

Libraries: Gold Mines for Family Historians

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Libraries and their websites can be great starting points for family historians. For novices, libraries offer basic genealogy how-to books to help patrons get started in their research. For more experienced family historians, libraries can contain invaluable treasure troves of information...maybe even hold the key to help break down that proverbial “brick wall.” Like our family histories, each library is unique, diverse, and full of surprises.

Within the different types of libraries (academic, digital, national / state, public, and special), patrons can expect to find different levels of services provided, accessible records, and range / scope of the library’s collection.

Academic libraries often receive grants or special funding to sponsor the creation of digital library collections. These collections contain anything from historic photographs, maps, and manuscripts to yearbooks, dissertations, newspapers, and postcards. The collections most often focus on regional cultures, events, and documents.

As mentioned, many digital libraries are created by academic libraries or by larger national / state organizations. However, digital libraries also include metadata sites (simply stated: metadata is “data about data”). Digital libraries often contain nothing more than a litany of web links pertaining to a specific subject. A word of caution about these sites, it is important to verify the authority of the source for such sites. Also, digital libraries may guide you away from free resources to subscription sites.

National and state libraries and archives are usually the mecca of archived materials. Many of these libraries still require on-site use. However, they also offer either free or relatively inexpensive research look-ups. Also, when conducting a catalog search of their materials, it is a good idea to check with your local library to see if they also carry those titles.

Special libraries are often privately funded and house specific collections. They typically allow for free admission to the site, but can charge quite a bit of money for record queries. Some require subscriptions to access their online materials. Societies often have their own collection, as well.

Public libraries = free resources*

* Library card fees, copier fees, overdue fees, mailing fees do not apply. Actually, you will also run across some public libraries that charge reference fees.

Your local public library will often give you free access to genealogical materials including:

- Basic genealogy how-to books, pathfinders, and handouts
- Genealogy magazines: if you notice a book of interest featured in one of these magazines, check to see if your local library owns it or can put it on hold for you.

- Local family history files
- Directories and gazetteers
- Maps and atlases: show where people lived, roads/waterways traveled, etc. They can also ensure that the patron is researching in the right geographical area (ex. Dawson Co., Georgia versus City of Dawson in Terrell Co., GA)
- Photo collections and scrapbooks
- Newspapers (both historic and current)
- Birth, marriage, death, and obituary indexes
- Tax, land, and will records
- Local muster rolls
- Church and cemetery records
- School records and yearbooks
- Some local libraries even contain oral history collections

Public libraries also typically house the DAR Patriot indexes, Civil War rosters, land lotteries, *Dawes Roll*, *Guion Miller Roll*, maybe even *The Georgia Black Book*.

The collection may contain materials specializing in the migration patterns typical of that area.

Libraries contain information on the geography, history, culture, and governments of specific locations, which helps patrons to better understand the decisions made and records kept (ex. family burial in back yard).

Accessing the card catalog online will give you a general idea of the genealogy collection. However, don't stop there. Some documents may not be cataloged.

When accessing the PINES OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog), you might see an item of interest that your local library does not carry. You can first try to place the item on hold. However, most genealogy and local history materials are Reference only books (note: PINES also has a 6 months hold restriction). If the system is telling you that the item cannot be placed on hold, then contact your local library and request an inter-library loan (ILL).

Don't live in a PINES library district? Search the WorldCat database at <http://www.worldcat.org/>, and then contact your library with an ILL request.

Some libraries are now members of the Family History Center Network and have loaning contracts with the LDS Family Search. This allows patrons to request microfilm rolls indexed on

the Family Search website at <https://familysearch.org/>. The fee is \$5.50 per roll for the initial 30 day check-out, microfilm is library-use only, and some materials are restricted (restrictions noted on the film description).

Many libraries can connect you with local people, who have knowledge of local histories, events, etc. These people (either library staff or someone they know) can guide you to where the records are within the county (ex. Clerk of Courts for logs/records of events, Dept. of Health has birth certificates in Dawson County).

Local libraries can help you contact funeral homes, so you can speak with them about their records. Librarians can also help you locate churches and cemeteries.

To explore the daily lives of past generations, libraries carry Civil War journals, newspapers, vintage catalogs (ex. Sears) including commercial catalogs, clothing catalogs, antiques & collectibles (research your family heirlooms), coin and paper money catalogs, Old Farmers Almanacs, PBS or documentary series on DVD, oral histories, and heritage books. The librarians may also know locals willing to talk more with you about past events in the area.

Beyond Family History Research

Books available for checkout also include: writing / journaling, scrapbooking, photography, digitizing photos and documents, quilting, computer skills and programming, social networking, citing sources (ex. *Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian* by Elizabeth Shown Mills), and even books on improving your organizational skills.

Before you go...

Follow many of the same guidelines that you would if you were planning a trip to an archive.

- Visit the library's website or call ahead to:
 - Check the library hours
 - Search the online card catalog ahead of time, so you will have specific titles, authors, files, etc. already selected. This will help you save precious research time. Call ahead and request to have the items already pulled and waiting for you. Most libraries will need the call number of the item (versus the ISBN).
 - Call or email the Reference Librarian or Specialist. Find out if that person will be working the day you intend to visit.

- Find out if the library allows for making photocopies and how much they charge to make copies.
- Many libraries now offer free Wi-Fi. Check to see if they allow unrestricted access to their wireless use.
- Check to make sure that a library card is not necessary to access their materials. If so, what are the requirements to obtain one?

A Small Selection of Online Library Resources



Academic Libraries

Brigham Young University Family History Archives: <http://lib.byu.edu/fhc/index.php>

Princeton University Library Digital Collection: http://diglib.princeton.edu/?_xq=browse&_xsl=browse.xsl

- Access the *Local Express* news, ethnographical maps, images of Native Americans and the American West
- Sanborn Maps: <http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/aids/sanborn/sanborn-web.xls>

University of Alberta: Peel's Prairie Provinces: <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/index.html>

- View thousands of digitized materials dedicated to the history of western Canada, including newspapers, folklore, postcards, and the Atlas of Alberta Railways

University of North Carolina

- View North Carolina postcards, maps, historic money, North Carolina place names, and slave narratives
- Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: <http://www.sohp.org/>
 - Search hundreds of oral histories, including first-person narratives from Southerners' perspectives

University of Texas at Austin

- Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>



Digital Libraries

Common-Place Web Library: <http://www.common-place.org/web-library/index.shtml>

- Browse selections of Web resources in American History

GALILEO: <http://www.galileo.usg.edu> or you can access the site via the CRLS homepage at <http://chestateelibrary.org/> (click on GALILEO located in the left-hand side). There are 2 ways to log in; use either the current GALILEO password or log into your PINES library account first.

- Ancestry Library Edition
 - Don't have time to sit down at the library and search the Ancestry Library Edition records right now? While conducting research at home, write down the name of the record you would like to view and go straight to that record the next time you are at your library accessing Ancestry Library Edition.
- Digital Libraries of Georgia
 - Search hundreds of digitized books, articles, newspapers, manuscripts, funeral programs and other materials pertaining to Georgia's history and cultures
- Heritage Quest
 - Search census records, the Revolutionary War Era Pension & Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, the Freedman's Bank, PERSI, books, articles, and the U. S. Serial Set
- Medical journals and case studies
 - Patrons have told me that they found ancestors by searching medical journals. Go ahead and try it out. See if you bust through the brick wall!
- Net Library
 - Read full text e-books
 - Includes genealogy how-to books, a few titles include:

- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Genealogy* by Rhonda R. McClure (2000)
- *The Genealogist's Handbook: Modern Methods for Researching Family History* by Raymond S. Wright (1995)
- *Genealogy Online* by Elizabeth Powell Crowe (2000)
- *Sams Teach Yourself Today E-genealogy: Finding Your Family Roots Online* by Terri Stephens Lamb (2000)
- ProQuest News and Newspapers
 - Access to 11 news databases containing both historic and contemporary news articles
 - Search obituaries
- WorldCat
 - Search the WorldCat records to find out if your library carries a specific title, or the closest library that does
 - WorldCat is also accessible at: <http://www.worldcat.org/>
- Additional databases within GALILEO that may be of interest to family historians:
 - Annual Reports of the Mayor of the city of Savannah, Georgia (1855-1917)
 - Athens Historic Newspapers Archive
 - Civil Rights Digital Library
 - Georgia Aerial Photographs
 - Georgia Historic Newspapers (currently holds 3 titles: *The Cherokee Phoenix*, *The Colored Tribune*, and *The Dublin Post*)
 - Georgia State Fair, Macon, Georgia (1886-1960)
 - Historical Broadsides (1746-1980s)
 - Joseph Henry Lumpkin Family Papers
 - Southeastern Native American Documents (1730-1842)

Historical Voices: <http://historicalvoices.org/galleries.php>

- Multi-media, interoperable digital library featuring historical political speeches, interviews, Supreme Court oral arguments, and other conversations
- Features the Flint Sit-down Strike, which includes the voices of sit-downers reminiscing about the strike

Historic Pittsburgh: <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh/>

- Provides access to historical materials pertaining to the western Pennsylvania area
- Free access to Pittsburg city directories published between 1815 and 1945:
<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/p/pitttextdir/>

ipl2—the Internet Public Library: <http://www.ipl.org/>

- Provides lists of Internet resources on a wide variety of topics, including genealogy and newspapers

JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/>

- Requires a subscription, usually through a participating library or organization
- Search millions of records including civil war journals, diary entries, letters, dissertations, and specific discipline studies

Open Journal Systems: <http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs-journals>

- Choose from many multilingual journals, including the *Annals of Genealogical Research*:
<http://www.genlit.org/agr/index.php>

Sheet Music Consortium: <http://digital.library.ucla.edu/sheetmusic/>

- Freely view hundreds of digitized sheet music
- Hosted by the UCLA Digital Library Program
- Quick and free login
- A great way to gain further insight into the lives, styles, thoughts, and trends of past generations

Virginia Commonwealth University Library Digital Collection: <http://dig.library.vcu.edu/>

- Features oral histories, the *Commonwealth Times* (1969-2010), the Robertson Hospital Register, and much more

World Digital Library: <http://www.wdl.org/en/>

- Provides primary materials from around the world in multilingual format
- Among other topics of interest, it provides access to literature that promotes an understanding of various cultural and religious beliefs



National, International, and State Libraries

British Library: <http://www.bl.uk/>

- Search thousands of records in their online collection, you can even view the genealogy of royal families, maps of London, manuscripts, and much more

Library and Archives Canada: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/index-e.html>

- Search their available records for on-site use
- Links to AVITUS, The Directory of Canadian Genealogical Resources: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/avitus/index-e.html>

Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>

- American Memory Collection: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>
- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- Veterans History Project: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>
 - Additional veteran repositories to choose from: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/relatedrepositories.html>

Library of Virginia: <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>

- Digital collection includes historic newspapers, photographs, map collections, a cohabitation register, Revolutionary War Bounty Warrants, and much more

NARA Archives Library Information Center (ALIC): <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/>

- If you find a publication of interest within the ALIC collection, your local library may either already own that title or have the ability to request it for you

National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklore: <http://www.nla.gov.au/oh/index.html>

National Library of Finland's Historical Newspaper Library:

<http://digi.lib.helsinki.fi/sanomalehti/secure/main.html>

- Written in Finnish and Swedish, this collection contains news articles from 1771 to 1900

New York State Library: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/gengen.htm>

- Full, digitized records not viewable online, but staff can assist in obtaining copies

State Library of North Carolina: <http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/patrons/genealogists.html>

- Search the Archives' Treasures
- Browse North Carolina Family Records and Civil War Resources

Washington State Library: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/Genealogy.aspx>

- Access to Classics in Washington History and Washington Rural Heritage
- Free obituary look up service for obituaries listed in their Washington State newspapers collection



Public Libraries

Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center (Indiana):

<http://www.genealogycenter.org/Home.aspx>

- An amazing genealogy collection! Allen County's Genealogy Center collaborates with BYU's Family History Archive, the Internet Archive, and WeRelate.org (a genealogy wiki). Here is a link to their brochure, which highlights a portion of their collection:
<http://www.genealogycenter.org/pdf/AboutUsBrochure.pdf>

Brooklyn Public Library: Brooklyn in the Civil War:

<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/>

- Explore documents within the four main themes of the collection: Soldiers, Slavery, Women, and Daily Life
- Use the interactive map or search the timeline

Galesburg Public Library (Illinois): <http://www.galesburglibrary.org/genealogy.html>

- Provides users with information on services and research assistance
- Includes helpful Internet resources for those conducting genealogy research in Illinois

New York Public Library: <http://www.nypl.org/>

- Stephen A. Schwarzman Building--Humanities and Social Science Library holds manuscripts and archives: <http://www.nypl.org/locations/schwarzman>

Oskaloosa Public Library (Iowa): <http://www.oskaloosalibrary.org/genealogy>

- Even smaller libraries hold hidden gems, the Oskaloosa Public Library features the Forest Cemetery Association's burial records

Prince William Public Library System (Virginia), Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center (RELIC): <http://www.pwcgov.org/library/relic/>

- Their digital library includes vital records indexes, historical sites documentation, and a postcard collection
- Knowledgeable staff is available to help answer your questions

St. Louis Public Library (Missouri): <http://www.slpl.org/slpl/gateways/article240117856.asp>

- Over 750,000 in their online obituary collection (1880-2009)
- 2,900 Family Histories (search names, but records are not digitized)
- Ask a Librarian service
- Book recommendations



Special Libraries

Atlanta History Center, Kenan Research Center:

<http://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/cms/Collection+Resources/155.html>

- Atlanta Newspapers on microfilm
- Atlanta City Directories
- Fulton County Court of Ordinary (Estate Records)

- Franklin Garrett Atlanta Necrology: <http://garrett.atlantahistorycenter.com/>
- Subject files, maps, Civil War artifacts

Bell Research Center (Cumming, Georgia): <http://www.bellresearchcenter.com/>

- Contains thousands of genealogy materials, with a focus on migration-trail genealogy
- Provides access to the Forsyth, Georgia Confederate Soldiers Website

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Library: <http://www.dar.org/library/>

The Newberry Library (Chicago, Illinois): <http://www.newberry.org/genealogy/collections.html>

- On-site access to thousands of genealogical resources, search their online catalog and request research help from staff



Genealogy libraries that provide some free access to records, but they also either lead to pay for sites or require a subscription:

Godfrey Memorial Library: <http://godfrey.org/>

- Requires a subscription to view full online collection
- Free access to the 1865 Chicago City directory (slow to load): <http://www.godfrey.org/searchfree/chicago.html>

Library of Genealogy: <http://www.libraryofgenealogy.com/>



Online Library Directories

Golden West Marketing Directory of Genealogy Libraries in the U. S.: http://www.gwest.org/gen_libs.htm

ipl2 Library Locator: <http://www.ipl.org/div/liblocator/>

PublicLibraries.com: <http://www.publiclibraries.com/>

Yahoo! Library Directory: <http://dir.yahoo.com/reference/libraries/>