

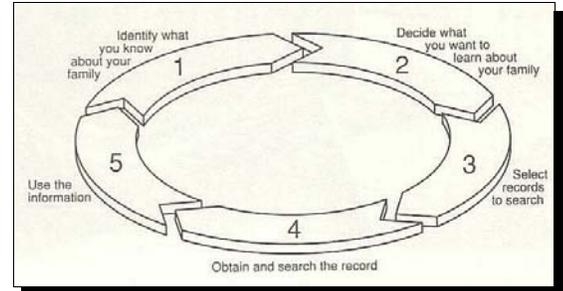


Basic Internet Resources for Family History Research

Mike Provard

Research Process

Successful family history research comes when the five-step research process is followed. Using the Internet has become a vital part of the process, but it must be used in wisdom and in order.



Research Toolbox

Researchers have many ways to find an ancestor, and the Internet is one of the tools in the researcher's tool box to accomplish this task. Important tools include:

- ☞ Family members
- ☞ Personal records
- ☞ Libraries & Archives
- ☞ Courthouses & Museums
- ☞ Churches, Cemeteries, & Funeral Homes
- ☞ Local Family History Center
- ☞ Newspapers, societies
- ☞ Professional researchers & Publications
- ☞ Internet

The Internet is a **gateway** and **signpost** to all of these record types.



www.google.com

One of the most useful Internet search engines available. There are other "meta search" web sites, but none come close to the ease of use, and uncluttered interface of Google. Google does not accept "payment for placement" which would otherwise skew search results. Google's simple search is bolstered by a robust advanced search engine where a user can define combinations of words and phrases to sort through three billion web pages. For the genealogist, a query on the surname and county name (or just the county name) will often bring up a wealth of information.

>>>> See also: <http://toolbar.google.com>

>>>> See also: www.touchgraph.com



www.ancestry.com

This is an extremely popular web site for genealogical researchers. The site contains millions of user-submitted records and the number of records increases daily. Family history centers have been granted the privilege of accessing Ancestry.com for free. New users to the site will use the basic search and may find the results daunting. Using the advanced search will bring back more specific results. Many more aspects of Ancestry are worth checking out, such as the census indexes and page images.



www.rootsweb.com

Rootsweb is a great “sharing” type of site that thrives because of the nature of the Internet. **Mailing lists**, a part of the Rootsweb site, is a location for true exchange of information. New users, and long-time users, can find an area discussion that will satisfy any research need. The mailing lists (all 26,904 of them) are broken down by subject: Surnames, USA, International, and Other. Subscribing is simply an e-mail sent to the list server. A subscriber can receive e-mails one by one as they are posted (list), or in one compiled e-mail each day (digest). Users may send messages or reply to a previous posting. Within each of the links of the major categories there are lists for topic specific mailing lists. Clicking on the topic will provide a page of information about the list and subscription information. Success with mailing lists come through active participation with other subscribers. Rewards come when others can provide clues and information on your own research.



More success can be found in using the Rootsweb **message boards**. Much like a virtual bulletin board, users can post messages with requests for help in finding an ancestor. Other users can reply to these postings. Specific topic message boards are the linked archive to the mailing lists.

www.familysearch.org

The web site of the Family History Library. Access to the International Genealogical Index, Ancestral File, Pedigree Resource File Index, Family History Library Catalog, and much more. Most beginning researchers will do a simple search from the “Search for Ancestors” screen and will end up with possibly hundreds of hits. More specific searches will cut the list down, more information about the ancestor will trim the list even more. Never put all the information known about an ancestor in the search fields; less is better.

A screenshot of the FamilySearch website's search interface. The page title is "SEARCH FOR ANCESTORS - ALL RESOURCES". It includes a navigation bar with "HOME", "SEARCH", "SHARE", and "LIBRARY". Below the navigation bar, there are instructions: "Enter at least your deceased ancestor's last name and then click Search." and a link "Tips on How to Search for Your Ancestor". The search form has several fields: "First Name", "Last Name", "Father Last Name", "Mother Last Name", "Spouse Last Name", "Event", "Year Range", "Year", "Country", and "State". There are also checkboxes for "Use exact spelling" and buttons for "Search" and "Clear".

When searching the Pedigree Resource File, click on the underlined source, then do a search on that number to show all the names that are in the submitter’s file.

Two other resources at FamilySearch.org are Research Guidance and Research Helps.

Research Guidance is a fairly unknown little gem to help new researchers understand what types of records to search. A preliminary set of questions about a particular ancestor will result in a set of records that may provide answers for the researcher. The entire time a researcher is using Research Guidance, a friendly research assistant is always there to guide the way and provide suggestions. Another related section of the Web site is **Research Helps**. Here a user can review and download many of the publications produced by the staff at the Family History Library. For some of the publications there are links to www.ldscatalog.com where multiple copies may be ordered.

Other web sites

The four web sites listed previously are good starting points. There are many, many others. Two that should be kept in mind are www.cyndislist.com and www.usgenweb.org.

Cyndi’s List is a collection of genealogically related Internet links, all arranged categorically. Currently there are 182,500 links. Many other resources are available on this site.



The **USGenWeb Project** consists of a group of volunteers working together to provide Internet



websites for genealogical research in every county and every state of the United States. The Project is non-commercial and fully committed to free access for everyone.