

Using Google for Genealogy Research

by Clint Elbow
January 2004

Based on an Article written by Kimberly Powell

Using Google for Genealogy Research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	4
2.	GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS SCREEN	4
3.	OPERATORS	6
4.	CASE.....	8
5.	ALTERNATE SPELLINGS	8
6.	CACHED COPY OF OLD WEBSITES	9
7.	SIMILAR WEBSITES	12
8.	SITES LINKING TO CURRENT WEBSITE	14
9.	SEARCH WITHIN A WEBSITE.....	15
10.	ALL IN URL AND ALL IN TITLE	15
11.	SEARCH WITHIN SEARCH RESULTS	16
12.	PEOPLE, MAPS, AND PHONE NUMBER SEARCH.....	16
13.	IMAGE SEARCH	17
14.	GOOGLE GROUPS	17
15.	FILE TYPE SEARCH.....	17
16.	GOOGLE TOOLBAR.....	17
17.	OTHER GOOGLE STUFF	22
18.	GOOGLE HELP	22

Using Google for Genealogy Research

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS EXPLANATION.....	4
FIGURE 2: SUGGESTED SPELLING.....	9
FIGURE 3: THE PAGE CANNOT BE DISPLAYED.....	10
FIGURE 4: EXAMPLE OF A CACHED COPY OF A WEBSITE.....	11
FIGURE 5: CACHED COPY OF WEBSITE.....	12
FIGURE 6: EXAMPLE OF SIMILAR PAGE LINK IN SEARCH RESULTS.....	13
FIGURE 7: SIMILAR PAGES FOR THEFAMILYDIRECTORY.COM/MO.HTM.....	14
FIGURE 8: SITES LINKING TO THE SITE THEFAMILYDIRECT ORY.COM.....	15
FIGURE 9: SEARCH WITHIN SEARCH RESULTS.....	16
FIGURE 10: GOOGLE TOOLBAR.....	18
FIGURE 11: TOOLBAR OPTIONS, OPTIONS TAB.....	19
FIGURE 12: TOOLBAR OPTIONS, MORE TAB.....	21
FIGURE 13: TOOLBAR OPTIONS, AUTO FILL TAB.....	22
FIGURE 14: GOOGLE HELP SCREEN.....	23

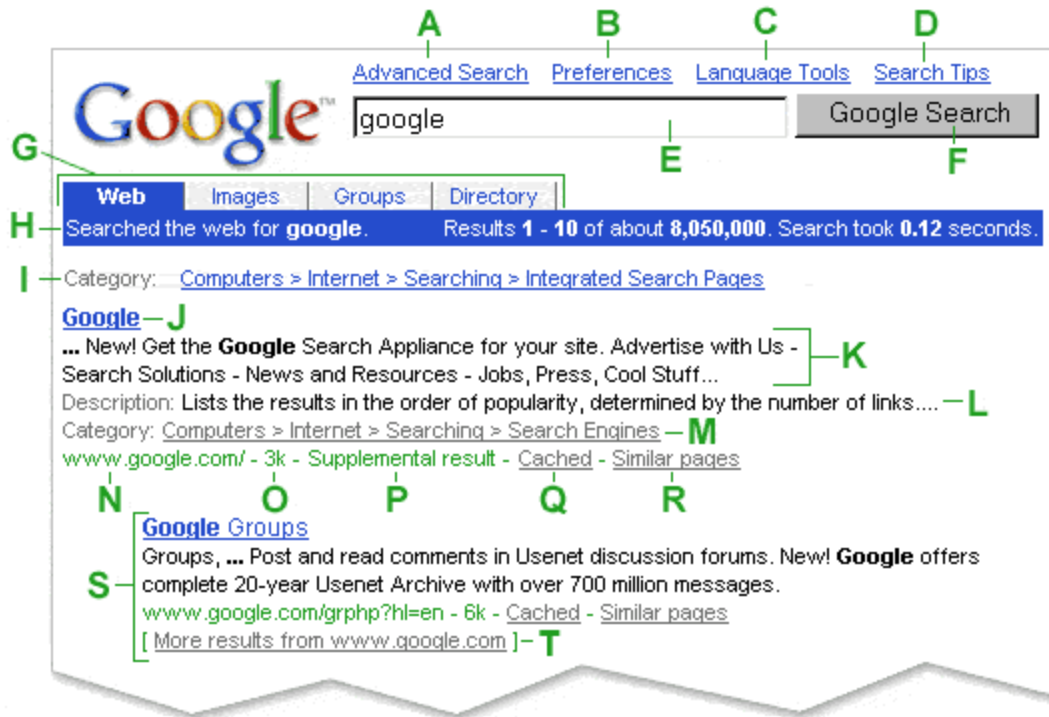
1. Introduction

Google is an internet search engine that allows for the searching of websites and other electronic resources by entering search criteria which is used by Google to return websites and the other electronic resources that match the search criteria.

2. Google Search Results Screen

The following is a screenshot of the Google search results screen taken from the Google help web page. Each feature is labeled with a letter number. Below the screenshot, each labeled feature is explained. The explanations were also taken from the Google help web page.

Figure 1: Google search results explanation



- a. **Advanced Search**
Links to a page that enables you to restrict your search if necessary.
- b. **Preferences**
Links to a page that enables you to set search preferences, including the default number of results per page, the interface language, and whether to screen results using our SafeSearch filter.
- c. **Language Tools**
Tools for setting language preferences for pages to be searched, interface language and translation of results.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

- d. Search Tips
Links to information that will help you search more effectively. Tells you how Google differs from other search engines--from the way we handle basic queries to the special features that set us apart.
- e. Search Field
To enter a query into Google, just type in a few descriptive keywords. Hit enter or click on the Google Search button for your list of relevant results.
- f. Google Search Button
Click on this button to submit another search query. You can also submit a query by hitting the 'enter' key.
- g. Tabs
Click the tab for the kind of search you want to conduct. Choose from a full web search, images only, Google Groups (Usenet discussion archive) or the Google Directory (the web organized into browsable categories).
- h. Statistics Bar
This line describes your search and indicates the number of results returned as well as the amount of time it took to complete your search.
- i. Category
If your search terms also appear in the web directory, these suggested categories may help you find more information related to your query. Click on them to browse for other links.
- j. Page Title
The first line of the result is the title of the web page found. Sometimes, instead of a title there will be a URL, meaning that either the page has no title, or Google has not indexed the full content of that page. We still know it's a good match because of other web pages -- which we have indexed -- that have links to this returned page. If the text associated with these links matches your query, we may return the page as a result even though its full text has not been indexed.
- k. Text Below the Title
This text is an excerpt from the returned result page showing your query terms bolded. These excerpts let you see the context in which your search terms appear on the page, before you click on the result. If Google expanded your search using its stemming technology to include variations of your search terms, those words will also be bolded.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

- l. Description
If your search query is listed in the web directory, the description filed by the open directory author is displayed.
- m. Category
If a site found by your search query is listed in the web directory, the category in which it appears is displayed below its description.
- n. URL of Result
This is the web address of the returned result.
- o. Size
This number is the size of the text portion of the found web page. It is omitted for sites we have not yet indexed.
- p. Supplemental Result
Google augments results for difficult queries by searching a supplemental collection of web pages. Results from this index are marked in green as "Supplemental."
- q. Cached
Clicking the cached link will enable you to see the contents of the web page as of the time we indexed it. If for some reason the site link does not connect you to the current page, you can still retrieve the cached version and may find the information you need there. Your search terms are highlighted on the cached version.
- r. Similar Pages
When you select the Similar Pages link for a particular result, Google automatically scouts the web for pages that are related to this result.
- s. Indented Result
When Google finds multiple results from the same website, the most relevant result is listed first with the other relevant pages from that same site indented below it.
- t. More Results
If there are more than two results from the same site, the remaining results can be accessed by clicking on "More results from..." link.

3. Operators

- a. AND
The AND operator links words together so that any website in your search results will contain all of the words that are connected by the AND

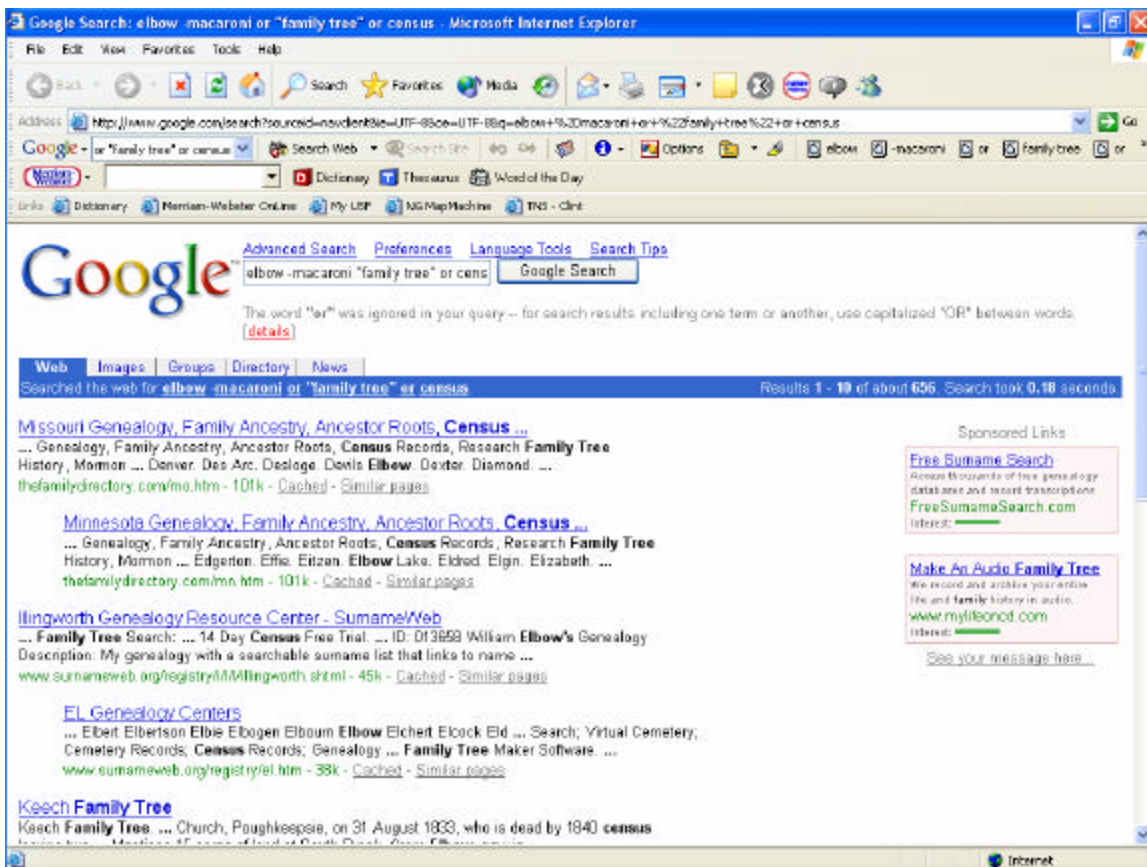
Using Google for Genealogy Research

operator. The use of this operator is inherent in all searches performed on Google so you do not need to use this operator.

b. +

The + operator is used to include websites that contain additional critical words in your search results. The + operator can be helpful because Google automatically filters out common words and characters. These include “how”, “where”, “or”, and “the” among others.

Google will tell you when it has excluded a common word. Google will print this at the top of the search results. In the screenshot below Google told me that the word “or” was ignored in my query. If I want to include this word in my query I would put the + operator before the word or.



c. “”

The “” operator is used to search for a phrase. You can enter multiple words enclosed in quotation marks and Google will search for websites that have that exact same combination of words in the same order. For example, “Gustavus Adolphus Elbow” will return any websites that contain the three words Gustavus Adolphus Elbow in this order in a website.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

The main difference in using the “” operator and the + sign or the inherent AND operator is word order. When using the “” operator, the websites returned in the search results will contain the words enclosed in quotation marks in the same order as in the quotation marks. Whereas AND and + will return websites that contain the words regardless of the order of the words.

d. –

The – operator is used to exclude websites that contain certain words. For example, elbow –macaroni will return websites that contain the word elbow but exclude any of these pages that include the word macaroni. This will keep any pages with recipes that include elbow macaroni from appearing in the search results.

e. OR

The OR operator is used to retrieve search results that meet multiple search criteria without having to do multiple separate searches. For example, elbow –macaroni “family tree” OR census will return all websites that contain the word elbow, do not contain the word macaroni and contain the phrase “family tree” and websites that contain the word elbow, do not contain the word macaroni, and contain the word census.

f. ~

The ~ operator is used to find websites that contain a synonym of the word following the ~. For example, if I did want to search for elbow macaroni, I could do it by entering elbow ~food. Google would return any website that contains the word elbow along with the word food or any of its synonyms such as nutrition, restaurant, and recipe.

4. Case

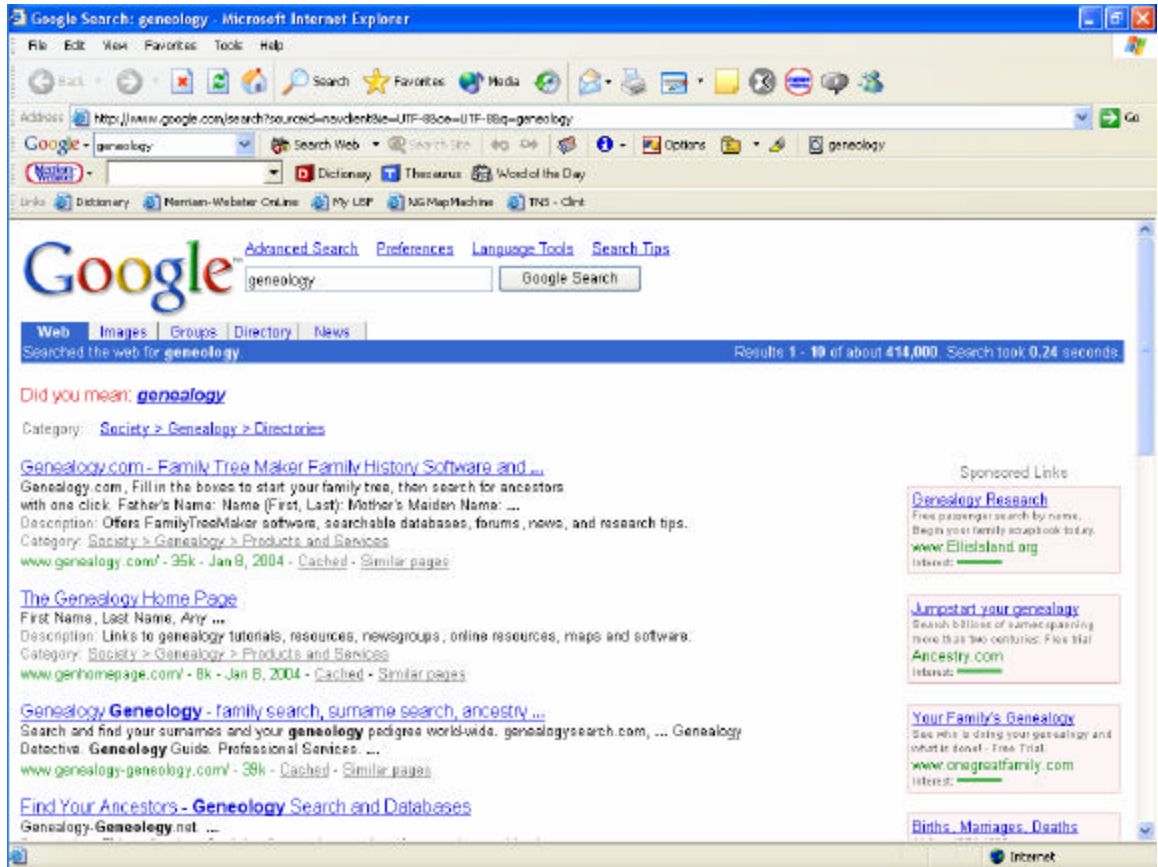
Google searches are not case sensitive so you do not need to worry about the case of the letters in your search criteria. For example elbow, Elbow, and ELBOW will all return the same search results.

5. Alternate Spellings

Google will provide alternate spellings of words when it thinks that a word has been misspelled because it doesn't find an exact match among the websites it has on file. For example, if I search for genealogy but I misspell the word and enter geneology, Google will ask if I meant to enter genealogy. See below for an example.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

Figure 2: Suggested spelling



6. Cached Copy of Old Websites

If you have ever searched for something and received the following screen, you may be able to use a cached copy of old websites.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

Figure 3: The page cannot be displayed



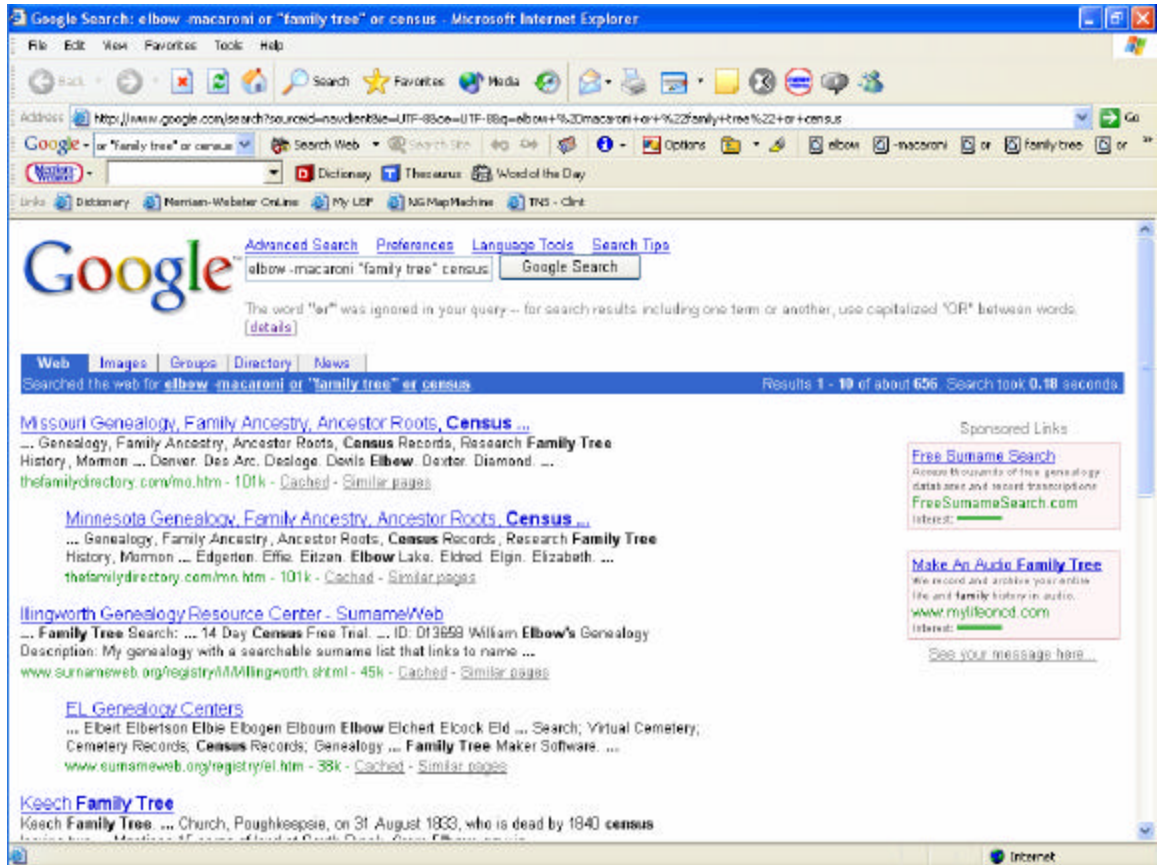
A cached website is an offline website. In the case of Google, it is a website that is saved on Google's computers. So, if a website is unavailable you may be able to access a version of the website directly from Google's website. Websites can become unavailable because of computer malfunctions, the owner no longer maintains the website, or the owner no longer paid their ISP bill etc.

Because a cached copy of a website is a saved version of a website, the cached copy will be older than the current (if still being maintained) so the data you are looking for may be out of date. This will depend on the nature of the data for which you are searching so use your judgment when you are using a cached copy of a website.

When a cached copy of a website exists, it will be noted as such in the Google search results. In the screen shot below, there is a cached copy of the website

Using Google for Genealogy Research

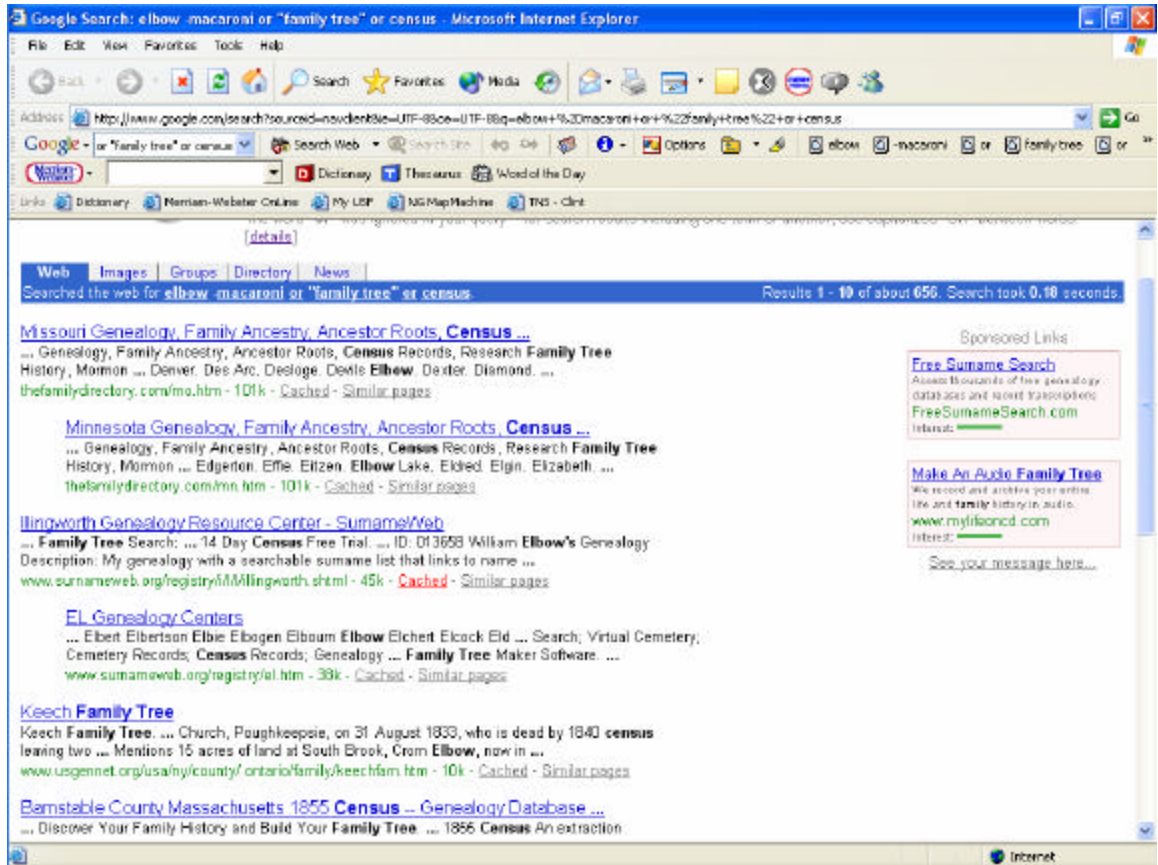
Figure 4: Example of a cached copy of a website



When you click on the word “Cached” that follows the search results, Google will display the cached website. In the screenshot above I clicked on the link to the cached copy of the URL www.surnameweb.org/register/el.htm which is the fourth item in the search results. So, where I originally got the page from above in figure 1, when I access the cached copy of that website I get the following.

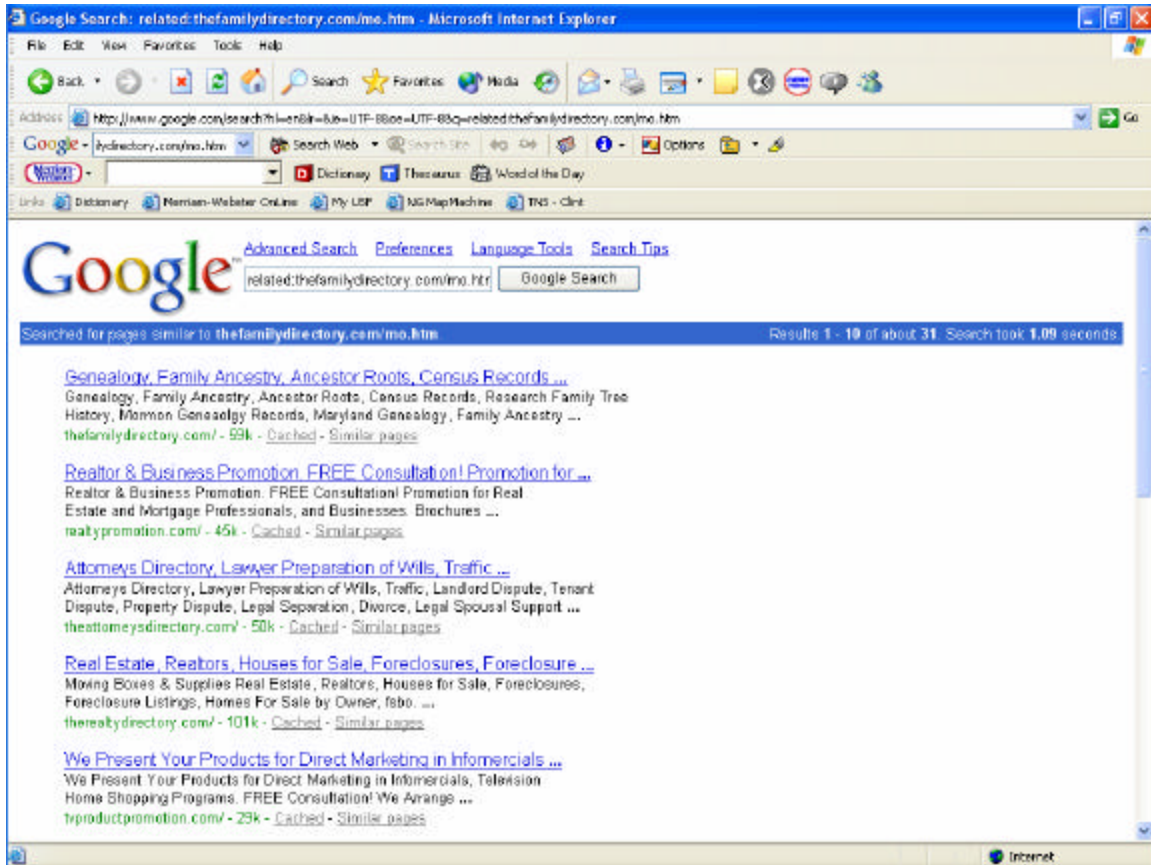
Using Google for Genealogy Research

Figure 6: Example of Similar Page link in search results



When I click on the “Similar Pages” link for the first entry in the search results, I get another page of search results that are related to the first. From the screenshot below of the similar pages for the site thefamilydirectory.com/mo.htm you can see that all sites that are related to a sight are related to what you originally began your search for.

Figure 7: Similar pages for thefamilydirectory.com/mo.htm



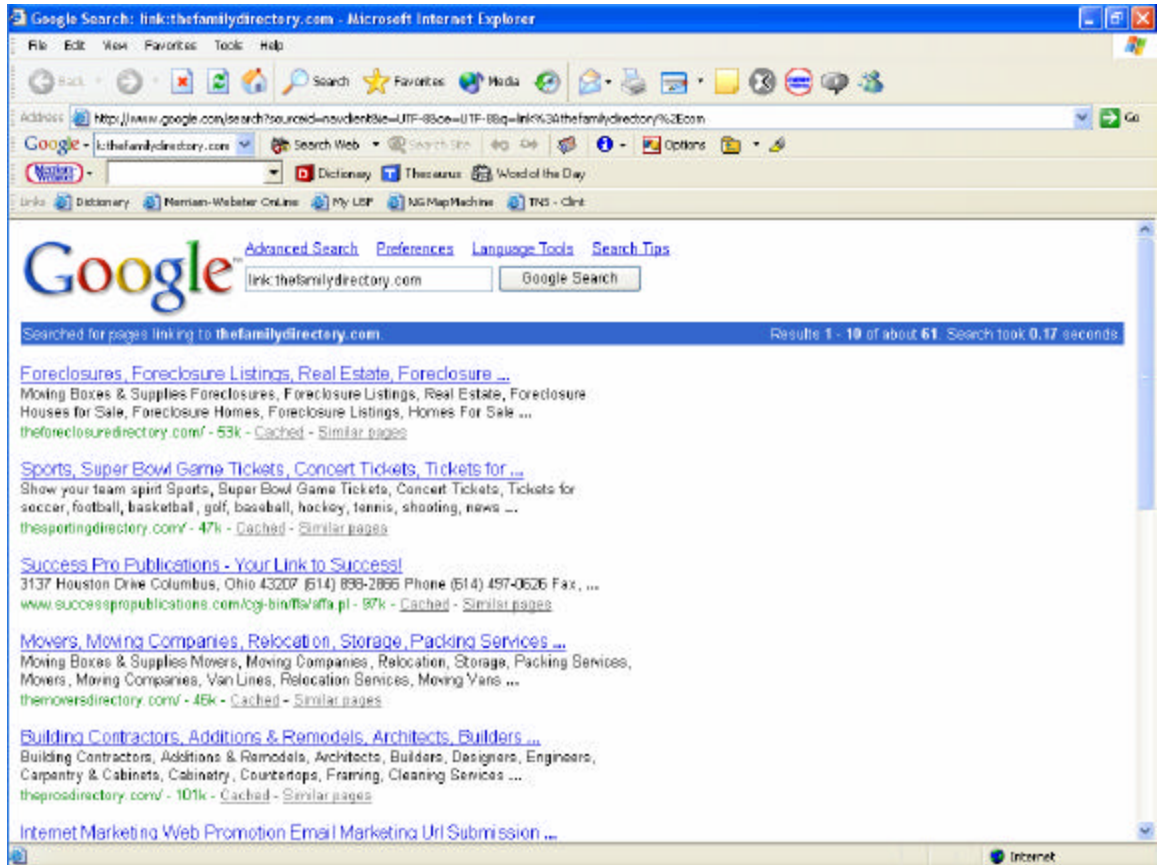
Another way to use this feature is to use the “related” keyword. Using the website thefamilydirectory.com from the example above we can get the same results by entering related:thefamilydirectory.com/mo.htm and we will get the same search results in Figure 7: Similar pages for thefamilydirectory.com/mo.htm.

8. Sites Linking to Current Website

If you find a site that is helpful, you might find other helpful information in websites that link to this site. You can get a list of all of the websites that Google has in its database that link to a site.

You can get this list by using the keyword “link”. For example, if you want to get a list of all of the websites that link to the website thefamilydirectory.com you would type link:thefamilydirectory.com into the search criteria. A screenshot of the pages that link to this site is below. Notice that Google found 61 sites that link to the site thefamilydirectory.com.

Figure 8: Sites linking to the site thefamilydirectory.com



9. Search within a Website

If you want to search for something within a website, use the keyword “site:” followed by the website you want to search within after your search criteria. For example, if you want to search for cemetery records within the Ancestry.com website you would enter cemetery site:www.ancestry.com.

10. All in URL and All in Title

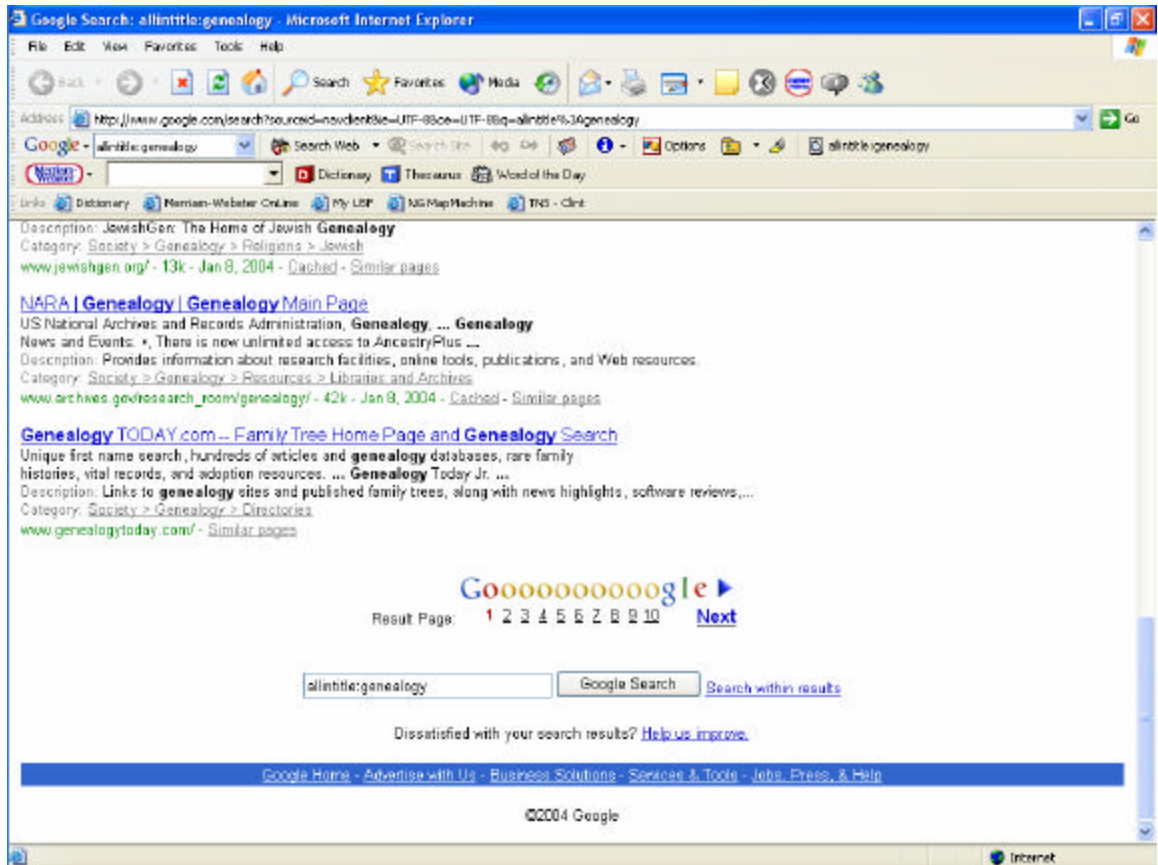
If you want to search for websites based on the URL (website address) of the site, you can use the keyword allinurl. For example, if you want to search for all websites that contain the word genealogy in their website address, enter allinurl:genealogy.

If you want to search for website based on the title of the site you can use a similar keyword called allintitle. A website’s title is what appears at the top of the browser window. For example, if you want to search for all websites that contain the word genealogy in their title enter allintitle:genealogy.

11. Search within Search Results

At the bottom of each page of search results there is a text box and a link that allows you to search within the current set of search results. For example, the screenshot below contains the first page of search results for the search criteria `allintitle:genealogy`. Notice at the bottom there is a text box into which you can enter additional search criteria. If you click the [Search within results](#) link Google will only search within the websites that are part of your initial search results.

Figure 9: Search within search results



12. People, Maps, and Phone Number Search

Google has a lot of US information about people. This includes, people names, phone numbers, addresses, and maps.

If you enter a person's first name, last name, city, and state all separated by spaces Google can find the phone number and address for the person. When Google finds an address it will provide a link to either Yahoo maps or MapQuest for a map of the address.

If you only have a phone number you can enter the phone number and Goggle will return the name and address connected with the phone number. Enter the phone number in the following format: (nnn) nnn-nnnn.

In my experience, addresses and phone numbers are usually at least 1 to 2 years old if not older.

13. Image Search

If you are searching for images, you can restrict your search results to only images. On the Google webpage, you can select the Image tab at the top of the page. Enter your search criteria like normal and Google will only return images that meet your search criteria.

14. Google Groups

If you are looking for usenet groups there is another tab for groups. Click this tab and enter your search criteria. There are a large number of groups (over a million in a recent search) that are related to genealogy.

15. File Type Search

If you are looking for documents of a specific file type, you can specify the file type in your search criteria with the filetype keyword. For example, if I wanted to search for pdf documents that contain elbow but not macaroni I would enter filetype:pdf elbow -macaroni.

16. Google Toolbar

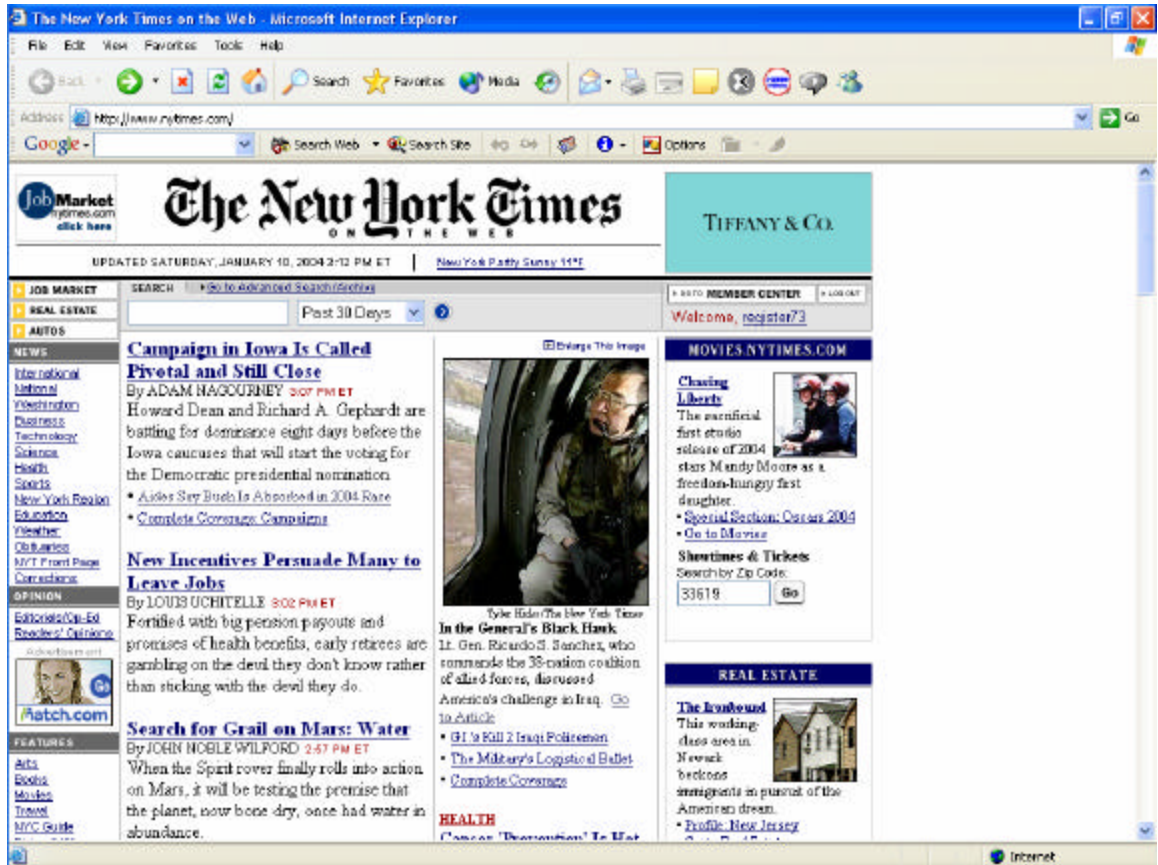
The Google Toolbar allows access to Google search results from your web browser without having to go to the Google website. The Google toolbar is a download from Google that can be found at the following URL:

<http://toolbar.google.com/>

Once installed, the Google toolbar will be part of your browser as can be seen below.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

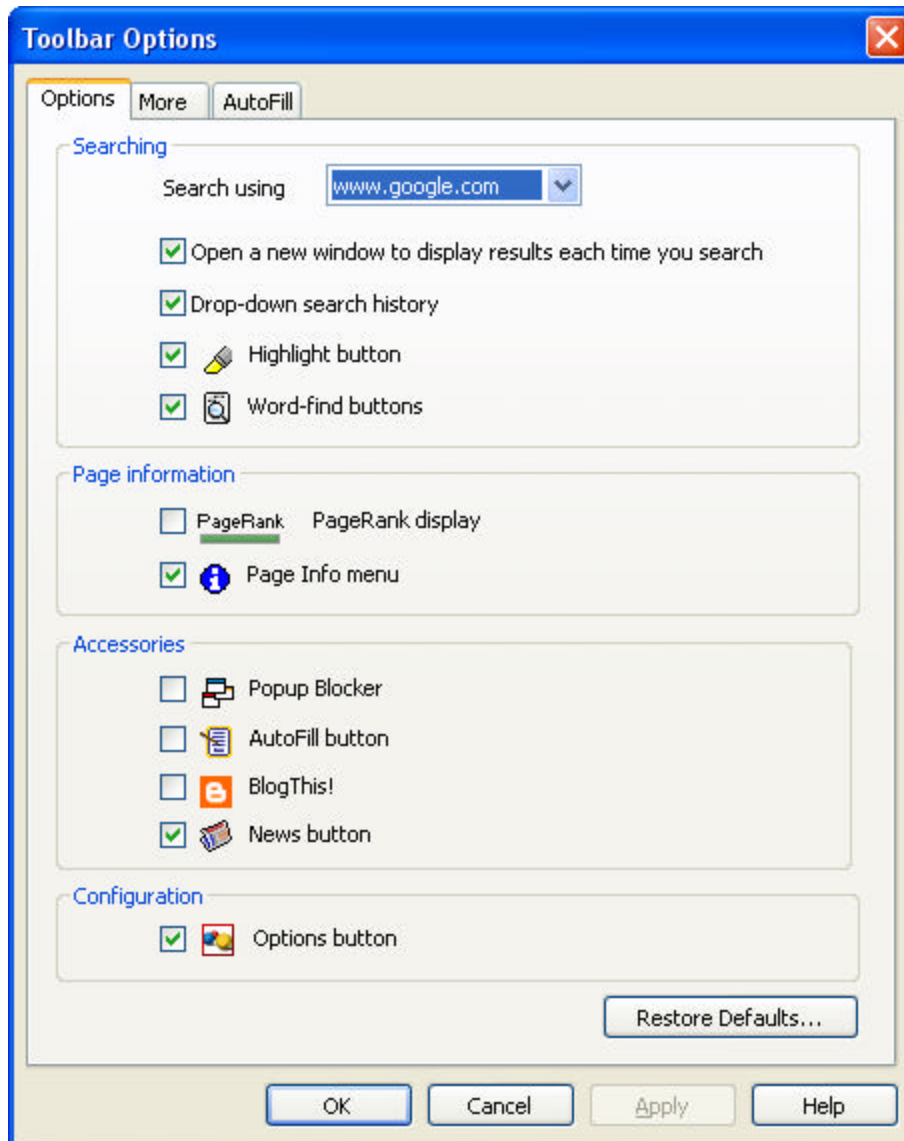
Figure 10: Google Toolbar



No matter which webpage you are on, you can enter search criteria in the in the toolbar. Google can display the search results in the same browser window or a new browser window. This is configurable in the toolbar options which will be explained below. The Google Toolbar will hold up to about 20 of your most recent search criteria that can be accessed via the dropdown list on the toolbar.

The Google Toolbar provides many options that can be configured through the options menu. If you click the Google button on the far left of the toolbar, you will see a menu. Select the "Options" menu item and you will see the following dialog box.

Figure 11: Toolbar options, Options tab



a. Options Tab

The Google Toolbar provides many options that can be configured through the Options tab. This tab provides several helpful features that you can turn off and on. I will only go through the ones I have found most useful.

Search Section

- Search Using: You can specify which Google search sight you want to search. There are Google search sights that are specific to many countries. You can select the sight from this drop down list.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

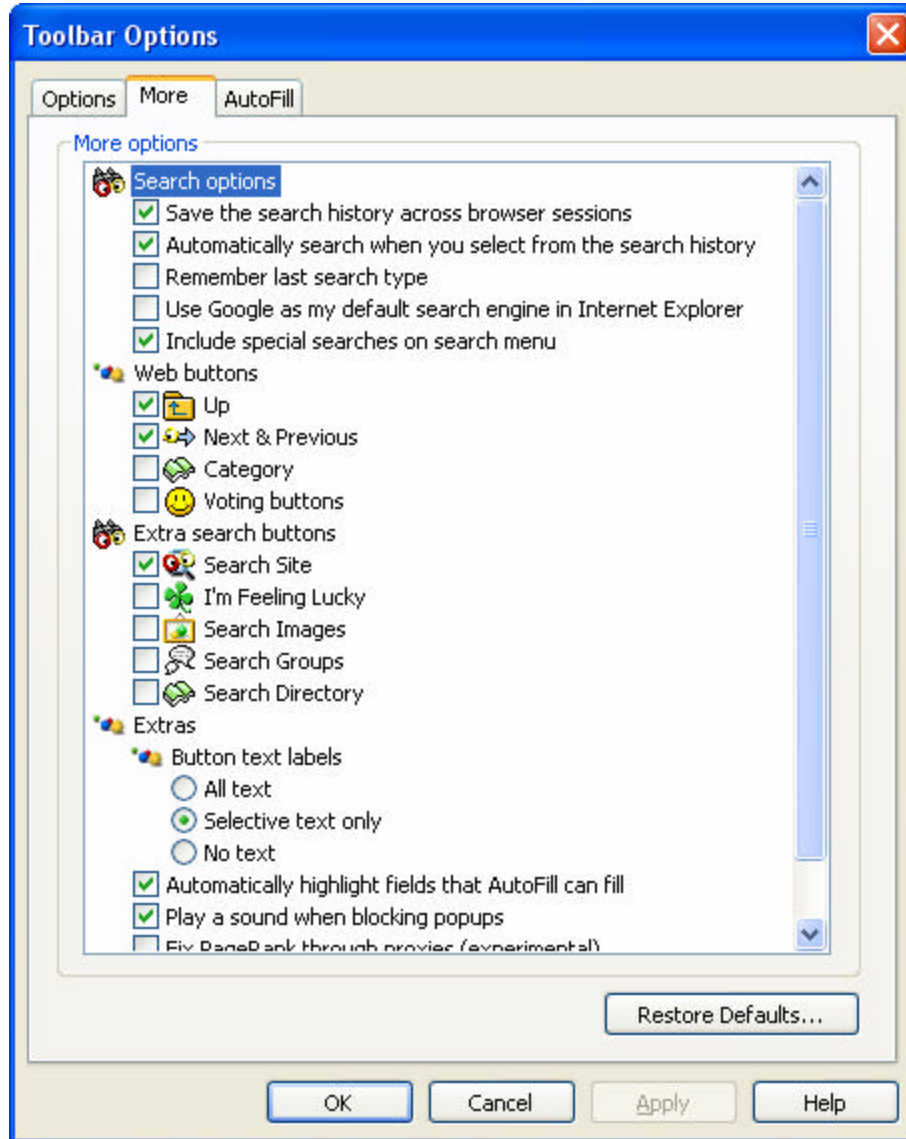
- Open a new window to display results each time you search: This feature will display the search results in a new browser window each time you search. This can be helpful because you don't lose your current webpage.
- Drop-down search history: this feature holds a history of your recent searches. If you need to redo a search you can select it from the drop down list. This keeps you from having to retype your search criteria.
- Highlight button: This feature provides a button that will highlight each occurrence of your search criteria in the websites in the search results.
- Word-find button: This feature will provide a button for each word in your search criteria. When you press a button for a word in your criteria, Google will highlight the first occurrence of the word in the page of search results. As you continue to press the word button, Google will cycle through each occurrence of the word on the page.

Using Google for Genealogy Research

b. More Tab

The More tab provides a number of search options and buttons that provide extra functionality. You may find some features that are helpful.

Figure 12: Toolbar options, More tab



c. AutoFill Tab

The Auto Fill tab provides a place to put personal information that you might regularly use to fill out forms on websites. This information is stored on your computer and when you press the Auto Fill button (that you have configured from the Options tab mentioned above) the Google Toolbar will fill in forms with the information on this page.

Even though the information remains on your computer, use your judgment on how much information you want to make available to

Using Google for Genealogy Research

computer programs. Remember, that when you are online there is always the chance that someone can access your computer from the internet.

Figure 13: Toolbar options, Auto Fill tab

The Google Toolbar can automatically fill out web forms with the information below. This information will be stored on your computer and will not be sent to Google.

Name

Full name

Email address

Phone number

Primary Address

Line 1

Line 2

City

State/province

Zip/postal code

Country

When a page asks for a shipping address, use

my primary address

an alternate address

Credit Card

Click below to add or edit your credit card information.

OK Cancel Apply Help

17. Other Google Stuff

There is a variety of other features that Google offers. You can explore many of these items from the following Google page.

<http://www.google.com/options/>

18. Google Help

Visit Google's help portion of their website by following the URL below:

Using Google for Genealogy Research

www.google.com/help/index.html

A screenshot of the Google help screen is below.

Figure 14: Google Help Screen

