in banking and finance. Full text of GAO reports can be either downloaded or requested in print. *Access:* <http://www.gao.gov/>.

The Federal Reserve System

Although the Web sites of the Federal Reserve Board and the 12 Federal Reserve Banks are all extensively linked, each site maintains its own personality and specialties. In general, most national economic and banking data series that the press attributes to the Federal Reserve originate from the Board. If interested in

a particular part of the country, check the Board's Web site map of Federal Reserve Districts (broken down by county) to see which Federal Reserve Banks cover the area, then navigate through those banks' sites to see what regional data, forecasting, or links are offered. The banks' URLs are listed below, but only selected highlights have been featured.

• **Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.** Founded by Congress in 1913, the Federal Reserve conducts the nation's monetary policy, supervises and regulates banking institutions, is charged with maintaining the stability of the U.S. financial system and provides certain financial services to the U.S. government, financial institutions, and public and foreign official institutions. The site map will show how rich and complex this Web site is to banking researchers. Of particular interest to banking researchers are items like "Assets and Liabilities of Commercial Banks in the United States" (H.8), the "Beige Book," a list of Section 20 Subsidiaries, the "Report to Congress on Fees," and "Services of Depository Institutions." The "Staff Studies" and *Federal Reserve Bulletin* articles are worth browsing through, as well. Fascinating discussions on a variety of problems and situations can be found in sections like Legal Interpretations, Public Meeting Transcripts and SR Letters, the last of which are the Board's guidance to the system's bank examiners. Current and historical tables of data like foreign exchange rates, selected interest rates, and consumer credit are available in a variety of formats. *Access:* <http://www.federalreserve.gov/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.** The handy brochure "Fundamental Facts about U.S. Money" is only one of the many useful publications from the 12 banks available in print and on the site of the bank that wrote them. *Access:* <http://www.frbatlanta.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.** *Access:* <http://www.bos.frb.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.** This site contains the "Payment Systems Research Database," an annotated bibliography that covers both historical and emerging issues in electronic banking, clearing systems, and commerce. The long-running newsletter *Agletter*, which includes the "Farmland Value Survey in the District," is another notable item at this site. *Access:* <http://www.frbchi.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland.** *Access:* <http://www.clev.frb.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.** *Access:* <http://www.dallasfed.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.** *Survey of Agricultural Credit Conditions* is another useful agricultural banking newsletter, covering this district. *Access:* <http://www.kc.frb.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.** *Agricultural Credit Conditions* and the interviews in *The Region* are two publications of special interest at this Web site. *Access:* <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of New York.** This Web site covers only a fraction of the duties and reporting that are exclusive to this bank. Examine this site carefully for information concerning foreign exchange rates (including the "Turnover Survey"), primary dealers, commercial paper, interbank loan rates, and others. Other features of interest are a first-rate savings bond calculator and "U.S. Payment Systems: A Plumber's Guide." *Access:* <http://www.ny.frb.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia.** "The Livingston Survey," a summary of economic forecasters, is a popular feature of this site. *Access:* <http://www.phil.frb.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.** This bank produces one of the system's best free publications to be found in print and on the net: "Instruments of the Money Market." *Access:* <http://www.rich.frb.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.** This site is the home of the *Fed in Print* database, which indexes and abstracts the periodicals, working papers, and conference proceedings published by the Federal Reserve System. Recent articles and working papers frequently appear as links; older material is often available through conventional interlibrary loan. *Access:* <http://www.frbssf.org/>.

• **Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.** "Fred," one of the first electronic compilations of historical economic and banking data, features more than just Federal Reserve data. Also available at this site are some of St. Louis's popular consumer-oriented periodicals like *U.S. Financial Data* and *National Monetary Trends*. *Access:* <http://www.stls.frb.org/>.

State banking commissions

- **Conference of State Bank Supervisors**

(CSBS). CSBS is a national organization of state banking regulatory offices trying to encourage the dual banking system of the United States (a bank's choice of either state or federal regulation, based upon the bank's charter). Besides discussing the operation and problems of banking across state lines, this Web site also has an extremely useful list of links to all state banking regulators. *Access:* <http://www.csbsdal.org/>.

International banking

• Bank for International Settlements (BIS).

A unique and sometimes controversial institution that began in the 1930s, the BIS is both a central banking institution and a commercial bank located in Switzerland. It is primarily owned and controlled by central banks; its depositors are limited to central banks and large international financial institutions. The BIS offers a forum for the international discussion of major topics, like derivatives and capital adequacy standards, and helps coordinate the efforts of central banks in these matters. Its excellent Web site has links to central banks around the world, and offers BIS statistical surveys, committee position papers, and other documents containing policies that have an enormous effect upon even the domestic banking industry of the United States. *Access:* <http://www.bis.org/>.

• Mark Bernkopf's Central Banking Resource Center. Not a government site, this Web page has a list of links to the Web pages of the central banks of nations worldwide. Also of note are the links to other nations' currency boards and ministries of finance and economy. A variety of other links pertaining to banking and economics also appear. *Access:* <http://adams.patriot.net/~bernkopf/>.

Professional organizations

• American Bankers Association. The principal association of bankers in the United States, this Web site has information about their activities and services to their membership. One of their surveys is known as the Consumer Delinquency Survey. *Access:* <http://www.aba.com/>.

• Bank Marketing Association (BMA). An affiliate of the American Bankers Association, the BMA is a large financial services marketing organization. It provides marketing information and education to its members. *Access:* <http://www.bmanet.org/>.

• Bank Administration Institute (BAI). The BAI is a professional organization that publishes and sells its strategic research and offers a variety of conferences and seminars. *Access:* <http://www.bai.org/>.

• Financial Services Roundtable. Formerly known as the Bankers' Roundtable and the Association of Reserve City Bankers, this association draws its selective membership from the largest financial institutions and companies in the country. Information about their published studies and policy papers are available on their Web site. *Access:* <http://www.bankersround.org/>.

• Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA). Formerly called the Independent Bankers Association of America, the ICBA's membership concentrates on serving independently owned and operated community banks. *Access:* <http://www.ibaa.org/>.

• Mortgage Bankers Association. Organized for all professional participants involved in real estate finance, this group's Web site lists its services for members and the latest releases in its surveys like "Mortgage Delinquency Rates" and "Mortgage Loan Applications." *Access:* <http://www.mbaa.org/>.

The secondary market

• Freddie Mac. This stockholder-owned corporation, chartered by Congress in 1970, increases the supply of funds available to mortgage lenders by buying mortgages and then repackaging them into guaranteed securities for sale in the secondary market. Freddie Mac standards and guidelines have an enormous effect on the standards of home financing loans that banks and other financial institutions offer. This site contains the often-cited "Primary Mortgage Market Survey." *Access:* <http://www.freddiemac.com/>.

• Fannie Mae. This shareholder-owned company, established in another form in the 1930s, also expands the availability of mortgage funds by buying FHA, VA, and conventional mortgages and selling them in insured packages on the secondary market. *Access:* <http://www.fanniemae.com/>.

• Fannie Mae's HomePath®. This site contains useful information about buying or refinancing a home, and offers a useful glossary and a mortgage calculator. *Access:* <http://www.homepath.com/>. ■

