

Searching the Internet with Search Engines

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- Is there any "wisdom" to using the Internet for family history research?
- Why?

google.com, Yahoo.com,
Cyndislist.com, etc.)

Why Use the Internet?

The Internet will allow you:

- to be much more productive in your research efforts,
- to extend your talents, skills, and abilities to your immediate and extended family members, as well as to the world, and above all,
- to take a quantum leap into the work of the millennium by being of service to those who have passed on.

What is the Internet?

- The Internet is a collection of electronic networks used to transfer information in digital form from one location to another, much like the telephone system with which we are familiar.
- See <http://www.hpcc.gov/fnc/internet.jpg>

Preliminaries

- To be an effective user of the Internet you need to know":
 - How to navigate in a "Windows" environment with your mouse and the keyboard.
 - How to use a "Browser" to navigate the Internet
- For browser information see:
<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/12browser.htm> .

Searching the Internet

- There are basically two major ways of searching the Internet for information:
 - By using a SEARCH ENGINE (such as google.com)
 - By using CATALOGS or DIRECTORIES (such as the ones located at

Internet Search Engines

- A simple definition of a search engine is that it is proprietary software which gathers and indexes web sites on the Internet.
- Two major types of search engines are used:
 - *Genealogical search engines* - those designed especially for locating family history
 - *Popular search engines* - which are used to access nearly all types of information on the Internet.

Premier or Popular Internet Search Engines:

Google	www.google.com
Alta Vista	www.altavista.com
Alltheweb	www.alltheweb.com/
Dogpile	www.dogpile.com/
Yahoo	www.yahoo.com/
Webcrawler	www.webcrawler.com/info.wbcrawl/

Search Engines

- *Use* computer programs to compile keywords from web sites to place them in massive indexes.
- *Scan* the keywords which have been placed in the indexes.
- *Link* the keywords back to the web pages.

Search Engines

To begin with:

- Search for a topic with which you are familiar.
- Use search engines intuitively.
- Use different search engines for the same key words.
- Examine the HELP screens when the intuition runs out.

- Examine advanced features as well.
- Use a tutorial.

How to Find Search Engines & Tutorials

- To find search engines enter:
 - “search engines”
- To find a search engine tutorial, enter:
 - “google tutorial”
 - “altavista tutorial”
 - “hotbot tutorial”

Preparing Your Search

Learn how to prepare your search by:

- *Identifying* the main concepts in your topic.
- *Determining* synonyms, alternate spellings, and variant word forms.
- Example:
 - George Duke
 - George Jonathan Duke
 - George J. Duke

Another example of variations of Spelling:

- Philo Farnsworth.....8,690 hits
- “Philo Farnsworth”.....2,580 hits
- “Philo T. Farnsworth”.....4,630 hits
- “Philo Taylor Farnsworth”..... 537 hits
- “Philo Farnsworth” OR “Philo T. Farnsworth” OR “Philo Taylor Farnsworth”.....17,200 hits
- “Philo T. Farnsworth genealogy”.....151 hits
- Or another approach is to use the tilde (~).

Example: “Philo T. Farnsworth”
~genealogy...2310 HITS

Limit again by using what terms?

Search Strategies

Learn How to use good search strategies and techniques to:

- Narrow and broaden your search
- Eliminate irrelevant web sites
- Push the most relevant information to the top of the list
- Use Boolean operators when necessary

Narrowing your search:

- Narrow your search by using .. [two periods between two dates]
 - Example: “philo farnsworth”
1907..1971
- Additional descriptive information could be added to the search, such as spouse’s name, place of birth, etc.

Boolean Operators

- With google.com all key words are treated as “AND” queries. (The + sign or “AND” are not necessary)
- Supports “OR” queries if in caps.
- Can use minus sign (-) to eliminate words (doesn’t always work)
- Implied Boolean logic uses the signs + or –

Phrase Searching

- Use quotation marks (“ ”) for phrase searching, although not always necessary in Google since it uses an “AND” mode.
- You can combine quotation marks with Boolean operators
- “Advanced Mode” for searching usually has a box for phrase searching

Extra things you could try:

- Use the two dots or periods between two dates to help narrow your search, e.g., 1620..1700. Doesn’t always work well, but try it.
- Wildcard feature (*) works with some search engines, but not others.
- The Tilde (~) is functional for determining synonyms to generic words like “genealogy”. Use often.

Preliminaries:

- Select a search engine to use.
- Your Internet Provider will always supply you with an Internet search engine.
- Use it to locate specific information.
- Compare your findings with the usage of a second search engine.
- Try using Google.com as a comparison.

Focus on Google

Google Facts:

- 1.5 billion pages are indexed.
- Returns a high number of relevant pages.
- Pages are ranked based on number of “high quality” links TO the pages
- The most popular search engine on the Internet

Google

- Google.com is one of the best search engines on the Internet.
- Google is easy to use.
- Google offers many side-benefits.
- You can download a free toolbar.
- You can make it your home page for searching.

Access to Google

- An google icon may already be on your desktop or Web browser, or
- You could type in www.google.com, or
- You could simply download the FREE Google Toolbar, which is the preferred way, by going to:
<http://toolbar.google.com>

Google Toolbar

The Toolbar will:

- Speed up the search process
- Offer a pop-up ad blocker
- Provide various options for searching
- Allow quick access to sites visited
- Allow you to set "preferences" and language

Appearance of Toolbar

- The Google Toolbar will appear on nearly every web site you visit.
- Note its location at the FamilySearch web site, www.familysearch.org, or any other site you may visit.
- It does not take the place of your address bar.

Sample Search with Google:

- To show how to find an ancestor named *Samuel Smith*
- To show how to narrow a search with qualifiers for such a common name.

Searching with Qualifiers

- Use Qualifiers when searching for common spellings of names, i.e., Smith, Brown, Jones, etc.
- Qualifiers are the words you select which you think would further help to identify your ancestor, such as:
 - A spouses name
 - A date of birth or death or marriage
 - A term such as: census, town, county, state, type of event, etc.
 - There are many combinations of terms you could use.

Expanding Searches with Google:

- Use fewer qualifiers, or
- Use the tilde (~) to search for synonyms
- Example:
 - Susan Hales (27,700 hits – too many)
 - "Susan Hales" (493 hits – probably too many)

- "Susan Hales" genealogy (13 hits – too few)
- "Susan Hales" ~genealogy (170 hits – just right)

Locating Tombstones

Using Google

- Actual images of a limited number of tombstones can be viewed.
- Volunteer groups and family organizations are making these images available, via USGenWeb.
- Most tombstone inscriptions on the Internet appear in typescript form

Language Tools on Google

- Can search pages written in dozens of languages.
- Can translate text (somewhat adequately) or Web pages from French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Portuguese to English.
- Very useful when looking at "foreign" news, bibliographies, biographies, etc.

Use Google as a Phone Directory

- Direct Look-up: type in a persons name followed by city and state, e.g., Roger Flick, Orem, UT.
- Also, for a Residential Phone Book: type in rphonebook:Flick, Orem, UT
- For a Reverse Look-up, type in the telephone number, e.g., 801-225-4943
- Google does help you remove your number from these listings, but does not get it totally off the web.
- Or a general address look-up can be made with any search engine by using www.411.com

Example of Locating Original Documents:

- Locate a marriage record of John Rabb and Annie in Hillsborough County, Florida, about 1882.
- Use as a search query: "Hillsborough County" Florida "Marriage Records"
- Refers to the University of South Florida Special Collections Digital Library

Examples of what can be found on the Internet:

■ Compiled sources

- Family Histories
- Genealogies: pedigrees and family group sheets
- GEDCOM Files
- LDS Ordinances
- Biographies
- Pictures of ancestors, tombstones, houses, family memorabilia, localities of interest
- Voice clips, video clips, music
- Indexes and transcriptions of records
- Tutorials for learning how to do family history

■ Original Records

- Certificates of Birth, Marriage, and Death
- Census manuscripts
- Journals and Diaries
- Handwritten letters
- Copies of original documents from microfilm
- Any scanned documents, i.e., wills, notes, certificates, etc.

Google Options to explore:

■ Google Links

- Advanced Search
- Google Images
- Google Groups
- Web Directory
- Google News
- Google Answers
- Blogger.com
- Zeitgeist
- Search Preferences
- Language Tools

Other Options (continued)

■ Options to Set:

- Drop down search history
- Highlight Button
- Word Find Buttons

■ Page Information

- Page Rank
- Page Rank Display

■ Accessories:

- Popup Blocker
- Blog This!
- News Button

■ Configuration

- Options Button

Meta-Search Engines

- Will search several search engines at once.
- Can be used to determine which search engine brings the most relevant results.
- Works best with simple searches rather than complex searches.

Examples of Meta-Search Engines:

- **Dogpile** (14 search engines & subject directories) See Advanced Search for each one. <http://www.dogpile.com>
- **Vivisimo** (8 search engines & subject directories) <http://www.vivisimo.com>
- **Metacrawler** (7 search engines & subject directories) <http://www.metacrawler.com>

Summary

- Use wisdom and record the best techniques for accessing web sites.
- Bookmark the sites or keep a separate table of web sites and their descriptions.
- Select the most relevant keywords which describe your topic.
- Know how to use several search engines, not just one.
- **Use the tilde (~) for common generic synonyms.**
 - Example: ~genealogy