



# USING THE INTERNET FOR FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

*Joseph Tritchler M.S.*

Email: [ancestry.tracker@gmail.com](mailto:ancestry.tracker@gmail.com)

URL: <https://ancestrytracking.com>

Facebook: <https://fb.com/JTritchler.AncestryTracker>

## Strategies for success

- Have a research plan
- Stay focused
- NGS “[Guidelines for Use of Computer Technology in Genealogical Research](#)”
  - accept that **computer technology has not changed the principles of genealogical research**, only some of the procedures;
  - treat compiled sources examined on-line in the same way as other **compiled sources**, being aware of their potential weaknesses as well as their **usefulness as guides to original sources**;
  - accept **digital images** or enhancements **of an original record as a satisfactory substitute for the original** only when there is reasonable assurance that the image accurately reproduces the unaltered original;
  - **cite sources**
  - preserve the integrity of your own databases by **evaluating the reliability** of downloaded data before incorporating it into their own files;
- Keep a record of every site/search
  - URL (Uniform Resource Locator) (http:// etc )
  - Name of the database
  - Search terms used

## Gateway websites

- Genealogical Gateways
  - Cyndi's List : <https://www.cyndislist.com/us/>
  - FamilySearch Wiki: <https://familysearch.org/en/wiki/>
  - Linkpendium : <https://linkpendium.com/>
  - Access Genealogy : <https://accessgenealogy.com/>
- Locality Gateways
  - Genealogy Links: <https://www.genealogylinks.net/>
  - World GenWeb Project: <https://www.worldgenweb.org/>
  - US GenWeb Project: <https://www.usgenweb.org/>
  - Canada GenWeb Project, Germany GenWeb Projects, etc
  - CanGenealogy: <https://www.cangenealogy.com/>
  - Olive Tree Genealogy (U.S. and Canadian ancestry): <https://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/index.shtml>
  - GENUKI: UK & Ireland Genealogy: <https://www.genuki.org.uk/>
- Ethnic/Religion Gateways
  - AfriGeneas: <https://www.afrigeneas.org/>
  - JewishGen: <https://www.jewishgen.org/>

## Online databases

- May require a fee to view or obtain copies of the information in the database
- MANY genealogy database websites – Fee-based and Free Online Database Gateways

- National Archives Database Links: <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/other-websites/database-links>
- Arkansas State University Free Online Databases: <https://libguides.astate.edu/freedatabases>

#### Specific Databases

- American Ancestors (\$): <https://www.americanancestors.org/>
- David Rumsey Map Collection: <https://www.davidrumsey.com/>
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – General Land Office (GLO) Records: <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>
- “The Civil War” National Park Services: <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
- American Wars: <https://www.americanwars.org/king-georges-war-ri.htm>
- Valley Forge Muster Roll: <https://valleyforgemusterroll.org/>

### **Online libraries, archives and other record repositories**

- World Library: <http://www.worldlibrary.org/>
- Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/texts>
- HathiTrust Digital Library: <https://www.hathitrust.org/>
- OpenLibrary.org: <https://openlibrary.org>
- Digital Public Library of America (dp.la): <https://dp.la>
- Google Books: <https://books.google.com/>
- WorldCat: <https://worldcat.org>

### **Internet Queries**

#### **1. Surname-based queries**

- GENUKI Surname List (UK surnames): <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/SurnameLists>
- Guild of One-Name Studies: <https://one-name.org/>
- WikiTree One Name Studies: [https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Category:One\\_Name\\_Studies](https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Category:One_Name_Studies)
- Surname message boards e.g. Ancestry Message Boards: <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/>
- GEDCOM websites
  - ✚ Most of the commercial websites allow you to upload GEDCOMS
  - ✚ GEDCOM Library: <https://gedcomlibrary.com>
  - ✚ GEDmatch – requires you to have uploaded your DNA profile AND your associated GEDCOM
- Searching GEDCOM files – 2 examples
  - ✚ FamilySearch – go to the Pedigree Resource File in the “Genealogies” section of SEARCH

#### **2. Search engine queries**

1. Steps for finding relevant information on the internet
  - a. Have a search plan
  - b. Read the search screen then read any search help screen(s). Sites may have unique search procedures.
  - c. Try alternate search terms, phrasings, and spellings
2. General search engines
  - a. Google
  - b. Bing
  - c. Yahoo
  - d. DuckDuckGo

3. **Boolean search logic** – reads left to right. Put most important term(s) first

a. **Boolean operators:**

- i. **AND** – helps narrow a search
- ii. **OR** – helps broaden a search
- iii. **NOT** (or minus sign – ) excludes results containing a specific word

b. **Boolean modifiers**

- i. **\*** asterisk – truncation tool – search based upon the letters before the asterisk
- ii. **(parentheses)** – used to encapsulate OR statements
- iii. **"quotation marks"** – searches for exactly what you type inside the quotation marks
- iv. **?** (or sometimes **!**) – searches for variations in spelling or a word, e.g. col?r searches for both the American spelling (color) and the British spelling (colour)
- v. **Site:** or **URL:** search on a particular website (no space between : and the website URL)
- vi. Date searching: type beginning **two periods** ending year (no space between the years and the periods) e.g. 1700..1800 will search for the terms you provided during just that time period

4. **Genealogy-specific search engines**

- a. **GenealogyInTime** – several different types of specialized search engines (Genealogy, Family Tree, Images, Rare Books): <http://www.genealogyintime.com/index.html>
- b. **Periodical Source Index (PERSI)**: Allen County Public Library Genealogical Center <https://www.genealogycenter.info/persi/> or Findmypast (\$)

## Useful tools on the Internet


- 1. Date calculators: <https://www.timeanddate.com/date/dateadded.html>

### Date Calculator: Add to or Subtract From a Date

Enter a start date and add or subtract any number of days, months, or years.

[Count Days](#)
[Add Days](#)
[Workdays](#)
[Add Workdays](#)
[Weekday](#)
[Week Ne](#)

#### Start Date

Month:	Day:	Year:	Date:	Add/Subtract:	Years:	Months:	Weeks:	Days:
<input type="text" value="mm"/>	<input type="text" value="dd"/>	<input type="text" value="yyyy"/>		<input type="text" value="(-) Subtract"/> <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Today

☐ Include the time
 ☐ Include only certain weekdays

☐ Repeat

2. RecordSeek: <https://recordseek.com/>

Source Title

Citations Simplified

This is whatever you want to call this

Source (URL)

<https://recordseek.com/>

This is the URL where you find the record on the internet

Where the Record Is Found (Citation)

Format: **Chicago**

"Citations Simplified", RecordSeek, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://recordseek.com/>

Your detailed source citation goes here. Example: Minnesota Department of Health, Certificate of Birth, no. 98765-000, Jane Doe, 25 December 1900.

Describe the Record (Notes)

Source created by RecordSeek.com

A space for notes: transcript, extract, or abstract of the source content.

3. Translation

Google Translate: <https://translate.google.com/>

Bing Translate: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/bing/features/translator>

4. Transcription

Transcribus: <https://www.transcribus.org/>

Google Docs: Upload to Google Drive as JPEG or PDF – Open with Google Docs

5. Artificial Intelligence

• Current genealogical applications of AI

- a. **Transcribe handwritten old records from** images (e.g. FamilySearch Full-Text search and Transcribus)
- b. **Analyze and enhance photos** (facial recognition, colorize, repair, and label photos) (e.g. MyHeritage photo enhancement)
- c. **Search, combine and match data across different datasets** (Ancestry)
- d. **Construct family trees by suggesting relatives to add to a tree** (Ancestry)
- e. **Translate records, journals, webpages** (Google Translate)
- f. **Search for records and databases** (ChatGPT)
- g. **Provide research tips** (ChatGPT)

• AI websites

- a. ChatGPT: <https://chatgpt.com/>
- b. Microsoft Copilot: <https://copilot.microsoft.com/>
- c. Google Gemini: <https://gemini.google.com/>

• Using AI – *The bare-bone Basics*

- a. Formulate precise queries that clearly define your search topic using specific keywords
- b. Contextualize your question by providing background information or related details to help AI understand your intent better.
- c. Request the source materials for the AI response so you can verify credibility and accuracy.
- d. Compare responses from different AI tools to ensure consistency.
- e. Follow-up with clarifying questions if the response is incomplete or unclear.