

Rookie's Guide to Top U.S. Websites and CDs

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Introduction

If you want to accomplish a lot of U.S. research on a low budget, CDs and Websites are the way to begin. This lesson covers CDs, free Websites, and commercial Websites used most often at the Family History Library. As you'll see, some of the commercial Websites require payment if you access them from home, but are free if you access them from family history centers.

Accessing Family History Library CDs from Afar

The fact that you or your family history center doesn't own one of the CDs mentioned in this guide doesn't mean you'll have to buy the CD to search it. Using a *Request for Photocopies: Books, Microfilm, or Microfiche* (Church Distribution Center item # 31768) you can request the search of a single name in a CD for a small fee. This form is available at family history centers and on www.FamilySearch.org under Search, Research Helps.

Cemetery Records

FindaGrave.com lists addresses, maps, and GPS coordinates for over 150,000 cemeteries. Also some online records.

CemeteryJunction.com lists over 38,000 U.S. cemeteries. Includes cemetery addresses and links to records online.

Interment.net includes a database of 3 million cemetery records from 6,700 cemeteries.

Census (U.S. Federal)

Census-Online.com lists free Websites, commercial Websites, CDs, and books for census indexes, records, and images. Resources are arranged by state and county. If you use only one census Website, use this one because it links to all the others.

Ancestry.com has images of census records from 1790-1930 and database indexes for most of these census years. Available by paid subscription. Free at family history centers.

Heritage Quest CDs include images and indexes of many censuses, including indexes of previously-unindexed 1910 censuses. Available at www.HeritageQuest.com. Some CDs available at the Family History Library.

Genealogy.com offers many census indexes on CD and on the fee-based Website. Many CDs are also available at the Family History Library. The Website includes census images, as well.

U.S. GenWeb Census Project at www.us-census.org/search.html is the most comprehensive free set of census transcriptions on the Web. Searchable by name, name and state, or name and year. Since the project does no separate given names and surnames into different fields, the search engine yields many false hits.

Directories (Addresses/Phone Numbers)

Switchboard.com includes residential and business directories. Search results can be ranked alphabetically or by distance. Business directory can be searched by name (Horton) and category (Funeral Directors) or distance and category simultaneously. Maps and directions included.

InfoSpace.com includes residential and business directories. Search results can be ranked alphabetically or by distance. Business directory can be searched by name (Horton) and category (Funeral Directors) or distance and category simultaneously. Maps and directions included.

Genealogies

FamilySearch Online at www.FamilySearch.org offers free genealogy databases of over 800 million names, many of which are extracted from original records.

World Family Tree by Genealogy.com is available online for a fee and on a large set of CDs at the Family History Library. This is one of the largest genealogy databases available.

Ancestry Archive at www.KindredConnections.com lists 146 million names. Fee based site. You can search this database for free at family history centers, but must buy a personal subscription to add your genealogy database or add extractions.

Immigration

Ellis Island Online at www.EllisIsland.org is an every-name database of passengers

who arrived in New York harbor from 1892 to 1924.

Passenger & Immigration Lists Index, 2001 ed., (FHL CD #354) by Genealogy.com is the largest index of published U.S. passenger lists. Searching the CD version for a name is much faster than searching the many sets of books and several addendums at the Family History Library.

Family Tree Maker's immigration CDs at www.Genealogy.com contain published passenger lists for various ethnicities and ports.

Lessons

Ancestors family history and genealogy series by PBS. Available at www.pbs.org/kbyu/ancestors/. Contains many lessons, forms, video clips, and firsthand accounts showing how researchers succeeded in finding their ancestors.

Religion 261 – Introduction to Family History is a BYU college course whose lessons are available online for free at <http://www.261.byu.edu/index.html>. Course covers gathering information, Personal Ancestral File, FamilySearch Internet, importing data files, basic research, family history centers, TempleReady, and sharing data files.

Mailing Lists at <http://lists.RootsWeb.com> contains the Web's largest directory of genealogical e-mail lists covering an incredible array of topics, surnames, ethnicities, and places.

Beyond the Veil: Using LDS Resources to Discover Your Ancestors at <http://users.mstar2.net/ritcheym> is a

personal Website containing lessons on software, research, and how to magnify LDS family history callings.

Links

CyndisList.com is the largest directory of genealogy links on the Internet. Includes 181,000 links in 150 categories.

USGenWeb is the largest collection of place-specific U.S. genealogy links on the Internet. State and county pages vary widely as to layout and depth of content, but can include important links, addresses of record offices, societies, and libraries, lessons, extracted records, and record images.

Manuscripts (Church records, family Bibles, letters, diaries, etc.)

National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) by Library of Congress. Available at www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html. Yields titles and call numbers of manuscripts in archives nationwide, as well as contact information for each archive.

Maps & Gazetteers

To find many kinds of U.S. records, you will need to know where your ancestor lived – particularly the county. Since county borders changed so often, different counties may have contained your ancestor's town during different years. Maps and *gazetteers* (dictionaries of place names) can help you match your ancestor's town with its parent county in any given year.

AniMap County Boundary Historical Atlas, with SiteFinder by The Gold Bug (FHL CD #865) allows you to plot your ancestor's town on a state map with county borders for any given year. This can save you hours of searching in historical maps and gazetteers.

Topozone.com maps help you ignore county and state borders and think in terms of mountains, rivers, and other topography that would tend to link or separate places.

Geographic Nameserver by USGS lists present-day latitude, longitude, population, elevation, and historical notes, including establishment date and variant historical names.

MapQuest.com displays clear, modern-day street maps which can be zoomed to scale and printed.

Early American Gazetteer: 1833 and 1853 Editions (FHL CD #45) contains text-searchable images of Darby's 1833 gazetteer, Hayward's 1853 gazetteer, and the May 1996 version of *Geographic Names Information System* database.

LDS Family History Suite CD by Ancestry.com (FHL CD #205) contains text-searchable versions of the *1854 Gazetteer of the United States* and *American Genealogical Gazetteer*. Also includes modern county border maps for each state.

Map Collections: 1500-2002 by Library of Congress contains a wonderful array of maps treating exploration, cities and towns, environment, culture, military action, and transportation and communication. Available at

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html>.

David Rumsey Map Collection by

Cartographic Associates includes 8,000 rare U.S. maps organized by state or author. Available at www.davidrumsey.com.

Periodicals

Periodical Source Index (PERSI) by the Allen County Public Library is an index of article titles in all major U.S. genealogical periodicals. Available via paid subscription at www.Ancestry.com, which can be accessed for free at family history centers. PERSI is very important because the Family History Library Catalog indexes only the titles of *periodicals*, not the titles of their *articles*. PERSI indexes *article titles*, allowing users to find published church, military, census, cemetery, and other records in periodicals owned by the Family History Library and other libraries.

Search Engines

Google.com is a great search engine because of how it ranks sites. When site A links to site B, Google uses that as a “vote” for site B’s importance. Site B’s rank also increases if the sites that link to it are themselves important. When you search Google, then, the search results are not ranked just by whether your search terms appear in the resulting pages. The results are also ranked by how important the resulting sites are according to other sites.

AltaVista.com indexes the most Web pages of any Internet search engine. Search results can be overwhelming, though, so read the Help page to learn how to narrow your search using Boolean search operators.

Social Security Records

Ancestry.com. If you find your ancestor in Ancestry’s Social Security Death Index, you can have the site generate a letter to order the SS-5 application. This expensive but valuable application record gives the ancestor’s full date and place of birth and full name of each parent. Ancestry’s version of the Social Security Death Index is updated more often than any other version online.

Vital Records (Birth, Marriage, & Death)

VitalRec.com lists addresses and telephone numbers of state and county records offices. Also includes years covered by records, fees, forms, and ordering information.