Three Approaches to Finding & Searching Databases in FamilySearch.org

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This lecture covers the types of places genealogists find useful databases via FamilySearch.org. These include the really big partner sites, geopolitical sites, volunteer and free projects, and government sponsored sites. Also covered are tools and approaches for finding the type of database you need at FamilySearch.org, and different search techniques for the databases online at FamilySearch.org.

There are three approaches to finding and searching databases via FamilySearch.org:

I. Search *vs* Search
II. 3 Ways to Search
III. More Via Links

PART I: SEARCH (TAB) *vs* SEARCH (ICON)
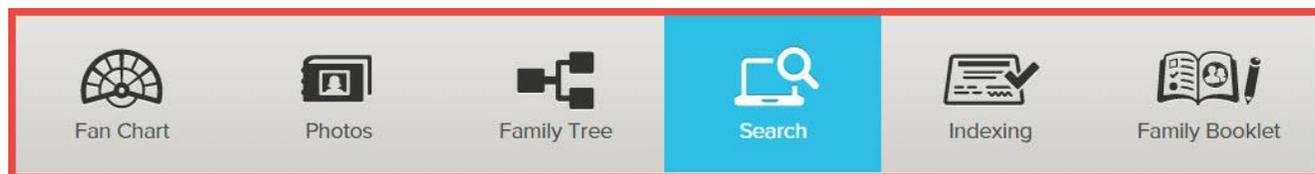
A. Search tab:

Size of databases (as of end of 2015):
- FamilyTree has 1.1 Billion People in the tree with 2.47 Million Contributors
- Memories has 10.3 Million Memories (total)
  - 9 Million Photos
  - 276,000 Documents
  - 747,000 Stories
  - 38,000 Audio Recordings
- Search has 5.31 Billion Searchable Records
  - 19 Million Non-English Records Indexed
  - 110 Million Total Records Indexed
  - 2.049 Total Collections
  - 122 Million Record Images Published

Search tab gives access to different databases at FamilySearch:

- Records (5.31 Billion searchable records—some indexed and some browse-able images)
- Genealogies
  - Ancestral File
  - Pedigree Resource File
  - International Genealogical Index
  - Community Trees projects
  - Oral Genealogies
- Catalog
  - Formerly called the Family History Library Catalog
  - Now called the FamilySearch Catalog
  - Includes resources held by FamilySearch.org, the Family History Library, and selected FamilySearch Centers
  - Provides links to WorldCat and ArchiveGrid from OCLC
- Books
  - More than 200,00 digitized genealogy and family history publications
  - Search field searches **only** descriptions of those 200,000 digitized publications
  - Advanced Search gives you the option to do a full text search
- Wiki
  - Is currently undergoing a complete overhaul (huge changes)
  - 83,093 articles that often include links to databases elsewhere on the Internet
  - Articles cover topics of genealogical interest for the United States and 244 countries
  - There are also many topical articles such as…
    - "Family History for Beginners"
    - "Get Started in the Wiki"
    - "Professional Genealogists who specialize in Russian Research"
    - "Reference Materials and Finding Aids"
    - "Military Records"
    - " United States Migration: Railroads"
    - "Gretna Greens in the United States"

B. Search icon:

Search icon takes you directly to the Search Historical Records page at FamilySearch.org.

PART II: 3 WAYS TO SEARCH

FamilySearch.org provides three ways to approach your search in their Historical Records Collections and links to take your search elsewhere via partner sites: the Search Historical Records template, the Research by Location option to narrow your search by locality first, and the Find a Collection option to be even more specific in the record group you want to choose to search.

A. Search Historical Records template

1. Allows you to search by name and/or life event and/or relationship plus the option to add additional restrictions to your search. This is why the parts of the search temple are called: Deceased Ancestor's Name, Search with a Life Event, Search with a Relationship, and Restrict Records By. There are small unlabeled boxes to check to require an exact match on that field. At the bottom of the search template is a small box to check if you want to require the search to "Match all items exactly."

2. This is NOT a fill in the blanks exercise!

3. You do not need to include a first and/or last name for an individual in your search. You may want to do a Parents Search or a No Name Search.

4. Once you make the search you see a results page and "Filter Your Results By:" fields are added to the page. The major difference is that changing your search criteria in the upper portion of the search template and clicking on the UPDATE button makes the site re-do your search as opposed to simply using the Filters provided below to filter your original search results set.

B. Find a Collection

1. You use the Collection Title box to type in portions of words to describe the collection you specifically want to search.

2. Don't type too fast! The Web site tries to guess which record collection you are searching for based on the portion of the words you type. This is one way to explore and find additional databases.

C. Research by Location

1. This begins with an interactive map of the world which allows you to start working your way down geographically to the level at which you want to search for records.

2. Once you choose a region (the United States is considered a region) a list of locations within that region appears (but only those locations for which FamilySearch has records). This allows you to scroll down through them alphabetically. For the United States this is a list of the states. For other regions it is a list of the countries.

Hovering over a location name in the list brings up a details window listing the name of the location (a link), the number of collections for that location, the range of years those collections cover, the number of indexed records, and the number of record images available for online browsing. Below these statistics is a another link "Start researching in [name of location]" which takes you to the same Web page as clicking on the location name link at the top.

3. Clicking on the name of location link [Tennessee in the box above] or the "Start researching in…" link below takes you to the research page for that location where a number of tools are conveniently

brought together. These include a search template for the indexed databases, a list of image-only collections are links to where you begin to browse them, and on the right sidebar a link to the FamilySearch Catalog collection for that location plus a link to the FamilySearch Wiki article (portal) for that location. There is often much of value to be found by exploring these additional resources rather than just going straight to the search template.

PART III: MORE VIA LINKS

The FamilySearch.org site is a particularly good resource for finding links to genealogically important databases elsewhere on the Web. Links to external resources can be found at FamilySearch.org via the FamilySearch Catalog, the FamilySearch Wiki, and links to their Partner sites.

A. FamilySearch Catalog

1. The main search page for the FamilySearch Catalog has a sidebar on the right which refers the user to OCLC's WorldCat and ArchiveGrid web sites.

2. WorldCat.org is searchable free online but your results list may vary if you search via a computer in a subscribing institution. You may get a fuller list of locations for an item if the computer location you use is authenticated (by IP address) as associated with a FirstSearch (paid version of WorldCat) subscribing institution. Don't worry. In the vast majority of searches the free online version is more than adequate.

3. ArchiveGrid is now owned by OCLC and is a major tool for locating archival material. Many of those types of items are cross referenced in WorldCat, too.

B. FamilySearch Wiki

1. Contains links often found by location but also by topic.

2. Watch for large blue buttons prominently displayed on county, state, and country Wiki pages (articles) that take you to long lists of links categorized by record type.

3. Record Selection Tables are now called "Record Finder" and listed under Beginning Research on the state Wiki pages.

C. Partner Sites

Currently members of the LDS Church are granted free subscriptions to Ancestry.com (the world edition subscription), MyHeritage.com (the plus subscription), findmypast.com (the plus subscription), and AmericanAncestors.org (a FamilySearch Affiliate Membership) accessible via the Web.

Those who are not members of the LDS Church can search these Web sites for free in FamilySearch Centers (including the Orange County FamilySearch Library).