Using the Family History Library Catalog

OBJECTIVE: To understand how to use the Family History Library Catalog for Windows by applying suggestions, tips and helps.

Before you start searching the catalog, consider the following steps:

1. Identify what you already know about your ancestor.
2. Use home and family records to find what has already been compiled.
3. Decide what information is missing and which records you want to locate.
4. Try to use original records, if they exist.

Catalog entries are not case-sensitive, except for the call number of books. Do not use abbreviations for searches.

"Truncation" allows you to type as much of a word that you know is correct, leaving off the ending of a word when you are not sure if it ends in, for example: "son, stone, sen, ssen," etc.

1. Type in your search terms or the words that may help you find the information.
2. Look through the results and decide which records may help you.
3. Select an entry you want to look at more closely.
4. Copy the information you need to help you locate that record in the library (such as the call number or film number.)
5. Obtain the record by going to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City or by ordering the film or fiche through a local Family History Center. Books listed in the catalog cannot be sent to Family History Centers unless they are on film or fiche.

PLACE SEARCH:
　　　　Search all levels of jurisdiction: parish or city, county, state and country. **EACH** has different records because boundaries change and people move. Be sure to click on the tab at the top of the screen for place details and related places.

It is not necessary to type the word "city" or "county" in your search terms. For United States searches start with census records. Use indexes, if they are available.

SURNAME SEARCH:
　　　　Enter your surname; it may be in the title or a major family listed in a book. Search for alternative spellings of the name. Books and other hard-copy materials do not circulate from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Check to see if the book has been microfilmed. If it has been filmed, then you can order the film at your Family History Center.

Common surnames can result in hundreds of 'hits.' For example, the surname "Cleveland" results in 150 entries. Try the 'Keyword Search' to reduce the number.

KEYWORD SEARCH:

Keywords can be from titles, places, authors, notes, series, and subjects. You can enter several terms; just leave a single space between words. Type a word or phrase that describes what you want to find.

For common surnames, try adding the first name of your ancestor with their surname, if you still get too many results, add the location of their birth or of the family ancestry.   For example, 'Moses Cleveland Woburn,' results in just 11 entries. This finds all three search terms; Moses Cleveland of Woburn, Massachusetts either in the title or the notes section.

TITLE SEARCH:

This is similar to Keyword; just leave a single space between words. You don't need to know the exact title if the word or words you enter is part of the title. You do not need to know the order of the words in the title.

Using a common surname, try entering the surname and a locality in order to narrow your search.   For example, the surname 'Johnson' would return 2484 entries; but when combined with 'Alabama' finds 12 entries where 'Johnson Alabama' are both contained in the title.

AUTHOR SEARCH:

An author can be one person, several people, societies, churches or government agencies. To search for records by a government, church, business, or other institution, type the institution's name in the Surname or Corporate Name field. To search for works by a person, type the person's surname in the Surname or Corporate Name field. To narrow the search, type all or part of the first name in the First Name field.

SUBJECT SEARCH:

Can be a surname, language, occupation, ethnic groups, religions, historical events or even a surname. If you get too many 'hits', add more terms to the search.

FILM/FICHE SEARCH:

This finds an entry from a previous search where the number is already known. Films may contain more than one item. Be sure to include the item number in order to locate that item in the film. Microfiche numbers begin with a "6" and contain 7 numbers/digits.

If you find a film number in the catalog and you would like to see if BYU has this film in the Utah Valley Regional Family History Center, type the following: http://www.lib.byu.edu/fslab/ choose the icon at the bottom of the right-hand column "What FHL Films and Fiche are at BYU?" This opens up a window to enter the film/fiche number and click 'search.' You get an immediate response, yes or no. While you are on this BYU page, please note all the research and family history links that are included. This page is new this year, is very well organized and updated frequently.

CALL NUMBER SEARCH:

Call numbers of books and microfilm/microfiche numbers are NOT interchangeable. You must enter call numbers exactly as listed, using case-sensitive letters. Type upper- and lowercase letters exactly as they would appear in the catalog. On a book's label, call numbers are usually printed on two or more lines; type the first line, a space, and then the second line.

If you are interested to see if BYU might have a book that you have located in the FHL catalog, you can search the BYU book collection from the above link, but the FHLC and BYU do NOT use the same call numbering system. You would need to search the book by either the title or author in the BYU catalog.

Organizing Your Research from the FHLC

When research in the FHLC has helped you find useful information, you may want to keep track of those pages you searched and the information found. Two functions of your Internet browser can help you locate page(s) without having to perform a new search; then permanently save that web link address in your computer. These functions are "History" and "Favorites" or "Bookmarks."

Click on "History" on your web browser. The internet browser keeps track of the sites that you have visited and stores this information in a list. The "History" list gradually degrades over time, depending on how you have your browser set to retain the addresses of sites visited on the web. Each search that you performed in the FHLC is recorded in this history list. Move your mouse cursor down the history list, as you do this, a web site address is highlighted for each site. When you find a search result that you want to permanently save, you can record the location of the page in "Favorites" or "Bookmarks."

1. Click on the highlighted address and the page/screen is displayed to the right of the history list.
2. To save this site, open up the "Favorites" menu and click "Add."
3. You can add the link to the list or you can create a new folder in which to save it.
4. Continue down the history list until you have retrieved the pages you want to keep.

Saving your choices in "Favorites" allows you to preserve the locations where you have found information. As an example, you can arrange your research links in folders you label for your localities or surnames; later you can return to those sites and print out the information. Clicking on "Favorites" or "Bookmarks" on your web browser allows you to save a link to any web page that you have browsed.