



Genealogy Online

Ancestry Library

One of the two subscription genealogy databases available at the library, Ancestry Library provides access to a great deal of information. Its over 4,000 databases contain census records, immigration records, death records, and much more, making it the perfect starting point for your research.

Some of the largest and most popular databases include:

- U.S. Federal Census (1790-1930)
- U.K. Census Collection (1841-1901)
- Social Security Death Index
- New York, Boston, and Philadelphia Passenger Lists
- WWI Draft Registration Cards
- Civil War Service Records

Due to licensing restrictions, Ancestry Library is only accessible via library computers and cannot be used from home.



Search Strategies

If your searches aren't giving you the results you want, try the following:

- If you are getting too many results, narrow your search by entering more information. If you are getting too few results, broaden your search by entering less information.
- Click on the [Advanced Search](#) link for more search options. You can narrow your search by keyword (ex. place, spouse, occupation), as well as limit your search to a specific type of record (ex. census, vital, military, immigration, newspapers).
- Try as many spelling variations as possible, and use the Soundex option to broaden your search to include people with surnames that sound like the one you entered.
- Use wildcards in keywords and names. A "?" stands in for 1 character, and a "*" stands in for multiple characters. A search for "val*" will find Val, Valentina, Valerie, etc. A search for "johns?n" will find Johnson and Johnsen. A wildcard cannot be used for any of the first 3 letters of a word.
- Enter as much information as possible, then use the ranked search option, which will rank your results based on criteria you set, much like a search engine.

HeritageQuest

Another subscription genealogy database available at the library, HeritageQuest contains census records, published family and local histories, and more.


When you log on to HeritageQuest, you have five options:

- Search Census – Like Ancestry Library, HeritageQuest has U.S. Federal Census page images from 1790-1930; however, HeritageQuest only provides head of household indexes and does not provide indexes for every year.
- Search Books – Match keywords to the full text of over 20,000 local and family histories, cemetery inscription collections, military rosters, and more.
- Search PERSI – Search for information about ancestors, locations, or research methods in genealogy-related periodicals.
- Search Revolutionary War – Find ancestors who participated in the Revolutionary War by searching 80,000 pension and bounty-land-warrant application files.
- Search Freedman's Bank – Locate African-American ancestors who deposited money in Freedman's Savings and Trust Company locations from 1865-1874.

You may access HeritageQuest from home if you hold a South Central Library System library card. You will need to enter your card number to use the database.

Printing Census Images

It is notoriously difficult to print the scanned census images found in Ancestry Library and HeritageQuest. Clicking on the Print button using either database will shrink the census page and print it on one piece of paper. If you would like to print an enlarged portion of the census page, it is easiest to use HeritageQuest:

1. Find the census page you wish to print a portion of, then click on the Download button.
2. Click on the View link. The image will open in Adobe Acrobat Reader as a PDF.
3. Enlarge the image using the Zoom In button and use the scrollbars to position the image so that the portion you want to print is displayed on the screen.
4. Click on the Snapshot Tool icon () , then use the mouse to draw a box around the exact area you wish to print. Click the OK button if a message pops up.
5. Click on the Print icon and choose the following settings:
 - Print Range → Selected graphic
 - Page Scaling → Fit to paper
6. Click the OK button to print the image.

If you would like to print an enlarged portion of a census image from Ancestry Library, you will have to save the image, then open it in a graphics editing program or Microsoft Word and use that program to enlarge and crop the image.

Selected Genealogy Websites

American Family Immigration History Center at Ellis Island

<http://ellisland.org>

Search for ancestors among the over 22 million people who entered the United States via New York Harbor and Ellis Island between 1892 and 1924. The Passenger Record Archive contains passenger records, which list information such as passenger name, age, marital status, date of arrival, port of departure, and ship name; scanned original ship manifests; and ship pictures and histories. While you can perform a search without registering, you must complete the free registration form in order to view passenger records, ship manifests, and ship information.

Ancestry.com

<http://www.ancestry.com>

The personal subscription version of the Ancestry Library database, this Web site contains much of the same information, and you can use it from home if you buy a subscription. You can search the various databases, create a family tree online, and contact others via the message boards. Yearly and monthly subscriptions can be purchased either for U.S. content only or for worldwide content.

Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet

<http://www.cyndislist.com>

Created and maintained by genealogist Cyndi Howell, this subject directory lists over 257,000 links to genealogy-related Web sites. As such, it is an excellent place to begin your research and gather background information on various topics. The links are categorized by subject: Obituaries, Adoption, Norway, Books, Cemeteries and Funeral Homes, Family Bibles, How To, and much more. You can browse through the categories or search for specific topics.

FamilySearch

<http://www.familysearch.org>

Compiled by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, this is one of the most helpful free database sites available on the World Wide Web. Coverage is worldwide and not limited to Mormons. Search the Ancestral File for pedigrees and family group sheets, the 1880 U.S. Federal Census, the 1881 UK Census and Canada Census, the International Genealogical Index for vital records (births, christenings, and marriages), the Social Security Death Index, and more. Also check out the Research Helps section, which contains an extensive collection of guides on various topics to help you with your research.

Genealogy at the Wisconsin Historical Society

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/genealogy>

Search for nearly 1.5 million names in the Wisconsin Pre-1907 Vital Records Index, find 19th and 20th century images in the Wisconsin Historical Images database, use the Wisconsin Name Index to search obituaries and biographical sketches, search for soldiers who served in Wisconsin Civil War regiments, and more. Once you find a record, you may purchase and have a copy of it mailed to you. You can also search the MadCat and ArCat online catalogs to find items available in the Historical Society's Library and Archives, which boasts one of the largest North American genealogy collections in the country.

Interment.net

<http://www.interment.net>

This "cemetery transcription library" contains listings compiled by volunteers for over 4 million tombstone inscriptions in nearly 9,000 cemeteries worldwide. Search by surname and country or state, or you can browse by region. For cemetery-related news and information, check out the Cemetery Column blog. Also, get advice on how to record a cemetery yourself and instructions for submitting your own transcriptions for inclusion in the database.

National Archives and Records Administration Genealogy Homepage

<http://www.archives.gov/genealogy>

The National Archives collects records from every branch of the federal government. Most of these records are not online, but this Web site provides indexes and finding aids to those records and contains information on how to access them for in-person research. The records that are available and searchable online include casualty and prisoner of war lists for WWII, Korea, and Vietnam; WWII U.S. Army enlistment records; and Port of New York passenger lists from during the Irish Potato Famine (1846-1851). Make sure to check out the Research Topics for Genealogists section for information on various types of records and research.

RootsWeb

<http://www.rootsweb.com>

Designed to help connect genealogists so that they can assist others and share research data with each other, RootsWeb is an excellent Web site to find online message boards and e-mail mailing lists for various surnames, locations, and topics. You can add yourself to the RootsWeb Surname List so that others researching the same last name can contact you, upload your family tree to the WorldConnect database, and submit records you have transcribed yourself to user-created databases. Of course you can also search everything that has been contributed by others. This Web site also has a particularly nice interface for searching the Social Security Death Index.

USGenWeb Project

<http://www.usgenweb.org>

Maintained by volunteers, this Web site is dedicated to providing transcriptions of public records and other historical and genealogical documents for free. Volunteers work mainly at the state and county levels, so there is a significant amount of variation in the material available for a particular location. Content may include census records, newspaper articles and obituaries, marriage records, cemetery inscriptions, wills, military rosters, church records, family group sheets, and much more.

Vital Records Information for United States

<http://www.vitalrec.com>

This Web site provides information on how to obtain copies of vital records (birth certificates, death records, marriage licenses, and divorce decrees). Organized by state, county, and territory, you will find information on which institutions hold which records for which time periods and locations, how to request copies of those records, and—if available—links to other Web sites that contain scanned images or transcripts of vital records.

Further Reading Suggestions

These books, available from the library, will help you learn more about searching various genealogical Web sites and finding family history information online:

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Genealogy by Rhonda McClure (2nd ed., 2002)

Covers the use of general search engines and specialized genealogy search sites, profiles various genealogical software packages, contains a section on organizing information obtained electronically, and discusses how to publish that information as a family history Web site.

Finding Your Roots Online by Nancy Hendrickson (2003)

Using lots of real life examples and case studies, covers many aspects of researching family history online and offers exercises and checklists at the end of each chapter.

Genealogical Research on the Web by Diane K. Kovacs (2002)

Written by a former reference librarian and geared toward librarians and professional researchers, provides step-by-step activities to learn how to use the most popular and useful genealogy Web sites and promotes sound research methodology. Covers evaluation of online information and proper documentation of sources.

Genealogy Online by Elizabeth Powell Crowe (7th ed., 2003)

Extremely comprehensive, contains "in-depth coverage of 100+ websites," covers the use of chat and other networking options such as e-mail lists, and lists various ethnic genealogy resources (including Jewish, African-American, Creole/Cajun, Native American, and Melungeon). Also discusses legal aspects of online genealogy research: privacy, copyright, and ethics.

Genealogy Online for Dummies by Matthew L. Helm and April Leigh Helm (4th ed., 2004)

Covers all the basics and more, including government records and ethnic research, and comes with a CD containing family tree software and demo versions of other genealogy software.

Online Roots: How to Discover Your Family's History and Heritage with the Power of the Internet by Pamela Boyer Porter and Amy Johnson Crow (2003)

Discusses using all of the major genealogy Web sites, using the Internet to locate and obtain print documents and sources, determining the validity of electronic sources, and finding poor, orphaned, criminal, and mentally ill ancestors.

Plugging into Your Past: How to Find Real Family History Records Online by Rick Crume (2004)

Explores search strategies and focuses on where to find specific types of records, listing vital records, census records, wills and court records, cemeteries and tombstone inscriptions, military records, land and property records, newspapers, church records, and books, journals, and manuscripts by state.