

*Celebrating 100 Years*  
*of Social Science Research*

RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION  
1907–2007





**Russell Sage**

1816–1906

*Russell Sage began his career in the grocery business and went on to make a fortune in the railroad and telegraph industries and as a Wall Street financier. Upon his death he left his large fortune to his wife Margaret Olivia Sage.*

**RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION**

112 East 64th Street, New York, NY 10021

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[www.russellsage.org](http://www.russellsage.org)



To the Trustees of Russell Sage Foundation:

*I have transferred to Russell Sage Foundation . . . a fund, the principal of which . . . shall be held, and the income thereof applied to the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America. . . .*

*The scope of the Foundation is not only national but is broad. It should, however, preferably not undertake to do that which is now being done or is likely to be effectively done by other individuals or by other agencies. It should be its aim to take up the larger and more difficult problems, and to take them up so far as possible in such a manner as to secure co-operation and aid in their solution. . . .*

Yours Sincerely,

*Margaret Olivia Sage*  
Margaret Olivia Sage

New York, April 19, 1907



## April 19, 1907

Margaret Olivia Sage (1828–1918) establishes the Russell Sage Foundation as the nation's first general purpose foundation with an initial gift of \$10 million, part of the fortune she inherited upon the death of her husband, Russell Sage, in 1906. Mrs. Sage directs the new foundation to pursue research and programs for “the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America.”

## May 1907

The Foundation funds the Pittsburgh Survey, the first systematic effort to survey the employment and living conditions among the working class in a large U.S. city. The findings inspire reforms regulating working conditions and the employers' liability system, and help end twelve-hour days and seven-day weeks for steel workers.



Robert W. de Forest played a large role in shaping the Foundation's early undertakings as Mrs. Sage's attorney, her most trusted advisor, and an influential member of the board of trustees. A leader of the New York Charity Organization Society, de Forest guided the Foundation toward efforts to understand and alleviate the conditions that cause poverty, rather than providing direct assistance to the poor.

“Homes of the Tax Burden Bearers,” by Lewis W. Hine, from the series of photos commissioned by the Foundation to illustrate the findings of the Pittsburgh Survey.

## 1907–1914

The Foundation sponsors early research on programs in housing, public health, working conditions, education, consumer credit, industrial relations, social surveys, and social statistics. These programs lead to legal reforms in building codes, workplace health and safety regulations, workmen's compensation and anti-usury laws.

## 1912

At Mrs. Sage's direction, the Foundation erects its headquarters building just north of Gramercy Park to house its expanding research operations. Designed by Grosvenor Atterbury in Renaissance Revival style, the nine-story building is decorated with carved panels symbolizing Service flanked by Study and Counsel, Religion, Education, Civics, Justice, Health, Work, Play and Housing.



## 1909–1922

RSF expends nearly a sixth of its capital to build Forest Hills Gardens, a model suburban community for working families designed by architect Frederick Law Olmstead Jr.. The grand aim was to demonstrate the possibilities of intelligent town planning for moderate cost housing close to a major urban center. The architecture was a great success, but the housing prices soon soared beyond the range of the families they were intended for, and the Foundation lost a significant part of its investment.





Mary van Kleeck's book *Women in the Bookbinding Trade* leads to legislation banning the employment of women in factories between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Over the next 45 years, Van Kleeck builds a remarkable record of industrial relations research at Russell Sage, conducting studies of working conditions, unemployment, collective bargaining, and economic planning.



John Glenn, RSF's first general director, 1907-1931

## 1910

Mary van Kleeck joins RSF's Department of Industrial Studies to study the working conditions of women.

## 1917

RSF publishes *Social Diagnosis*, Mary Richmond's classic text on social work. Head of the Foundation's Charity Organization Department since 1909, Richmond orchestrates RSF's long-standing efforts to support private social service agencies, rationalize their operations and improve case work methods. These efforts culminate in the 1930s, when the Foundation provides space in its own building for the New York School of Social Work and gives key support for other fledgling schools of social work around the country.

## 1921-1931

RSF supports the New York Regional Urban Planning Project, "to visualize the commercial, the industrial, the social and the artistic values and possibilities of our glorious harbor and of all [its] broad and varied environs." The project becomes the Regional Plan Association of New York, responsible for coordinating policies for urban planning in the greater New York City area.

## 1931-1948

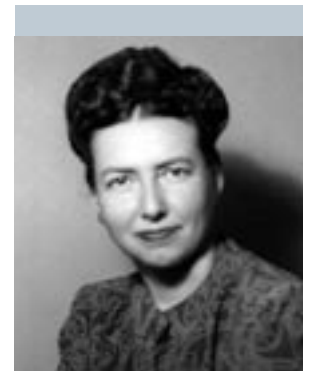
In charge of the statistical work for the Pittsburgh Survey in the early days of the Foundation, and later head of the Department of Exhibits and Surveys, Shelby Harrison takes over as second general director of the Foundation.



*Investigation of Poverty at the Russell Sage Foundation*, by Alice Neel, 1933. The Linda Lee Alter Collection of Art by Women, Philadelphia.

## 1935

Esther Lucile Brown, a member of the Foundation's Department of Statistics, produces a study on *Social Work as a Profession*. Over the next three years, she releases reports on the professions of engineering, nursing, medicine, and law. In 1944, the Department of Studies in the Professions is established, headed by Brown.



Esther Lucile Brown







E. Whitney Debevoise

## 1945–1948

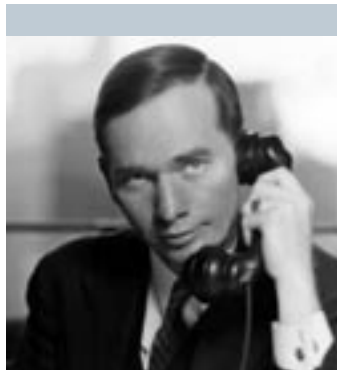
Trustee E. Whitney Debevoise spearheads a major overhaul of the Foundation’s mission and institutional identity. Using a military metaphor in the wake of World War II, RSF declares a redeployment of its intellectual and capital resources to “the second trench.” Henceforth, the Foundation will work to strengthen the basic capacities of social science in order to provide intellectual and scientific support for efforts to design and implement social policy on the “front lines.” The Foundation phases out all existing grants and direct financial support for charitable organizations, the original building is sold, and staffing is reduced.

## 1948–1963

Donald Young, formerly a professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania and Executive Director of the Social Science Research Council assumes the presidency of RSF and develops its new research agenda. The Foundation focuses on applying social science to the professions of medicine, law, social work, and to the arts of social practice more generally. Under Young, and later Orville Brim, RSF begins to develop a new role as a linking institution, connecting the growing enterprise of university-based social science to the social issues of long-standing concern to the Foundation.

## 1950s

In collaboration with the Social Science Research Council, the Foundation publishes a series of 17 monographs analyzing social and demographic data from the 1950 Census. The decennial “census series” becomes a tradition at Russell Sage; for every census thereafter, except 1970, the Foundation publishes reports on the economic and social condition of the country based on the statistics available in the census.



F. Emerson Andrews

## 1950s

Under the direction of F. Emerson Andrews, the Foundation begins a series of studies of philan-



Donald Young (left), RSF president, 1948-1963, and Orville G. Brim Jr., RSF president, 1963-1972

thropy: *Philanthropic Giving* (1950), *Corporation Giving* (1952), *Attitudes Toward Giving* (1953), and *Legal Instruments of Foundations* (1958). This work on philanthropy leads eventually to RSF’s support for the publication of the *Foundation Directory* and the establishment of the Foundation Center, both key resources in making the world of American foundations more intelligible and accessible.

## 1962

Donald Young inaugurates a program on social science and mass media in the hopes of fostering more informed and accurate reporting on the social sciences by professional journalists.

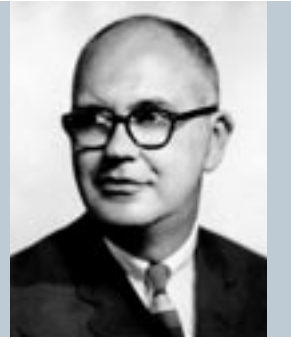
## 1963–1972

Orville G. Brim Jr. serves as president of RSF. Brim extends research on the professions to include journalism and the military, and inaugurates diverse new areas of research, including life-span development and aging, mental testing and human resource management, techniques for evaluating social programs, the development of social indicators, and even behavioral biology.





Staff sociologists Eleanor Bernert Sheldon and Wilbert Moore explore the possibility of developing a national battery of social indicators. Their pioneering work is published as *Indicators of Social Change* in 1968 and leads eventually to the development of the General Social Survey.



## 1963

Brim's first staff appointment, Princeton sociologist Wilbert Moore, helps solidify the Foundation's reputation as a research institute.

## 1963–1969

The Foundation initiates a series of studies of the social and educational effects of standardized testing under the direction of staff member David Goslin. The resulting RSF volumes include Goslin's *Search for Ability*, Brim et al.'s *American Beliefs and Attitudes about Intelligence*, and David Armor's *American School Counselor*.

## 1964

Under staff member Leonard Cottrell, and later Stanton Wheeler, the Foundation's effort to extend social science to the study of legal institutions becomes RSF's largest program and succeeds in creating a new interdisciplinary field. With seed money from Russell Sage, the Law and Society Association—and its affiliated journal, the *Law & Society Review*—is launched.

## 1966

The Foundation's prior focus on social science and medicine evolves toward more basic support for the developing field of behavior genetics. Russell Sage partners with Rock-



Stanton Wheeler

efeller University to select candidates for joint training in biology and the social sciences. A prominent result of this initiative is the three-volume *Biology and Behavior* series published jointly by Russell Sage and the Rockefeller University.

## 1967

The Foundation's Visiting Scholars program is inaugurated with the appointments of Alex Inkeles (Stanford) and Robert K. Merton (Columbia). Other visiting scholars in the early years of the program include futurist Alvin Toffler, sociologist Daniel Bell, and *Public Interest* editor, Irving Kristol.

## 1970

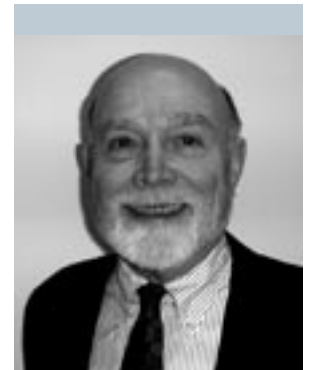
Capping the studies of the professions inaugurated by Young and carried out under Brim, Wilbert Moore's *The Professions* is published.

## 1970–1971

As part of an evaluation of the quality of RSF's programs, Brim opens RSF files to a group of radical New Left sociologists. They criticize the Foundation for focusing on applied research rather than supporting "direct action programs," and for the lack of attention to powerless groups in American society. Brim's own approach to evaluating foundation programs appears in his classic essay archly titled "Do We Know What We Are Doing?"

## 1972–1976

Hugh Cline serves as RSF president. During his tenure RSF focuses on improving measurements and methods of analyzing social change. The Foundation also sponsors research on the evaluation of governmental and non-governmental social programs. Cline extends the effort carried out by Young and Brim to explore more effective ways of communicating the findings of social science to policymakers and others outside academia.



Hugh Cline





Marshall Robinson

## 1974

RSF launches new research programs on civil liberties and social control to study “the attitudes and behavior of the general public . . . toward general and specific topics of freedom and control,” and on the changing social roles ascribed to individuals on the basis of gender, race, and ethnicity.

## 1979

After a period of administrative upheaval at Russell Sage in the late 1970s, Ford Foundation economist Marshall Robinson assumes the presidency of RSF and establishes new research programs on the social impact of changing gender roles, the growth of procedural complexity in the organization of economic and social activity, and the assessment, management, and public perception of risk.

## 1982

The Foundation establishes its new headquarters on East 64th Street in the former home of the Asia Society, designed by distinguished American architect, Philip Johnson.



## 1982

The Foundation’s research program on the impact of gender role change focuses on institutional responses to efforts to expand opportunities for women. With support from the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, and Russell Sage, a task force under the direction of resident scholar Mariam Chamberlain is formed to chart the progress of women in higher education and examine the impact of changing gender roles on institutions of higher learning.

## 1983–1993

After skipping the 1970 Census, RSF again collaborates with SSRC to study the results of the 1980 Census. The Foundation publishes an authoritative 17-volume series on social, cultural, and economic trends in the U.S. revealed by the Census.



Eric Wanner and Robert K. Merton

## 1986

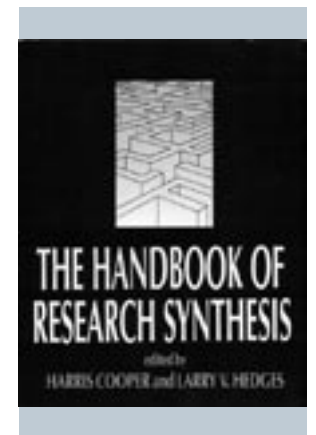
Eric Wanner, a social psychologist and vice president at the Sloan Foundation, is appointed president of RSF. The Foundation launches several new research initiatives, redesigns the Visiting Scholar program to permit open application and to foster collaborative groups, and overhauls the book publishing program to give the Foundation’s research wider distribution and greater public impact.

## 1987

Continuing its tradition of support for promising inter-disciplinary research, the Foundation announces a joint program of research with the Sloan Foundation in behavioral economics, examining the consequences of incorporating more realistic accounts of human decision making into economic models of market behavior. A second new program returns the Foundation to its earliest concerns with the plight of the poor, supporting research on the causes of the persistence of poverty and the rise of economic inequality in the U.S. despite robust economic growth.

## 1988

Maintaining the Foundation’s long-standing interest in strengthening the methodological equipment of social science, RSF provides support to encourage the use of state-of-the-art methods in quantitative research synthesis, which allow reliable conclusions to be drawn from multiple studies of a given social intervention or program.



## 1990

Robert K. Merton becomes the first Foundation Scholar at Russell Sage, recognizing his long and invaluable service as an advisor to the administration and a mentor to so many visiting scholars. In 2000, Robert M. Solow becomes the second Foundation Scholar, following Merton's retirement. In 2003, the position is renamed the Merton Scholar, in memory of the Foundation's invaluable friend.

## 1991

RSF inaugurates a new program of research on immigration to investigate how well immigrants and their children are adapting socially and economically to life in the U.S. The program is designed to examine speculation that non-European families in the current immigrant cohort might not duplicate the intergenerational progress of European immigrants in the great wave of immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century.

## 1992

A program is formed to study contact among cultures within the increasingly diverse American population. In its initial stage the program examines problems of racial and ethnic discrimination; subsequently, the program evolves to study the frictions that arise as American institutions—schools, health care facilities, the legal system—adapt to a more diverse clientele.



Four of the seven books resulting from the Multi-City Study on Urban Inequality.

## 1992–2000

Working jointly with the Ford Foundation, RSF conducts the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, which examines the economic problems of the poor in four of America's largest cities. Echoing the Pittsburgh Survey, the Multi-City Study attempts to determine whether high rates of unemployment in the inner city are due to residential segregation, labor market discrimination, the flight of employers to the suburbs, or poor educational preparation. The results are published in seven RSF books and over a dozen doctoral dissertations.

## 1993

The Foundation establishes the Behavioral Economics Roundtable, a group of leading behavioral economists elected by grantees in the program and charged to design initiatives to advance this new interdisciplinary field. Three charter members of the Roundtable subsequently receive the Nobel Prize in economics: George Akerloff, Daniel Kahneman, and Thomas Schelling. The most successful of the Roundtable's several initiatives is its summer institute, held in alternate years since 1994 to provide an introduction to the field for young investigators.



Daniel Kahneman receiving the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for his work in behavioral economics. Photo: Hans Melin, © Nobel Web AB 2002

## 1994

The Foundation's program of research on poverty is refocused specifically on an examination of the causes and consequences of the long-term decline in availability and quality of jobs for workers with limited education. Renamed the Future of Work and undertaken jointly with the Rockefeller Foundation, the program supports extensive case studies of nearly 500 establishments in 25 industries to assess the changing competitive pressures on American firms, the ways in which firms responded by restructuring work, and the consequences for the quality of low-wage jobs. More recently, the Foundation has undertaken a comparative study of low-wage jobs in five European countries to compare the restructuring of work and the quality of low-wage jobs in different national institutional environments.



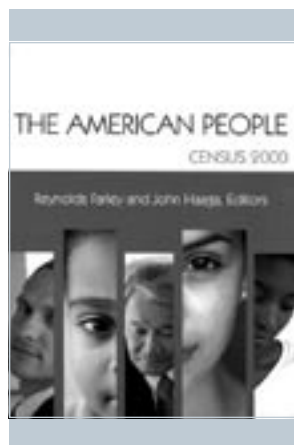
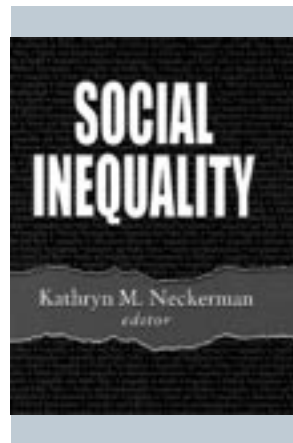


## 1995

The Foundation establishes an initiative to develop research on the role that trust plays in sustaining cooperative behavior. The project is motivated both by worries about the social consequences of the long secular decline in levels of trust among American citizens, and by theoretical puzzles about whether and how cooperative behavior can be sustained in the absence of trust. The work encompasses interpersonal trust, as well as trust in institutions and the political process. Eleven RSF volumes have appeared reporting the results of this initiative, which was brought to a successful conclusion in 2005.

## 1999

In partnership with the Carnegie Corporation, RSF launches a special project on Social Inequality to explore the social repercussions of rising economic inequality in such areas as family formation and functioning, the resources available to children, education from pre-school to college, health care and insurance coverage, political participation and representation, and involvement with the criminal justice system. The project is designed to determine whether families who are falling behind economically are also falling behind in other ways that will make it difficult for them to keep pace in the future.



## 2000

Extending the trend toward lighter, faster reports on the decennial census, the 2000 project focuses on promoting public awareness of the census results and their societal implications. With the Population Reference Bureau, RSF produces a series of 14 reports on what the census reveals about issues such as work, gender, immigration, and racial inequality. Two major volumes are commissioned framing the results of the 2000 Census within a long, historical view of the statistical trends in American society over the course of the twentieth century. RSF also funds an online guide to the census for journalists, a web-based survey

of public participation in the census, and a study of the impact of the Census Bureau's decision to allow respondents to identify as multiracial.

## 2002

Prompted by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, RSF develops several lines of research to examine the nature of social and political life after September 11. The initiatives include studies of New York City's recovery from the attack on the World Trade Center, field studies of Muslim- and Arab-American communities in the U.S., and a standing committee to monitor the effects of the war on terror on the relationship between national security concerns and the protection of civil liberties.

In the century since Mrs. Sage first dedicated her foundation to the betterment of social and living conditions, the institution she created has evolved in many ways—beginning as a source of information and support for private social agencies in its earliest years, and gradually becoming a research organization dedicated to strengthening social science and bringing it more effectively to bear on describing and analyzing the nation's changing social problems. It was Mrs. Sage's foresight in allowing the Foundation to adapt to unanticipated circumstances that has allowed RSF to pursue its founder's intentions in a variety of fresh and creative ways over the long life of the institution. As we look ahead to the next hundred years, it will be a challenge to do as well.



## A SELECTION FROM 100 YEARS OF RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION BOOKS

- Women in the Bookbinding Trade*, by Mary van Kleeck (1913)
- The Pittsburgh Survey, Findings in Six Volumes*, edited by Paul Underwood Kellogg (1914)
- Social Diagnosis*, by Mary Richmond (1917)
- Social Work as a Profession*, by Esther Lucile Brown (1935)
- Attitudes Toward Giving*, by F. Emerson Andrews (1953)
- Indicators of Social Change: Concepts and Measurement*, by Eleanor Bernert Sheldon and Wilbert E. Moore (1968)
- A History of Public Health in New York City, 1625-1966* (two volumes), by John Duffy (1968, 1974)
- Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R.*, by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1970)
- The New Presidential Elite: Men and Women in National Politics*, by Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick (1975)
- Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, by Michael Lipsky (1980)
- Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, by Charles Tilly (1984)
- Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities*, by Mary Douglas (1984)
- Total Justice*, by Lawrence M. Friedman (1985)
- Dollars and Dreams: The Changing American Income Distribution*, by Frank Levy (1987)
- How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam 1954 and 1965*, by John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein (1991)
- Inequality Reexamined*, by Amartya Sen (1992)
- Advances in Behavioral Finance*, by Richard Thaler (1993)
- Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments in Strategic Interaction*, by Colin Camerer (1993)
- The Handbook of Research Synthesis*, edited by Harris Cooper and Larry V. Hedges (1993)
- Uneven Tides: Rising Inequality in America*, by Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk (1993)
- Working Under Different Rules*, edited by Richard B. Freeman (1994)
- The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, edited by Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (1994, revised edition: 2005)
- Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*, by Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein (1997)
- The New American Reality: Who We Are, How We Got Here, and Where We Are Going*, by Reynolds Farley (1998)
- No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*, by Katherine S. Newman (1999)
- Well-Being: The Handbook of Hedonic Psychology*, edited by Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwarz (1999)
- Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*, by Rubén Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes (2001)
- Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*, by Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone (2002)
- Downsizing in America: Reality, Causes, and Consequences*, by William J. Baumol, Alan S. Blinder, and Edward N. Wolff (2003)
- Low-Wage America: How Employers Are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace*, edited by Eileen Appelbaum, Annette Bernhardt, and Richard Murnane (2003)
- Social Inequality*, edited by Kathryn Neckerman (2004)
- Punishment and Inequality in America*, by Bruce Western (2006)

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The Russell Sage Foundation is the principal American foundation devoted exclusively to research in the social sciences. Located in New York City, it is a research center, a funding source for studies by scholars at other academic and research institutions, and an active member of the nation's social science community. The Foundation also publishes, under its own imprint, the books that derive from the work of its grantees and Visiting Scholars.

One of the oldest American foundations, the Russell Sage Foundation was established by Mrs. Margaret Olivia Sage in 1907 for "the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States." In its early years the Foundation undertook major projects in low-income housing, urban planning, social work, and labor reform. The Foundation now dedicates itself exclusively to strengthening the methods, data, and theoretical core of the social sciences as a means of diagnosing social problems and improving social policies.

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