
Online Tools for Genealogists



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Links to most of the sites mentioned in this lecture are at: www.zroots.com/links.htm

This lecture covers seven types of online tools genealogists find helpful: language and handwriting, time and calendar, geographic and map, history and background information, help and educational, utilities, and locator tools.

PART I. TOOLS TO FIND TOOLS

A. Google is not necessarily the best tool to find tools online, although Google has developed many products and resources that are useful for doing genealogy and family history.

1. To get to a list of more resources at Google:
 - a. click on the **more** ▼ tab to the right of the tabs on the Google home page
 - b. click on **even more** >> at the bottom of the menu that appears
 - c. search down through the list of **More Google Products** and notice the utilities (like the Google Toolbar, Picasa image editing software, and Google's Web browser called Chrome), Translate, and the additional services offered
2. Improve Your Search Experience (www.google.com/intl/en/help/features.html)
 - a. Reference Tools (example of Unit conversion: four chains in feet) [264 ft.]
 - b. Choosing Keywords (search on: define provenance)
 - c. Local Search (find food using identifier and zip code: pizza 92821)
3. Remember to use your browser's **Find on Page** feature when searching results lists
4. Genealogy Search Help and Genealogy Message Searcher are free Google tools
5. RootsSearcher Chrome browser extension (free)
6. Google Cultural Institute (history information portal)

B. Other Search Engines

1. About.com
2. Answers.com
3. Ask.com
4. SearchEngineColossus.com
5. Million Short (focuses on returning matches for records that are not high ranked by Google—things like ancestral records and obscure historical documents)
6. Genealogy Search Engine at GenealogyInTime Magazine's site (see "A Guide to Performing Online Genealogy Searches" listed under **Articles** at: www.genealogyintime.com/genealogy-articles.html)
7. Mocavo (basic is free and paid does an auto search for their new online trees)
8. Linkpendium (Genealogy search engine for USA filtered by state)

C. Directories

1. Cyndi's List
2. Linkpendium USA & UKI Directories (surname links and links by state & county)

D. Portals

1. RefDesk.com
 - a.) use the Search RefDesk site search tool on the left sidebar of home page
 - b.) search on "Essential Reference Tools"
 - c.) see "Top Reference Tools" sidebar on bottom right side of home page
2. Epodunk (find cemeteries, libraries, and even newspapers in/near small USA towns)
3. Europeana (www.europeana.eu) is a portal for Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (DDB)
- 5.6 million records from 1800 institutions on Art, Culture, and History (archival records)

E. Wikis

1. Wikipedia.org (a major tool for genealogists in so many ways)
2. FamilySearch Research Wiki (www.familysearch.org > Learn > Research Wiki (check out the new green "Online Records" button for most U.S. states on state portal pages)

PART II. LANGUAGE & HANDWRITING TOOLS

A. Google keyword search: define provenance

B. The Free Dictionary (www.thefreedictionary.com)

1. See Also Found In feature
2. Pronunciation audio files

C. OneLook Dictionary (www.onelook.com)

1. finds definitions and translations from multiple dictionaries
2. reverse dictionary search
3. specialty dictionaries (example: LAW > Bouvier's Law Dictionary 1856 ed.)

D. YourDictionary.com (www.yourdictionary.com)

1. Also has thesaurus, audio pronunciations, wild card searches
2. Links to Language and Translation Tools

E. Variety of language, dictionary, and translation tools apps for mobile devices

F. FreeTranslation.com and Google Translate (by URL or text you copy and paste)

G. BYU Center for Family History and Genealogy > Resources tab > Script Tutorials (currently have English, German, Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Script Tutorials)

H. FamilySearch.org Research Classes Online has hundreds of free video tutorials including 229 on languages and reading handwritten records (www.familysearch.org > LEARN > Research Courses)

I. duoLingo.com (free language learning gamified)

J. TypeIt.org (a quick way to do diacritics and accent marks)

PART III. TIME & CALENDAR TOOLS

- A. RefDesk.com > Calendars: Time and Date Resources Page
- B. Calendar Zone (www.calendarzone.com)
- C. FamilySearch Research Wiki (do location and topic searches)
 - 1. From home page search for *French Republican Calendar*
 - 2. From home page click on *France* under **Browse by Country**

PART IV. GEOGRAPHIC & MAP

- A. Check the FamilySearch Research Wiki for “Surname Distribution Maps”
- B. GLO/BLM site (Bureau of Land Management)
 - 1. Search Land Patents
 - 2. Search Surveys
 - 3. Search Land Status Records
 - 4. the BLM recently added Federal Survey Plans (survey plats) and Field Notes
- C. Arphax.com publishes map books and has a free surname search engine at their site online (the www.historygeo.com paid site will soon have all the Arphax books searchable online)
- D. Geographic Names Information System (GNIS)
 - 1. search for current (or historical) place or feature (stream, school, etc.) names
 - 2. to sort results by column click on that column's header
 - 3. click on the feature name in the search results list to see that feature's details screen
 - a. Variant Names are listed with the source (citation) for each
 - b. notice the links to free mapping services (each with different features)
 - c. Topozone is gone from this list (it is now part of Trails.com and costs \$\$\$)
 - 4. GNIS in Google Map has Satellite, Topo, and Terrain views
 - 5. The National Map viewer is excellent for locating churches, cemeteries, etc.
 - 6. HomeTownLocator has maps rendered with USGS digital raster graphics (made by scanning a topographic map and using a computer to mark the changes in elevation)

NOTE: Two excellent lectures were given at the NGS 2009 Conference in Raleigh, NC by Richard G. Sayre CG: "Google Earth for Genealogists" (with Pamela Boyer Sayre) and "Topographic and Other Maps for Genealogists."
- E. Finding historical gazetteers is one of the most challenging online searches for genealogists. Best advice: use all of the tools listed in Part I above, especially the FS Research Wiki.
 - 1. GENUKI Gazetteer (www.genuki.org.uk/big/Gazetteer)
 - 2. “The JewishGen Communities Database” with 6000 places and “The JewishGen Gazetteer” database 1.8 million locations: <http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/>
- F. County Boundaries (<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>) is an excellent tool for finding historic county boundaries within a state in USA
- G. “Railroads and the Making of Modern America” <http://railroads.unl.edu/>
- H. MyGenealogyHound.com (free)

PART V. HISTORY & BACKGROUND

- A. Wikipedia.org is an excellent resource for the history, geography, and demographics of many areas and countries around the world ...just remember to check the See Also, References, Further Reading, and External Links sections typically at the bottom of articles
- B. FamilySearch Research Wiki is strong in this area (see History in the Contents box for most location portals in this wiki)
- C. Volunteer genealogy and local history projects provide history, geography, and background
 1. USGenWeb and WorldGenWeb
 2. The American Local History Network (with sites for each state and many counties)

PART VI. HELP & EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

- A. Cyndi's List > How To
- B. OFHC page at ZRoots.com with Orange (Regional) Family History Center class schedule
- C. Videos and video tutorials on the Web for almost anything (Remember the YouTube 3 C's: not always correct, not always current, and content often not what you wanted to know.)
- D. Legacy Family Tree Webinars (www.familytreewebinars.com)
- E. Ask a Librarian = live chat and via e-mail

PART VII. UTILITIES

- A. Google Blog Search, Image Search with Face Recognition (not very functional), and Picasa
- B. Google Drive, Zoho, and OpenOffice offer free office suites
- C. WorkFlowy vs. Evernote (free & paid versions) or OneNote (in Microsoft Office 2010) (blog at <http://blog.workfloy.com> for more information about the free, paid, and offline via app versions)
- D. Wayback Machine at Archive.org
- E. Dropbox.com and other free online storage and backup utilities
- F. YouSendIt.com (free trial) and YouConvertIt.com (free)

PART VIII. LOCATOR TOOLS

- A. WorldCat (original) vs. WorldCat.org vs. Open Library Project (remember to do reverse searches by looking for sources and resources in libraries you do NOT plan to visit then find access to those sources in a library/archives near you, by InterLibrary Loan, digitized, etc.)
- B. ebay (great for finding things like historic postcards)
- C. BillionGraves versus FindAGrave and their affiliations with FamilySearch, Ancestry, and MyHeritage (which has come on very strongly lately with added features and databases)