

Making Appropriate Referrals for Librarians: Repositories, Books, Websites, Portals, and Professionals



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When a patron comes to you with a genealogical question what should you do? Where should you point them? How do you help them get to the right places, particularly online?

Dismantling a Genealogy Research Question

- The first thing to do is determine what their genealogical question is, keeping in mind that it is quite common for them to not really know what that is themselves.
 - They may have multiple questions all jumbled up into one long story.
 - Get them to focus on one person and/or one event at a time.
- Have them write out the questions, complete with details of what they already know about their ancestor. This includes full names, event dates, and full place names (city, county, state/province, country, etc.).

- Timelines are a great way to take a research question and break it up into individual events with dates and places indicated. These can be quickly handwritten or planned out and created in something like Word. (See also: <https://CyndisList.com/timelines>)

Year	Date	Event	Place Name	Notes
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- Maps work hand-in-hand with timelines to help pinpoint where an ancestor was located and what area needs to be covered for the research being done. (See also: <https://CyndisList.com/maps>)
- Using the *when* and the *where* info, point them to the types of resources and repositories discussed below.
 - Look for repositories in the areas in which their ancestors lived.
 - Look for collections that cover the time-period and the location they are interested in.
 - Start with your own library's collections or those repositories in your area that have materials which work for the research question.
 - Move on to online resources next.
 - Those resources should lead you to repositories in other areas with materials you need.

Research How-To Help Online

There are a lot of helpful sites online for reference material and for learning about how to do genealogical research. Here are a few of the most popular, but keep in mind that this just scratches the surface of what is available.

Free Guidance and Tutorials

- The Family Search Wiki, <https://wiki.familysearch.org>
User-contributed for all topics for genealogy (internationally), there is a wiki page for each dataset on FamilySearch.
- Ancestry.com Family History Wiki, <https://wiki.rootsweb.com>
Based on two respected reference books for U.S. genealogy, *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy* and the *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources*. It is sorted by topic and by state and county.
- FamilySearch – Learning Center, <https://www.familysearch.org/help/helpcenter/learning-center>
 - Classes in the Learning Center, https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Classes_in_the_Learning_Center
- Ancestry Academy, <https://www.ancestryacademy.com/browse>
- Cyndi's List:
 - Beginners, <https://cyndislist.com/beginners/>
 - How To, <https://cyndislist.com/how-to/>
 - How To: Tutorials & Guides, <https://cyndislist.com/how-to-tutorials/>
 - And in the How To sub-category on many category pages

Fee-based Learning

- Genealogy Guys Learn, <https://genealogyguyslearn.com>
- Legacy Family Tree Webinars, <https://familytreewebinars.com>
- Research Write Connect Academy, <https://www.researchwriteconnect.com>
- Cyndi's List – Education (Genealogical), <https://cyndislist.com/education>

Repositories

Types of Libraries, Archives & Societies

We find a variety of records and sources for genealogical research in many different types of repositories, including libraries, archives, genealogical societies, and historical societies.

Libraries

- National libraries
- State libraries
- Provincial libraries
- Public libraries
- Private libraries
- University libraries
- Museum libraries
- Historical society libraries
- Genealogical society libraries

Archives

- Federal archives
- State archives
- Provincial archives
- County archives
- City archives
- Church archives
- Private archives
- University archives
- Museum archives

Societies

- Genealogical societies
- Historical societies
- City, Town, or Village
- County
- State or Province
- Territory
- Regional
- National

Where are the Records Coming From?

When looking for a specific type of record, consider the original source of that type of record. Where did the record originate? Then look for the type of repository that might house that record in their collections now. Examples:

City government

- City government departments
- Archives
- Libraries
- Historical societies
- Genealogical societies

County government

- County government departments
- Courthouses
- Archives
- Libraries
- Historical societies
- Genealogical societies

State or provincial government

- State government departments
- State archives
- State libraries
- Archives
- Libraries

Federal government

- Federal government departments
- National archives
- National libraries
- Archives
- Libraries

Churches

- Church archives
- Historical societies
- University libraries
- University archives

Personal: Manuscript Collections

- Private archives
- University archives
- Public libraries
- Private libraries
- University libraries
- Historical societies
- Genealogical societies

Locating Repositories & Societies

Locate the archives, libraries, courthouses and other records repositories for the area(s) in which the ancestor lived. Look for special collections, local history collections, manuscript collections, newspapers, directories, personal genealogies, etc. You can use Google or

Cyndi's List – Libraries, Archives & Museums, CyndisList.com/libraries

OR Cyndi's List > Location of choice > Libraries, Archives & Museums

Locate each of the genealogical and historical societies (county, state, region, country, etc.) that cover the area(s) in which the ancestor lived. Determine if they have a library or a relationship with a repository in the area. Learn about what type of access they have to records that may help. Many societies also have online databases and publications. You can use Google or

Cyndi's List – Societies & Groups, CyndisList.com/societies

OR Cyndi's List > Location of choice > Societies & Groups

U.S. State Level Repositories

Most states in the United States have a state library, state archives, state historical society, and a state genealogical society. In some cases, those repositories are combined, with their collections housed together. In other cases, the repositories support one another when it comes to housing their collections and digitizing them. Partnerships are formed and dismantled, morphed, and moved, all depending on accessibility to research collections and the finances necessary to maintain, preserve, and digitize them.

More and more repositories are making their electronically accessible online. Many states call these web sites a “digital archive” or a “digital memory.” They often include collections from other repositories within the state, not just those at the state-level institutions. This includes some overlap with university libraries and archives. Keep in mind to check web sites for each institution as well as a possible digital archive collaboration web site. Sometimes the collections on each are different. See also:

<http://www.cyndislist.com/us/state-level-records-repositories/>,

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/statememory/>

- Alabama Department of Archives & History, <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/>
- Alabama Mosaic, <http://www.alabamamosaic.org>
- Alaska's Digital Archives, <http://vilda.alaska.edu>
- Arizona Archives Online, <http://www.azarchivesonline.org/xtf/search>
- Arizona Memory Project, <http://azmemory.azlibrary.gov>
- Arkansas History Commission (AHC), <http://www.ark-ives.com>
- Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org>
- Colorado Encyclopedia, Digital Collections, <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/collections>
- Colorado Virtual Library, <http://www.coloradovirtuallibrary.org>
- Connecticut Digital Archive, <https://collections.ctdigitalarchive.org>
- Connecticut Digital Collections, http://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/CT_Digital_Collections
- Connecticut History, <https://connecticuthistory.org>
- State of Delaware – Digital Archives, <http://archives.delaware.gov/exhibits/exhibits-toc.shtml>
- Florida Electronic Library – Florida on Florida, <http://fof.fcla.edu/cgi/b/bib/bib-idx>
- Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com>
- Digital Library of Georgia, <https://dlg.usg.edu/>
- Georgia's Virtual Vault, <http://cdm.georgiaarchives.org:2011/cdm/>
- Hawaii State Archives Digital Collections, <https://digitalcollections.hawaii.gov/greenstone3/library>
- Idaho State Archives, <http://history.idaho.gov/idaho-state-archives>
- Illinois Digital Archives, <http://www.idaillinois.org>
- Indiana Digital Archives, <https://secure.in.gov/apps/iara/search/>
- Indiana Historical Society Digital Images, <https://images.indianahistory.org/digital/>
- Indiana Memory, <https://digital.library.in.gov>
- Iowa Digital Library, University of Iowa, <https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu>
- Iowa Heritage Digital Collections, <http://www.iowaheritage.org>
- Kansas Memory, <http://www.kansasmemory.org>
- Kentucky Digital Library, <http://kdl.kyvl.org>
- Louisiana Digital Library, <http://louisianadigitallibrary.org/>
- Maine Memory Network, <http://www.mainememory.net>
- Archives of Maryland Online, <http://aomol.msa.maryland.gov/html/index.html>
- Digital Maryland, <https://www.digitalmaryland.org>
- Maryland Center for History and Culture, <https://www.mdhistory.org/online-resources/>
- Digital Commonwealth - Massachusetts Collections Online, <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org>
- The Making of Modern Michigan, <http://mmm.lib.msu.edu/index.php>
- Michiganology, <https://michiganology.org>
- Minnesota Digital Library, <https://www.mndigital.org>
- Minnesota Reflections, <http://reflections.mndigital.org>
- Minnesota Historical Society, <https://www.mnhs.org>
- MDAH Digital Archives - Mississippi Department of Archives and History, <http://da.mdah.ms.gov>
- Mississippi Digital Library, <https://msdiglib.org>
- Missouri Digital Heritage, <http://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh>
- Montana Memory Project, <http://montanamemory.org>
- History Nebraska, <https://history.nebraska.gov>
- Nebraska Memories, <http://www.memories.ne.gov>

- Nevada Library Cooperative, <https://nvlibrarycoop.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/search/advanced>
- New Hampshire Historical Society, <https://www.nhhistory.org>
- New Jersey Digital Highway, <http://www.njdigitalhighway.org>
- New Mexico's Digital Collections, <http://econtent.unm.edu>
- New York State Archives' Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.archives.nysed.gov>
- New York State Library Digital Collections, <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/scandocs/>
- DigitalNC, <http://www.digitalnc.org>
- North Carolina Digital Collections, <http://digital.ncdcr.gov>
- State Historical Society of North Dakota, <https://www.history.nd.gov>
- Ohio History Central, <https://ohiohistorycentral.org>
- Ohio Memory, <http://www.ohiomemory.org>
- Oklahoma Digital Prairie, <http://digitalprairie.ok.gov>
- Oregon Digital, <https://oregondigital.org/catalog/>
- Oregon History Project, <http://www.oregonhistoryproject.org>
- Oregon State Archives, <http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/default.aspx>
- State Library of Oregon Digital Collections, <https://digital.osl.state.or.us>
- Pennsylvania State Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us>
- Rhode Island State Archives - Digital Library, <https://catalog.sos.ri.gov/?p=digitallibrary/digitallibrary>
- South Carolina Digital Library, <http://scmemory.org>
- Digital Library of South Dakota (DLSD), <http://dlsd.sdln.net>
- South Dakota State Library Digital Collections, <http://sdsdl-montage.auto-graphics.com/>
- Tennessee Virtual Archive, <http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org>
- Texas Digital Archive, <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/texasdigitalarchive>
- The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>
- Utah's Online Library - Digital Utah, <https://pioneer.utah.gov/digital/utah.html>
- Utah State Digital Archives, <https://archives.utah.gov/digital/>
- Vermont History – Digital Resources, <https://vermonthistory.org/digital-resources/>
- Vermont State Archives, <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/archives-records/state-archives.aspx>
- Virginia Memory, <https://www.virginiamemory.com>
- Washington State Digital Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov>
- Washington State Library Digital Collections and Resources, <https://www.sos.wa.gov/library/digcolls.aspx>
- West Virginia Division of Culture and History, <http://www.wvculture.org>
- West Virginia Memory Project, <http://www.wvculture.org/history/wvmemory>
- Recollection Wisconsin, <https://recollectionwisconsin.org>
- Wisconsin Historical Society, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org>
- Wyoming State Archives, <http://wyoarchives.state.wy.us>
- Wyoming State Library Digital Collection Suite, <https://digitalcollections.wyo.gov>

Regional:

- Archives West (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, Montana, Utah), <http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org>
- Digital Horizons (North Dakota, Minnesota), <http://digitalhorizonsonline.org>
- Digital Library of Appalachia (southern & central), <https://dla.acaweb.org/digital/>
- Digital Public Library of America, <https://dp.la>

- Mountain West Digital Library (Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, Hawaii, Wyoming and other parts of the U.S. West), <https://mwdl.org>
- Rocky Mountain Online Archive (Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming), <https://rmoa.unm.edu>
- Upper Mississippi Valley Digital Image Archive (Iowa, Illinois), <http://www.umvphotoarchive.org>
- Western Waters Digital Library (Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington), <http://westernwaters.org>

Books

eBooks

There is a treasure trove of untapped research sources online: the electronic book or ebook. All the major genealogy sites are publishing their own collections or digitizing collections along with their partners. But genealogical research goes far beyond what some people might consider traditionally genealogical. For example, family histories published by genealogists. In ebooks online we can find county and town histories, military and regimental histories, historical laws and statutes, ethnic and cultural histories, church and religious histories, social history, directories, and so much more. See also: <https://www.CyndisList.com/books/ebooks/>

Where to Find eBooks in General

- Google Books, <http://books.google.com>
 - Starting here tells you when there is an ebook or a print book available
 - Links to vendors online to purchase a copy
 - Link to WorldCat so that you can locate a copy in a library
 - How to Use Google Books, <http://bit.ly/2Hf5sgu>
- Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/texts>
 - More than 15,000,000 freely downloadable books and texts.
 - Collections from public libraries, universities, genealogical and historical societies.
 - Digitized from various media: microfilm, fiche, journals, serial publications, etc.
 - Internet Archive Help, <https://help.archive.org/hc/en-us>
- Hathi Trust Digital Library, <http://www.hathitrust.org>
 - More than 140 member institutions
 - Searching, Reading, Building Collections, and Accessibility, <https://www.hathitrust.org/access>
 - Help - Using the Digital Library, https://www.hathitrust.org/help_digital_library
- Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - More than 58,000 free eBooks, free of U.S. copyright
 - How-To and FAQs, <http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Category:How-To>
- Open Library, <https://openlibrary.org>
 - A catalog with a goal to have a web page for every book ever published.
 - 20 million edition records online, 1.7 million scanned versions of books.
 - Help, <https://openlibrary.org/help>
- WorldCat, <http://www.worldcat.org>
 - Locate ebooks through libraries
- Amazon.com, <http://www.amazon.com>
 - Locate ebooks for sale in Kindle format

Where to Find eBooks for Genealogy

- Ancestry.com, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/33/>
 - Found under “Stories, Memories & Histories.”
 - Part of the database collection, so not a separate ereader.
- FamilySearch Digital Library, <https://books.familysearch.org>
 - Actively digitizing family histories, local histories, and other collections.
 - Also working with genealogical research partner libraries.
- MyHeritage Books & Publications, <https://www.myheritage.com/research/category-8020/books-publications>
 - 447,870 sources
 - Thousands of published books ranging from family, local and military histories, city and county directories, school, university and hospital reports, church and congregational minutes, and much more.
- Find My Past - Directories & Social History, <https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records-in-directories-and-social-history>
 - Directories and Almanacs, Family Histories & Pedigrees, Social History, and more.

Recommended Books for Genealogy

There are books for every topic in genealogy: beginners, ethnic research, locality-specific research, religions, methodology, and more. In general, there is at least one respected tome that most veteran genealogists would recommend for research in a certain specialty. Examples are here:

- Bettinger, Blaine T. *The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy, Second Edition*. Cincinnati, OH: Family Tree Books, 2019.
- Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards, Second Edition*. Tennessee: Ancestry.com, Turner Publishing Company, 2019.
- Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2013.
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2017.
- Morgan, George G. *How to Do Everything Genealogy, Fourth Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015.
- Smith, Drew. *Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher*. Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2016.

Websites & Portals

Commercial Genealogy Sites

To know which of the commercial sites will help in your research it is best to browse the collections to see if they have records that cover the right locations and time periods. No one service has everything that someone will need in their research. It is necessary to combine research time with these sites and with other repositories.

- Ancestry.com
 - U.S. based, international collection, more than 32,840 datasets.
 - Search All Records, <http://www.ancestry.com/search/>

- Card Catalog, <http://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/catalog/>
- ArkivDigital
 - The largest provider of Swedish church records online.
 - 87 million images of historical documents including church records, court records and inventory of estates.
 - Search, <https://www.arkivdigital.net>
- FamilySearch (FREE)
 - Largest collection of genealogical records. U.S. based and international.
 - Search, <https://familysearch.org/search>
 - Browse All Published Records, <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list>
 - FamilySearch FHL Catalog, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>
- Findmypast
 - U.K. based, also Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.
 - Search World Records, <https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records>
 - Browse – Search All Record Sets, <https://www.findmypast.com/search/historical-records?region=world>
 - List of All Records, <http://www.findmypast.com/articles/world-records>
- Fold3 (by Ancestry)
 - U.S. based, military records from NARA, expanding worldwide.
 - Search Records, <http://www.fold3.com/search>
 - Browse Records, <http://www.fold3.com/browse/>
- TheGenealogist
 - U.K. based, records for England and Wales.
 - List of all datasets, <https://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/coverage/>
- GenealogyBank
 - U.S. newspapers, some other records in cooperation with FamilySearch
 - Search All Records, <http://www.genealogybank.com>
 - List of All Newspapers, <http://www.genealogybank.com/newspapers/sourcelist>
- MyHeritage
 - Based in Israel, heavy on European records. U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.
 - Search, <http://www.myheritage.com/research>
 - Browse the collections from that page by category or by locality on the map
 - Collection Catalog, <https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog>
- NewspaperArchive
 - Newspapers only. United States and international.
 - Search, <https://newspaperarchive.com>
 - Browse Newspaper Archives, <https://newspaperarchive.com/browse/>
- Newspapers.com (by Ancestry)
 - Newspapers only. U.S., Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, Panama, Scotland, Wales.
 - Search, <http://www.newspapers.com/search/>
 - Browse Newspapers, <http://www.newspapers.com/browse/>
- Scotland's People, <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>
 - The official Scottish Government site for searching government records and archives.
 - An overview of the records available, <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/family-history>

Genealogy Portals

Genealogy portals are starting points that get you to what you need. In general, there is a genealogy portal site for every topic, location, ethnicity, and religion. Some are created by individuals, some by groups, some by societies or other types of repositories. Too numerous to list, here are some examples:

General:

- Cyndi's List, <https://www.CyndisList.com>
 - A categorized and cross-referenced list of more than 337,000 links in 223 categories.
 - Free. Covers all topics in genealogy. International.
 - Searchable, but browsing is recommended for productivity.
- Linkpendium, <http://www.linkpendium.com>
 - 10,000,000+ resource directory to surnames worldwide and U.S. states and counties.
 - Free.
 - Searchable and browsable.

Topic, Locality & Ethnicity Examples:

- Afrigeneas, <https://www.afrigeneas.com>
- CanGenealogy, <https://www.cangenealogy.com>
- Find A Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com>
- GENUKI, <https://www.genuki.org.uk>
 - A virtual reference library of genealogical information for the UK and Ireland.
- GenWiki – Genealogy.net, <http://wiki-en.genealogy.net>
 - Germany genealogy wiki
 - The German version is more complete, <http://wiki-de.genealogy.net>
- Irish Ancestors, <https://www.johngrenham.com>
- JewishGen, <https://www.jewishgen.org>
- USGenWeb, <https://usgenweb.org>
 - Free volunteer project for every U.S. state and county.
 - Transcriptions, indexes, research help.

Social Networking

- The Genealogy Squad, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/genealogysquad>
The mission of the Genealogy Squad Facebook group is to provide a positive space for the sharing of appropriate and reliable methods and resources to assist a global community of genealogists at all levels. We focus on answering questions and solving problems, while demonstrating best practices in all aspects of genealogical research.
- Genetic Genealogy Tips & Techniques, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/geneticgenealogytipsandtechniques>
A place to discuss topics in DNA ranging from beginner to advanced.
- Genealogy on Facebook List, <https://socialmediagenealogy.com/genealogy-on-facebook-list/>
Download the 428-page PDF file containing 16,400+ links (updated in August 2020) to genealogy & history Facebook groups/pages.

Professionals

When all avenues of personal research have been exhausted including libraries, archives, and society collections, it might be time to ask a professional for help. The following are the best places to start to find a professional. Look for one that has a specialty that covers the research question(s) or lives in the area in which repositories have collections that cover the research question(s).

- Association of Professional Genealogists, <https://www.apgen.org>
 - Directory, <https://www.apgen.org/directory>
 - Why Hire a Professional? What Can a Professional Genealogist Do for Me?, <https://www.apgen.org/cpages/why-hire-a-professional>
 - How to Hire a Professional Genealogist, <https://www.apgen.org/cpages/how-to-hire-a-professional-genealogist>
 - Code of Ethics and Professional Practices, <https://www.apgen.org/cpages/code-of-ethics>
- Board for Certification of Genealogists, <https://bcgcertification.org>
 - Directory of Certified Genealogists, <https://bcgcertification.org/directory/>
 - Why Hire a BCG Associate?, <https://bcgcertification.org/bcg-associates/why-hire-associate/>
 - Ethics and Standards, <https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards/>
- ICAPGen - International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists, <https://www.icapgen.org>
 - AG® Professionals, <https://www.icapgen.org/professionals/>
 - Ten Effective Steps to Hiring an AG Professional, <https://www.icapgen.org/home/ten-effective-steps-to-hiring-an-ag-professional/>
 - Professional Standards, <https://www.icapgen.org/home/professional-ethics/>
- Cyndi's List - Professionals, Volunteers & Other Research Services, <https://cyndislist.com/professionals>
OR Cyndi's List > Location/topic of choice > Professionals
- Register of Qualified Genealogists (U.K.), <https://www.qualifiedgenealogists.org>
- Association of Genealogists & Researchers in Archives (U.K.), <https://www.agra.org.uk>
- The Association of Scottish Genealogists & Researchers in Archives, <https://www.asgra.co.uk>
- Accredited Genealogists Ireland, <http://accreditedgenealogists.ie>
- Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents (AAGRA), <https://www.aagra.asn.au>
- Verband deutschsprachiger Berufsgenealogen - Association of German Speaking Professional Genealogists, <https://berufsgenealogie.net/german/start.html>

Professional Companies

- Ancestry ProGenealogists, <https://www.progenealogists.com>
- LegacyTree Genealogists, <https://www.legacytree.com>