Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR GENEALOGY

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Internet Resources for Genealogy Research

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1 Introduction

The Internet is a vast resource for genealogists. There are many types of resources available. This presentation will cover the following types:

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c. *Local Genealogy Sites*

d. *Building and Maintaining Websites for Genealogy*

e. *Privacy and Information Protection*

2 Search Tools and Techniques

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
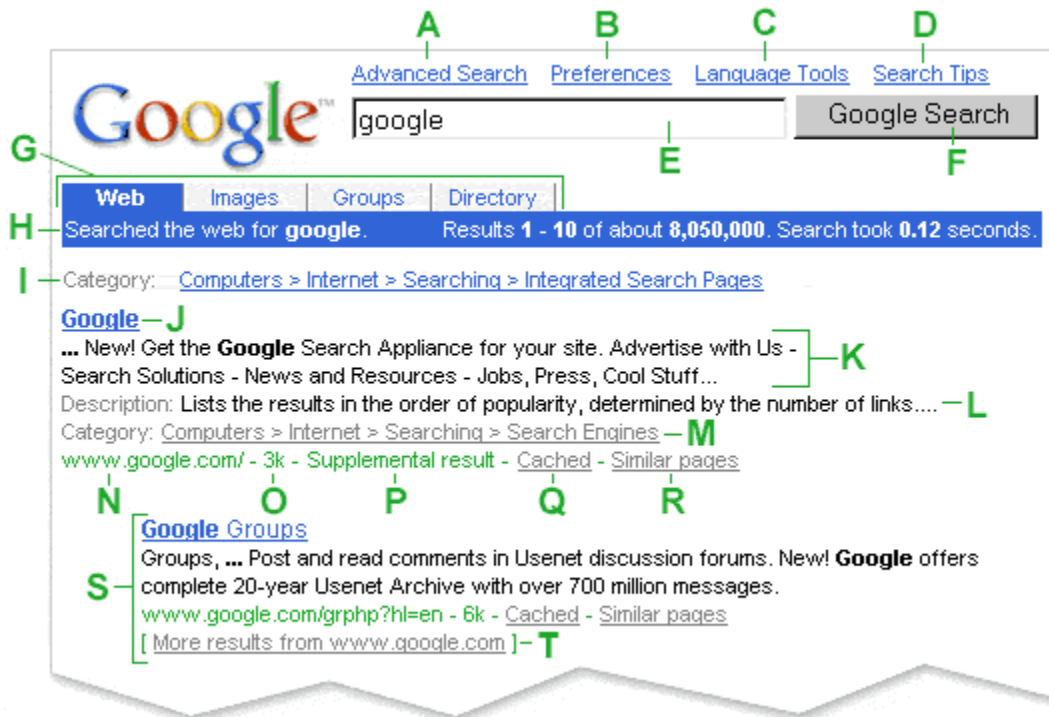
a. Advanced Search

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.

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.

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.

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 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.

Figure 2: + Operator
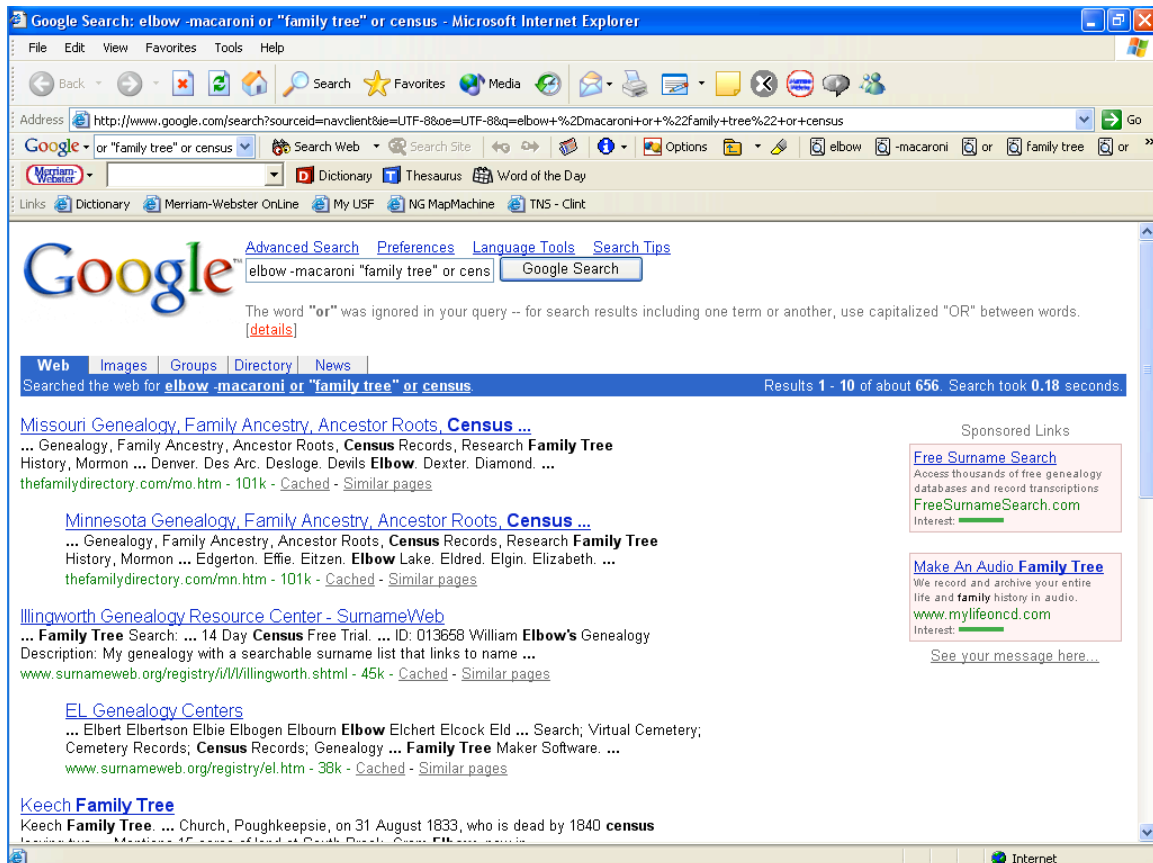
c. **""**

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 3: Search within search results
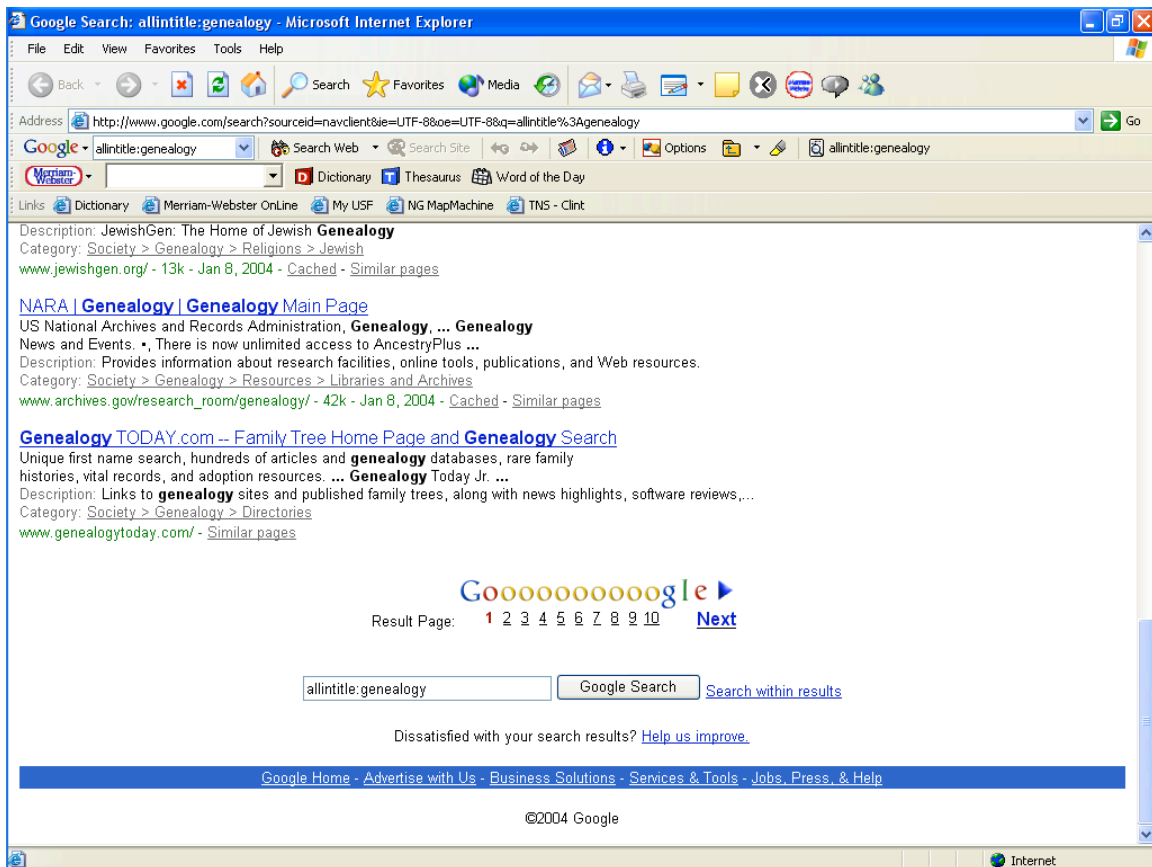
People, Maps, and Phone Number Search

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.

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.

3 Popular Genealogy Sites

3.1 JewishGen

The JewishGen website was founded by Susan King in 1987 as she started her own research into her genealogy. She started an Internet message board that had 150 members. This message board eventually became the JewishGen website. JewishGen has grown into a research tool that benefits hundreds of thousands of genealogy researchers in 163 countries.

Susan King bases JewishGen on the concept that all information people contribute to JewishGen should be free to all who participate. This brings over 6.5 million visits to JewishGen each month.

The JewishGen website is free to use, but you must register as a user to access many of the features such as searching the database, submitting information to the family tree, and subscribing to mailing lists.

Registration is a simple process. You can register by following this link to the registration page: http://www.jewishgen.org/cure/jgidadd.asp. You can also reach this page when you try to access an area of JewishGen that requires registration and you have not already logged in to the site. The following is a screenshot of the registration form. Note this does require that you supply an email address so be sure to have that ready when you register.

3.1.1 Research

JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF): The JewishGen Family Finder is a database used for finding other researchers who are searching the same towns and surnames. It contains over 70,000 researchers who are researching over 350,000 surnames and 20,000 towns.

This database can be used by entering a surname, town, and country and viewing all registered JewishGen users who are searching the same surname, town, and country. If you register with JewishGen you can add your name to the list of researchers along with a surname, town, or country so that other researchers can contact you for research collaboration.

Below is the search page for JGFF. There are three fields in which a surname, town, and country can be entered. In the following example, the surname 'Ellenbogen' and the country 'Germany' have been entered. Once you have entered your search criteria, click the 'Search' button.

Figure 4: Family Finder Search Page
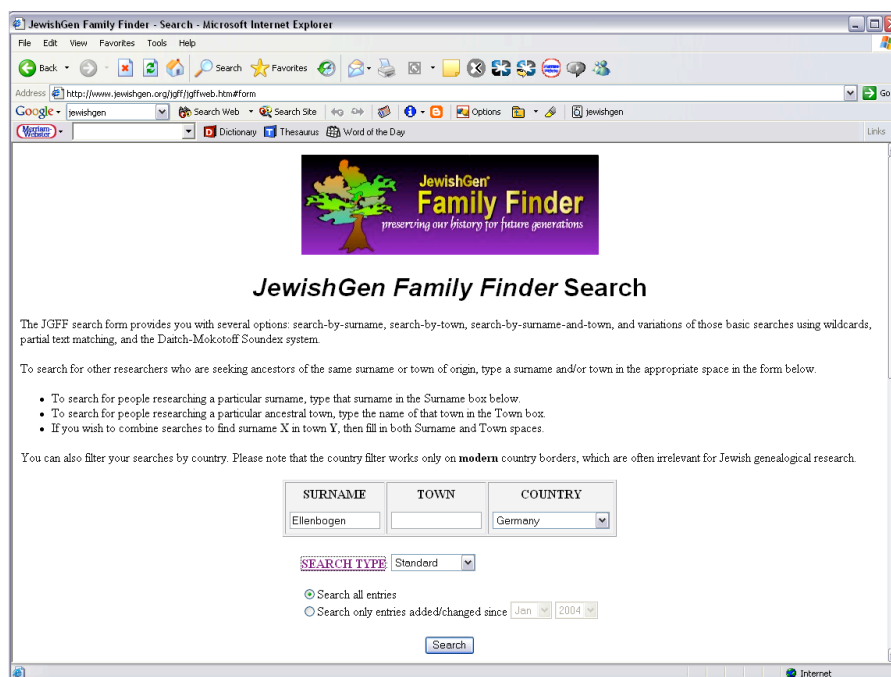
You will then be presented with search results, as shown in the next screenshot. The surname, town, country, date entry last updated, and the researcher will be displayed for each record that matches your criteria. There will be a varying amount of information in the researcher column. The amount of information is determined by the amount that the researcher has chosen to make available. There will be a link in the researcher column that can be either an email link to allow you to contact the researcher directly, or it could be just the JewishGen ID of the researcher. In this case you can enter a message and it will be forwarded to the researcher via their email address without displaying the email address to you.

Figure 5: JGFF Search Results for Ellenbogen
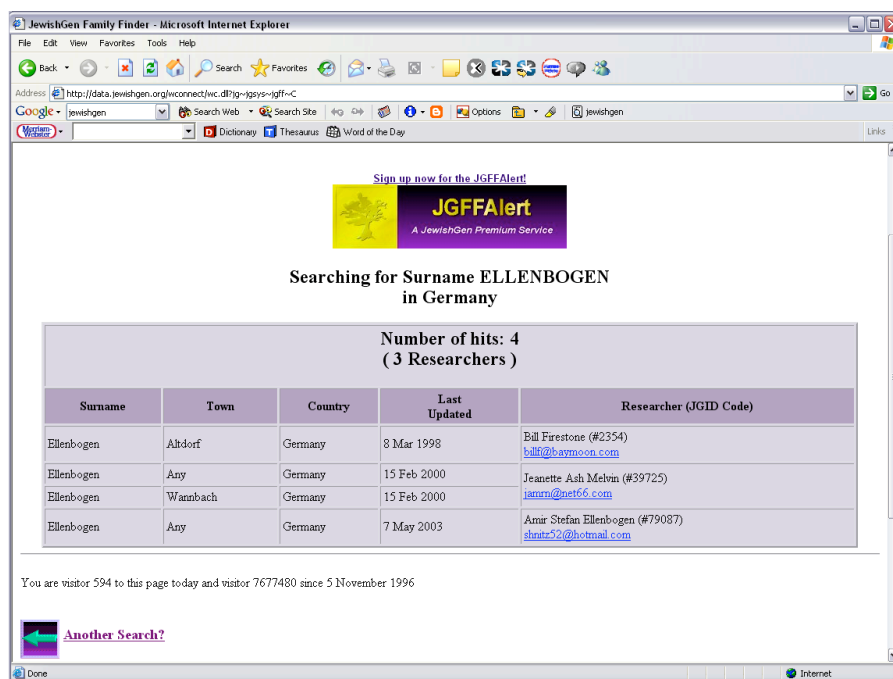
JewishGen Databases: This page is a list of links to the various sources of information contained on JewishGen. The links are grouped in a General category and then by country. The screenshot below shows the contents of the General category as well as a list of the countries that are found further down the page.

Figure 6: JewishGen Database
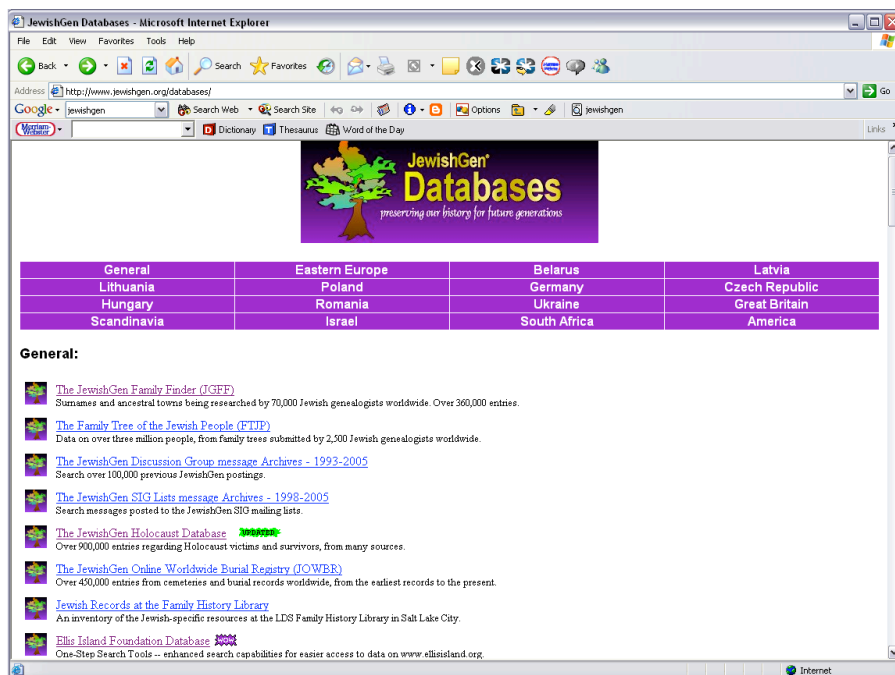
The Family Tree of the Jewish People (FTJP): A searchable compilation of family trees of Jewish researchers. This project is a cooperative project by the following three

different agencies: JewishGen, Inc., The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), and the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora (Beit Hatefutsot). Both JewishGen and Beit Hatefutsot make this family tree available through websites, IAJGS makes the family tree available on CD-ROM. JewishGen allows registered users to search and to upload genealogy data. In order to do this, you must agree to certain uses of the database. You do this by clicking either a button to search the database or upload GEDCOM data to the database as is seen in the next screenshot.

Figure 7: FTJP Agreement Page
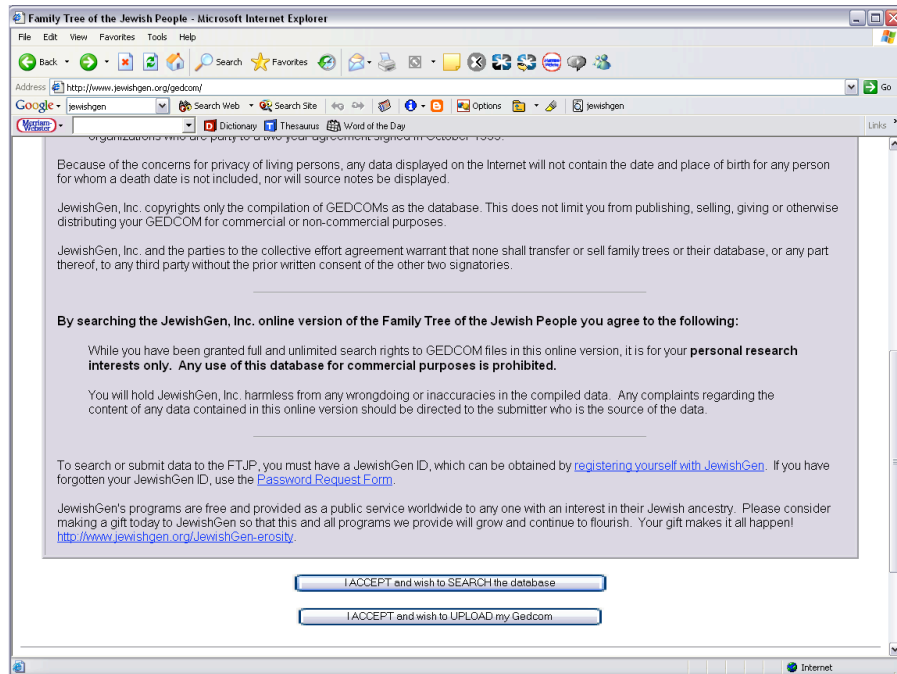
Once you accept the agreement to search the database you will be presented with the following search screen. You have two search options, a simple search by surname, town or country or a generational search. The simple search allows you to enter a surname, a town, or a country. JewishGen will return any record that meets the criteria you enter. The generational search allows you to search for people who have common ancestors. You can enter up to six surnames in the bottom half of the search screen.

Figure 8: FTJP Search Screen
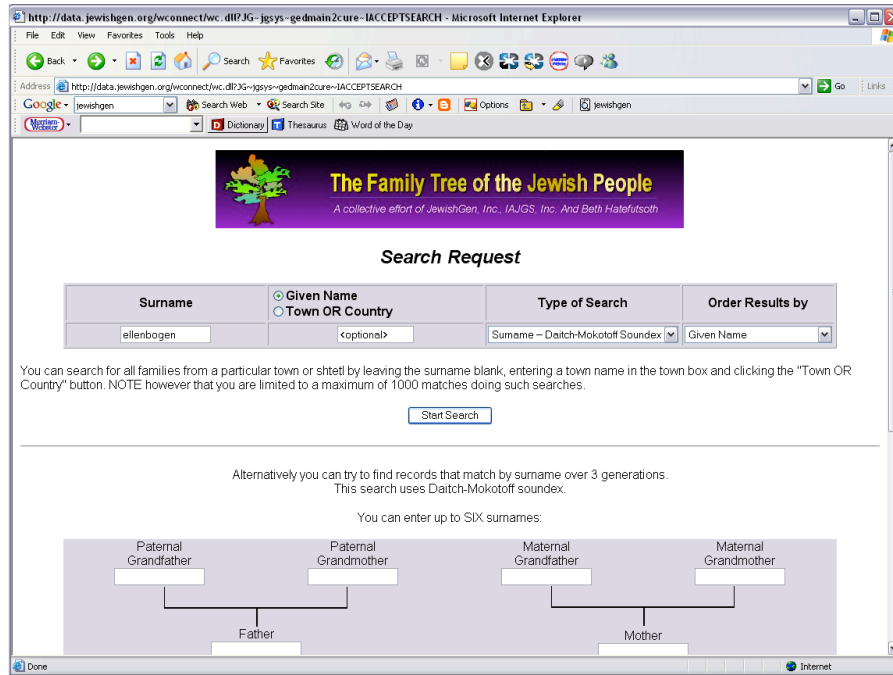
The following are the results of a search for the surname 'Ellenbogen'.

Figure 9: FTJP Search Results for 'Ellenbogen'
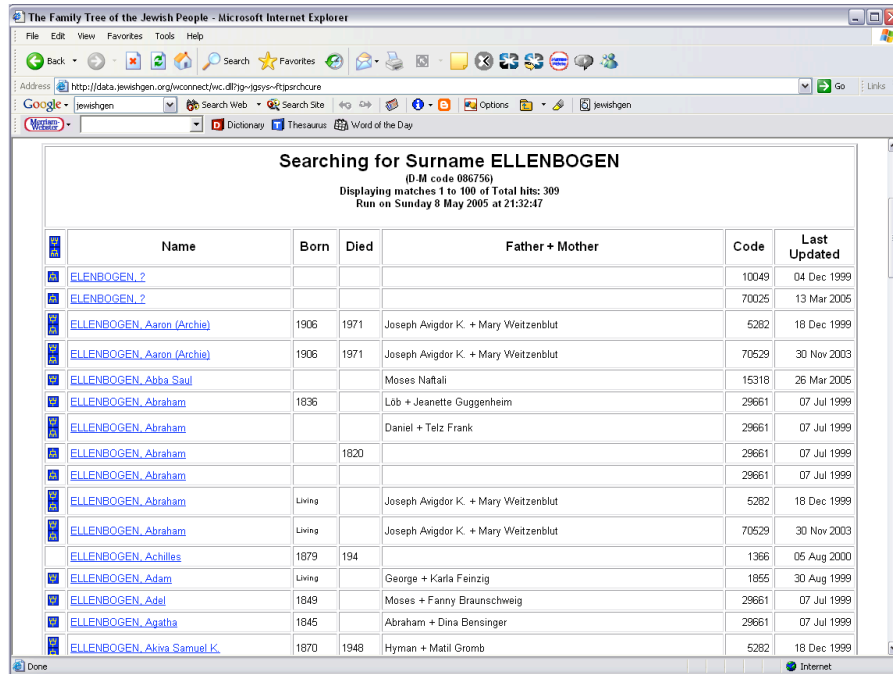
If you find the person you are looking for in the search results, click the link. You will then see a Family Display page that has a family tree centered on the person

whose link you clicked. This page will open in a new browser window so you can easily return to the search results.

The Family Display page displays two generations of ancestors of the selected person, spouse (if any), and any recorded children. You can see the family page for any of the relations by clicking on their link.

Figure 10: FTJP Family Display
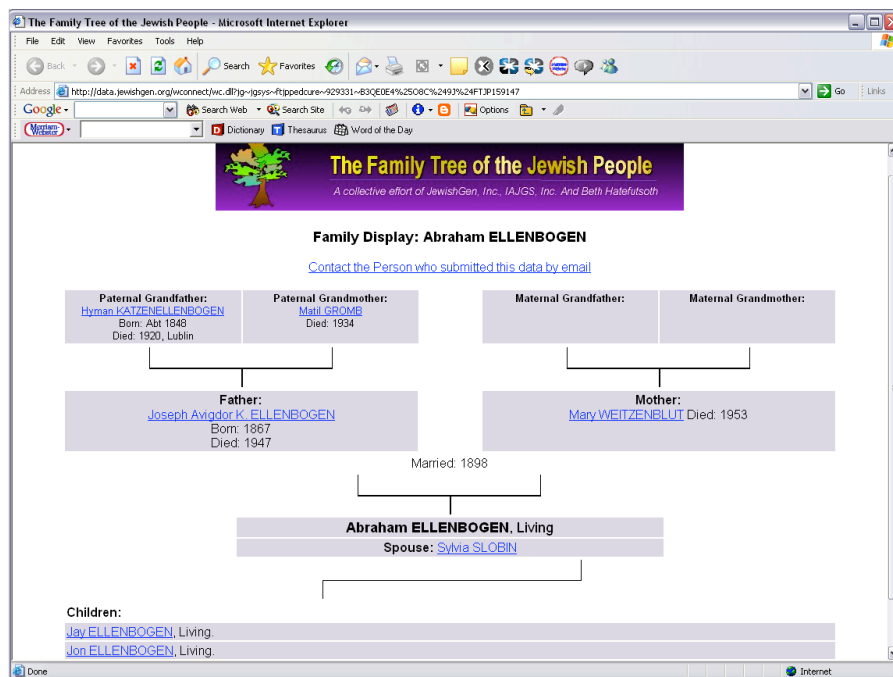
Learn
Discussion Groups
Projects and Activities
Contributions and Fund Raising
Special Interest Groups
Hosted Organizations

3.2 FamilySearch.org

FamilySearch.org is a non-profit service of the The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints, otherwise known as the Mormons. You may wonder why the The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints is interested in genealogy. According to their website, the church provides the following explanation:

"Members of the Church believe that the family can also continue beyond the grave, not just until death.

This is possible when parents and their children make special promises, called covenants, in sacred temples. These covenants, when made with the authority of God and faithfully kept, can unite families for eternity.

Members of the Church believe that their deceased ancestors can also receive the blessings of being eternally united with their families.

For this purpose, Church members make covenants in temples in behalf of their ancestors, who may accept these covenants, if they so choose, in the spirit world.

In order to make covenants in behalf of their ancestors, members must first identify them. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has gathered genealogical records from all over the world. These records are available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, and at Family History Centers throughout the world."

The FamilySearch.org home page is below. It has a relatively simple interface for the quantity of information contained in the site.

Figure 11: FamilySearch.org Home Page
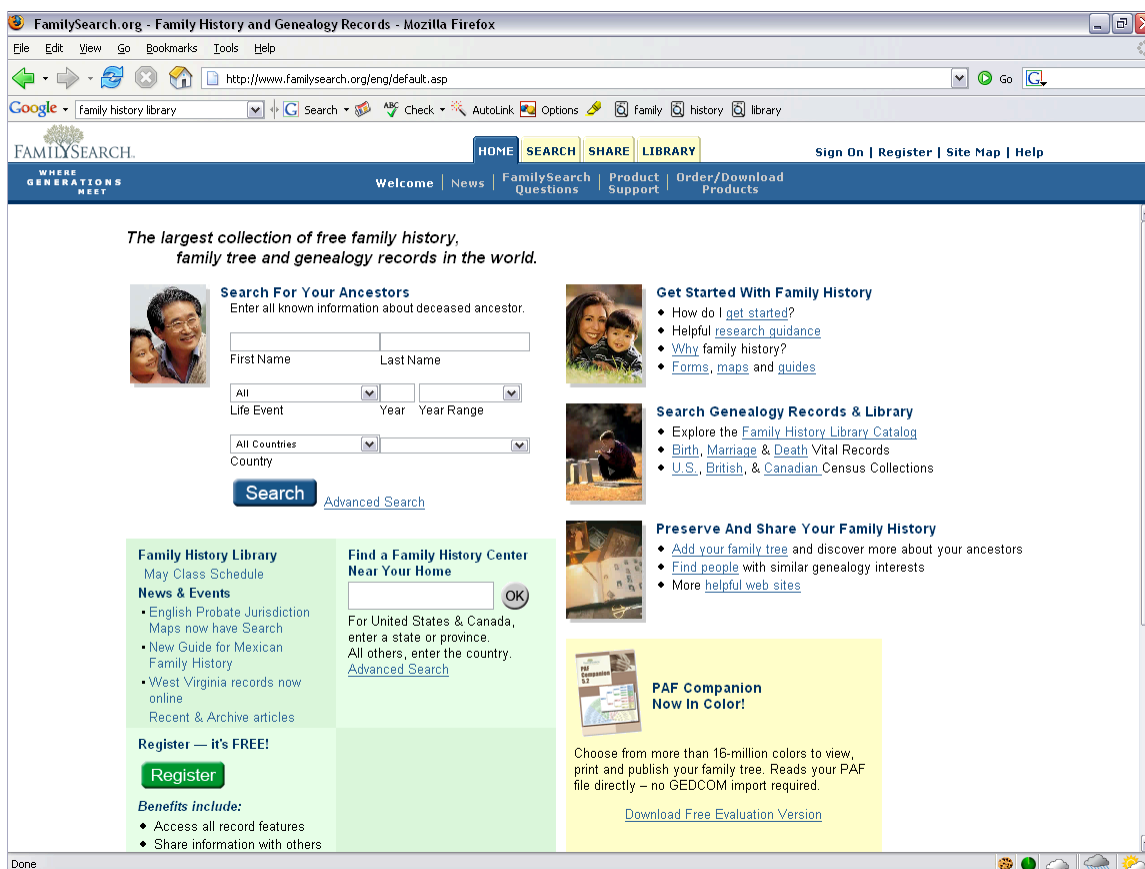
We will focus on the search capabilities of FamilySearch.org. Click on the 'Search' tab on the home page to access the 'Advanced Search' page. Once you do, you will see the following screen.

Figure 12: FamilySearch.org Advanced Search Screen
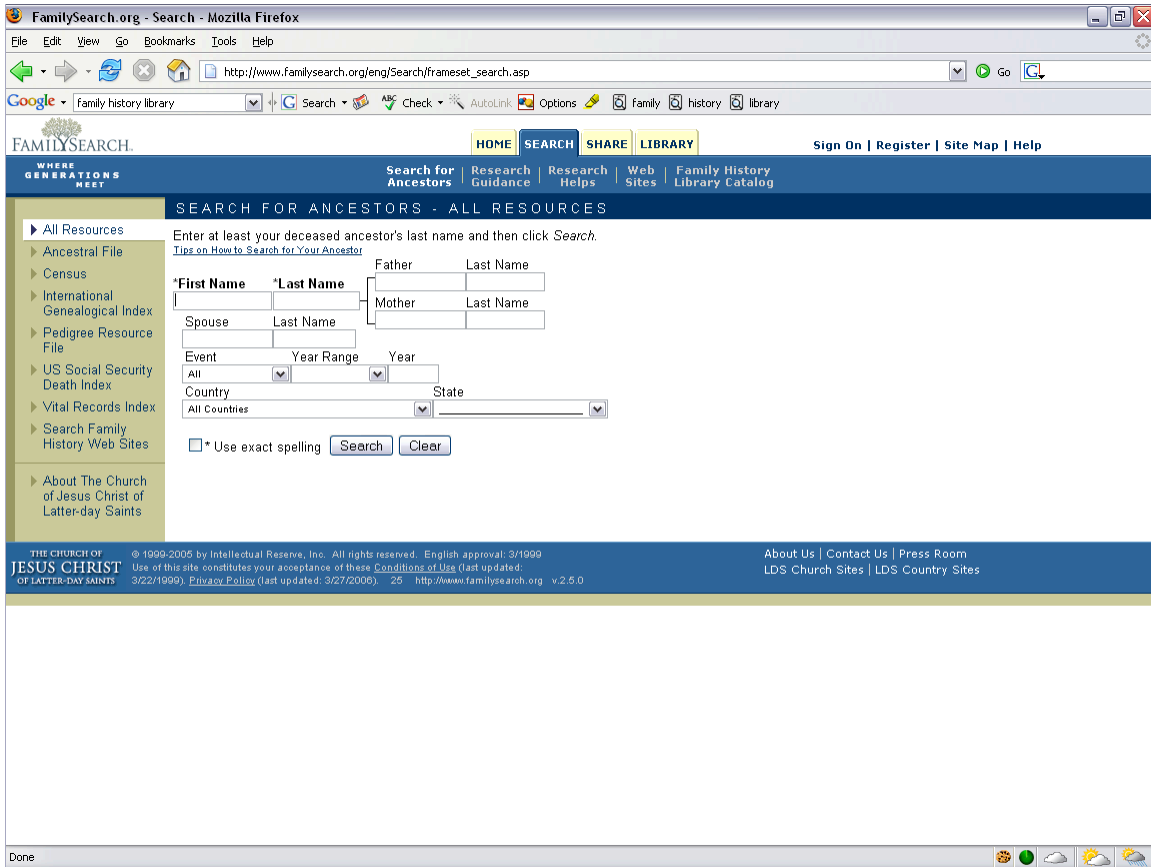
The search results screen will contain any match for the criteria entered. The screen shot below shows the results for the search criteria: "gus elbow".

Figure 13: Search Results for Gus Elbow

Each search result contains a link to the information that it represents. The screenshot below shows the information for link 1 in the search results.

Figure 14: Information for Search Result Number 1

In this example, the search results are a marriage record. The date and location are provided as well as the spouse that is a link to another record for this person. In the 'Source Information' section there are links to the 'Batch No' and the 'Source Call No'. These provide information about the batch of information the data comes from and the microfilm or fiche that contains the data.

3.3 Ellis Island

The Ellis Island Foundation has a website that provides access to immigration records for those who passed through Ellis Island. Manifests can be obtained for a fee once an ancestor is found. Below is the initial search screen for the website.

Figure 15: Ellis Island Database Home Page
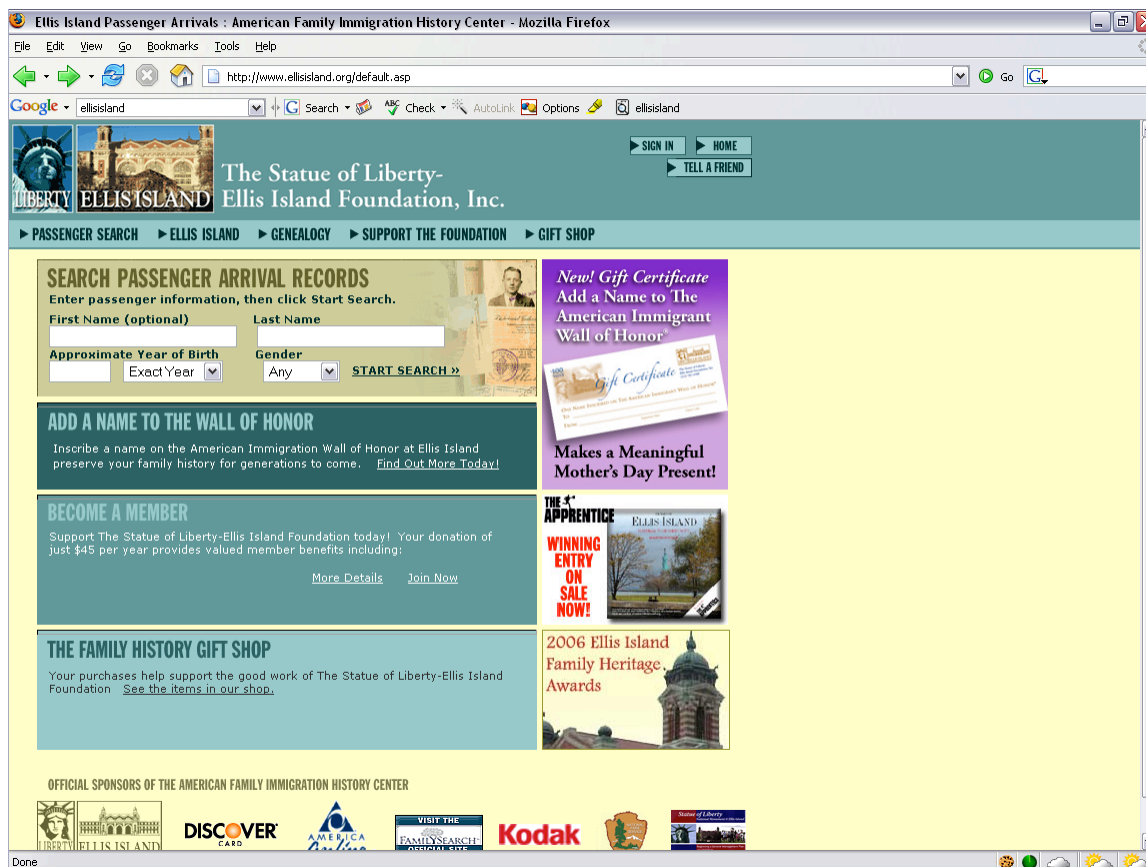
The Ellis Island database provides a list records that matches the search criteria. The screenshot below shows the results for a search of the last name of 'elbow'. In order to view the information about a result, click the radio button by the record and click on the 'Search On The Checked Name Choice' button at the bottom of the screen.

The database will return any specific names for the selected name choice. The screenshot below shows the name 'Moische Elbau'. From this screen you can link to the details about the person, view the passenger record, view the ship manifest, or view and image of the ship. The screenshots following are for the passenger record, ship manifest, and image of the ship.

Figure 16: Ellis Island Name Match

Figure 17: Ellis Island Passenger Record

Figure 18: Ship Manifest

Figure 19: Ship Image

3.4 Cyndi's List

Cyndi's List is a website (www.cyndislist.com) that provides many links to a wide variety of genealogical resources. The range of categories ranges from different areas of the world, religions, newspapers, obituaries, personal home pages, and societies.

There are too many categories to list here but below is a screenshot of the home page of www.cyndislist.com. It is best to peruse this website to discover the many resources it contains.

Figure 20: Cyndi's List Home Page
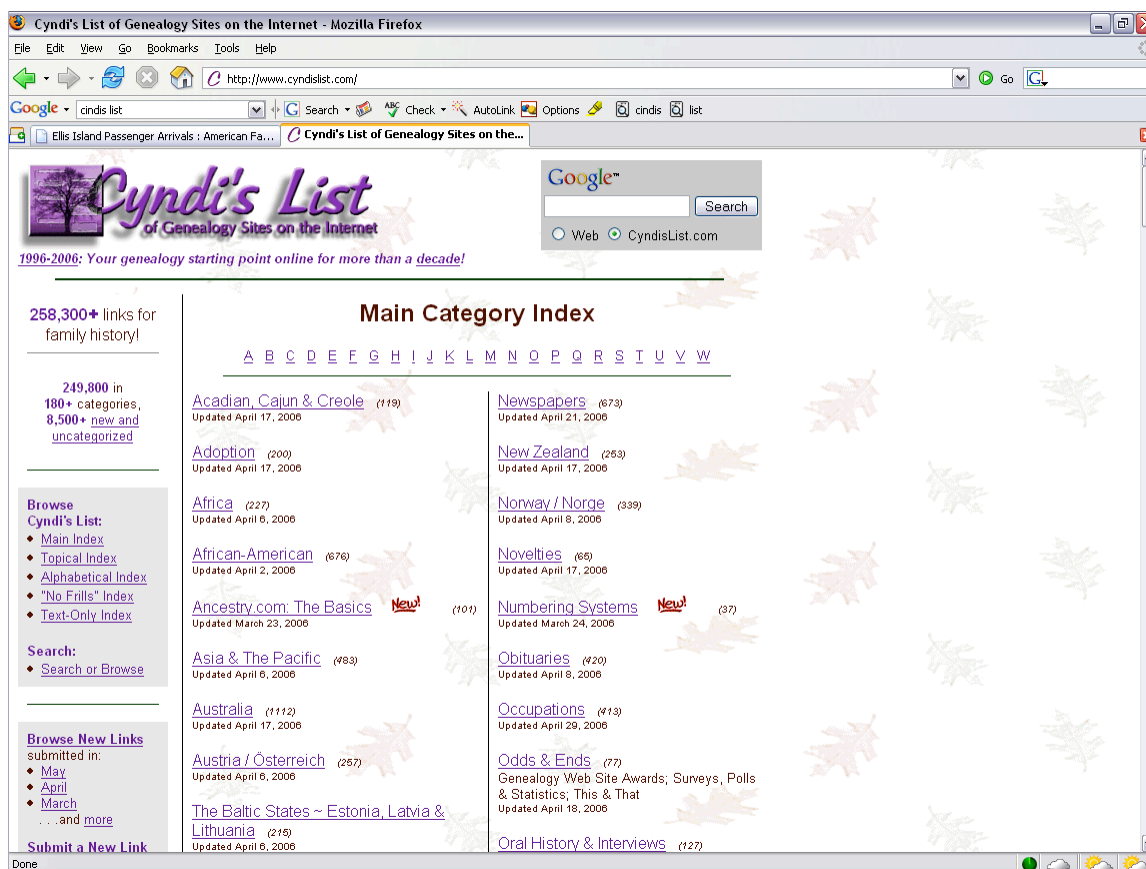
3.5 National Archives and Records Administration

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is a federal agency that is charged with preserving important documents generated by the federal government. There is a genealogy section on the website that can assist genealogists with their research.

Anytime an ancestor interacted with the federal government, it is possible that a record was generated to record this interaction. These records range from federal census records, to military records, to naturalization records, and land records. Below is a screen shot of the NARA home page, followed by the 'Genealogist/Family History' page.

Figure 21: NARA Home Page

Figure 22: Genealogy/Family History Page
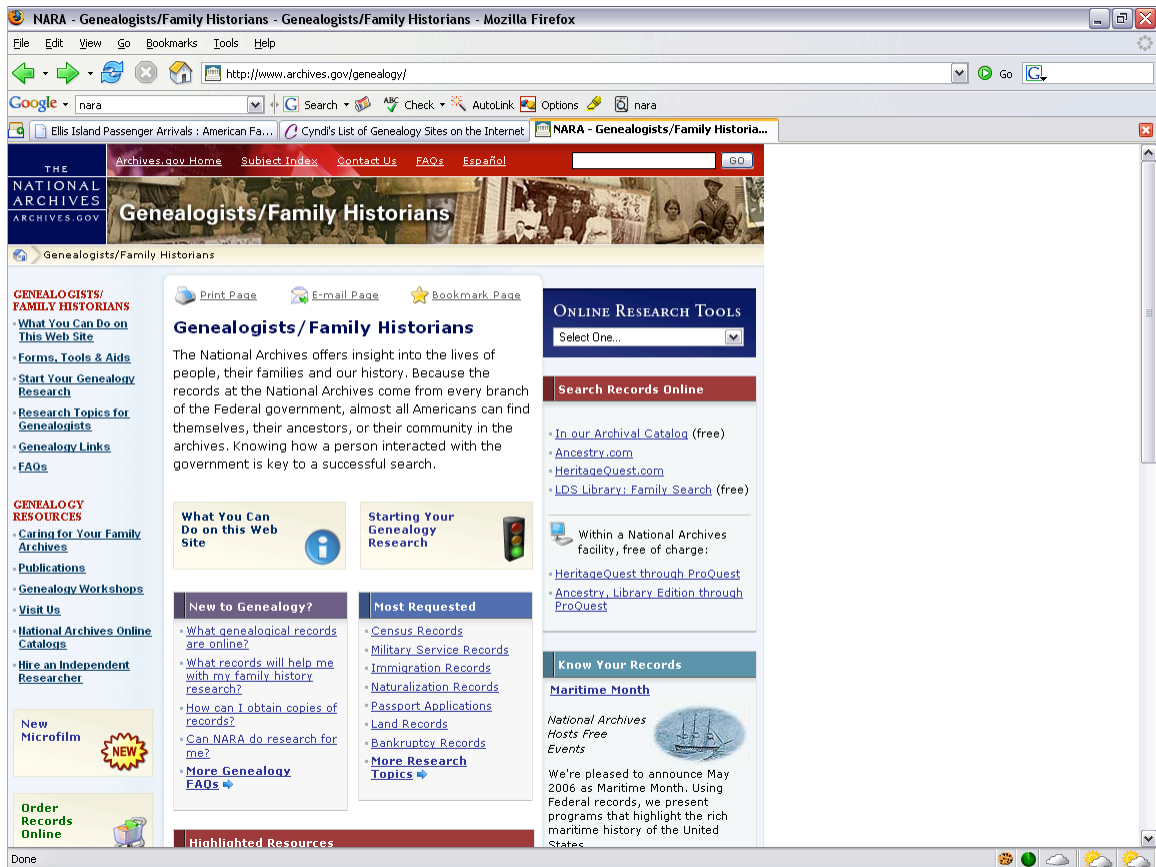
Using the census records as an example of what NARA has to offer, we will access the 'Census Records' page from the 'Genealogist/Family Historians' page. NARA does not actually have census forms available on their site, but they have all of the microfilm catalogs online. Using these catalogs you can find the census records in which your ancestors may be listed but will need to use another source to actually view the records.

Once you have located the census records that you need, you can access the records in several locations, both physical and online. NARA does have all of the census records on microfilm. However, access to these is limited to the national NARA location in Washington DC or in one of the regional NARA locations, the closest to Tampa Bay being in Atlanta, GA. Many public libraries have census records on microfilm. The Tampa Public Library has a large selection of these.

There are two subscription-based services that have digitized many census records. They are Ancestry.com and Heratigequest.com. From these sites, you can view a digitized copy of the actual census record. The Ancestry.com records can be accessed from either he national or any of the regional NARA facilities as well as some public libraries like the Tampa Public Library.

The NARA site is most helpful for discovering what federal records exist, and in many cases which of these records may contain your ancestors. Once you have identified these

records you will need to access the records elsewhere. The NARA site often indicates where the records exist and how you can access them.

4 Local Genealogy Sites

Local sites can offer many records that you won't come across on federal or commercial lists. Local sites can include local records such as wills, marriage records, naturalization records up to a certain time period, newspaper stories, and obituaries. The list goes on and it is well worth it to spend the time to search local sources. Many local entities have begun to put information online so a trip to the locale is not always necessary.

In order to illustrate how local sites can be helpful, I will provide a few examples where I have found records in local sources. To find online local sources, begin searching the Internet from a search engine such as Google. You can learn of a place name from many sources such as census records or existing family knowledge. One you have a place name, search for this place name. Examine the results and dig into them. Often they will have a local contact phone number or email address that can be helpful for specific questions.

4.1 Carroll County Tennessee

After learning that my namesake, my great-great-great grandfather was married in Carroll county Tennessee in 1865, I searched online for Tennessee resources. One site I came across was TNGenWeb Project. One this site there is a page for Carroll County in which my ancestor lived. The link to this page is:

<div align="center">

http://www.tngenweb.org/carroll/

</div>

Figure 23: Carroll County TN GenWeb Page
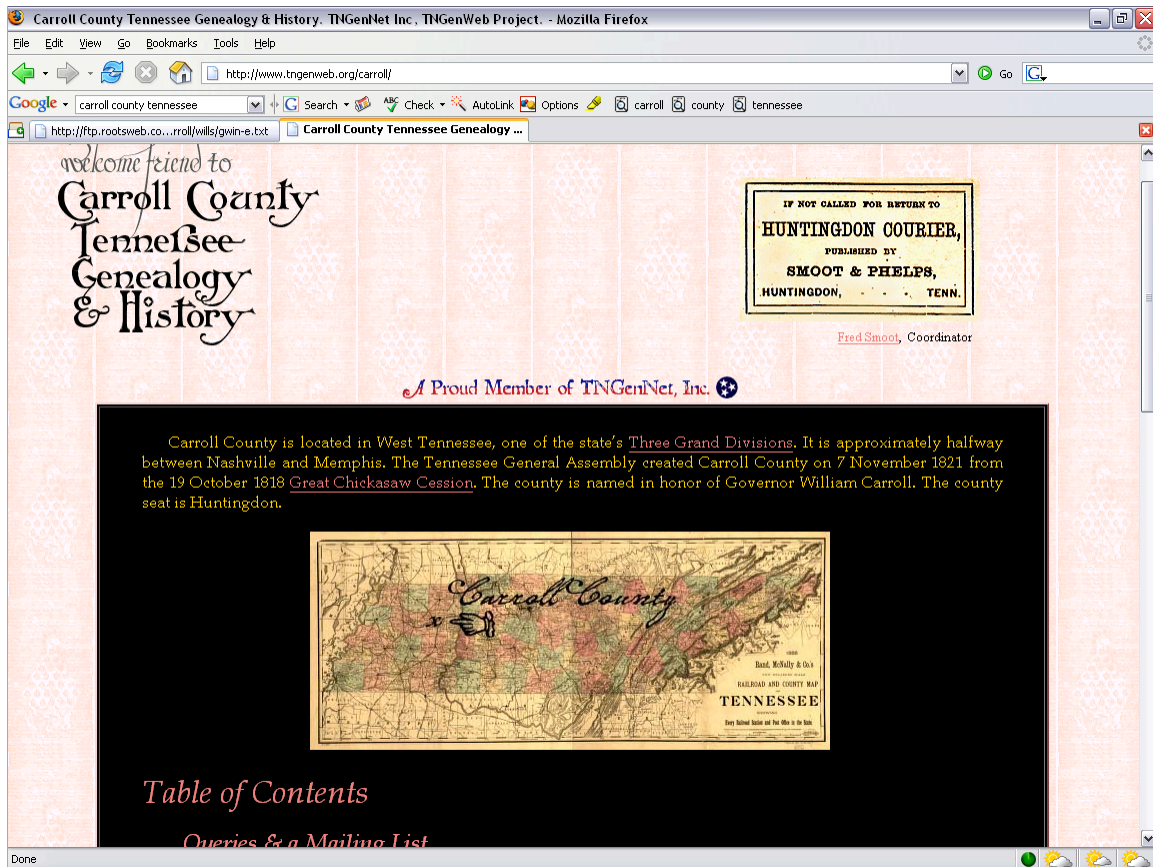
Above is a screenshot of the Carroll County page. My find on this site was a link to Carroll County records on US GenWeb on which I found a will for which my ancestor was a witness. This find did not add new names to my genealogy research but it was a find that added color and background to an ancestor which I would not have found had I not looked at the local level. Here is a copy of the will. My ancestors name is Gus Elbow.

```
County:  Carroll Co.                        State: TN

Deed Book: Will Book B, Roll 112           Page: 116-121

Grantor:  Edward Gwin                       Residence:

Grantee:  Robt. D. Gwin and John E. Gwin    Residence:

Date of Deed: Will dated 18 Jun 1870       Date Recorded: March 1874

Consideration:

Signature: Edward Gwin (Seal)

Witnesses: A. S. Cole, W. H. Hawkins, Gus Elbow, Jim Null

Description:
To my Son Robert D. Gwin I give a one half interest and my other son John E.
Gwin and to his children after him Jointly and Equally.  I give a one half
interest in the following described tract of Land Known as my Mill tract and
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upon which is Sit-uated my Mill and Cotton Gin.  Begining at a Stake at Clear
Creek runs thence North - West to a point fifty yards North of the North end of
the Mill - thence to the head of John E. Gwin's Ditch-thence with said ditch
thence with said Ditch to Clear Creek thence up said creek with the mean-derings
of said stream except at the mill where the line shall run South from the Creek
so as to include a space one hundred yards long and fifty yards wide on the
South side of Said Creek where the mill and Gin now _____ thence with said creek
to the begining It is my wish further that if my son Robt D Gwin shall die
without Lawful issue that his share of the above land shall at his death descend
to as in the fourth devise to the children of Sarah C. Brannock and John E.
Gwin.
```

As an example of more local resources that can be found at local sites, the TN GenWeb page has a couple of links to local historical societies. These sites have general information online but offer a local contact should I wish to do more local research.

4.2 *Effingham County Illinois*

My namesake ancestors spent time in Effingham Illinois. I have found some resources online for this town that have helped me in my preparation for a visit to this town. The town of Effingham is the county seat for Effingham County Illinois. Through the county website, I have found a link to the clerk of records office from which I can request copies of birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage records. The link is:

http://www.co.effingham.il.us/clerkrecorder.html

Also through local sites I have come across the **Effingham County Genealogical and Historical Society.** On my visit to Effingham in the local library, I looked up this society and found a small Effingham history publication that listed a couple of my ancestors and a clothing store that they ran. This is another example of what local resources can offer that you won't find in state and national resources.

5 Building and Maintaining Websites

A website is one way of storing and making available genealogical research. If you have never had any experience with a website this may seem like a daunting project. However, it may be easier than you think. There are three main components to operating a web page.

Web Pages

First you need at least one web page for visitors to your site to view. You can create a webpage with a program as simple as Microsoft Word. There are several software programs that exist which provide many tools to create websites. A couple of examples are Microsoft FrontPage and Macromedia's Dreamweaver. These applications offer a number of tools that allow you to create more complex websites but they are more expensive.

As far as skills go, the easiest route is a word processor application like Microsoft Word. If you have enough skills to type a document, you can create a web page. It involves type the text that you want, formatting the text, inserting pictures, and adding hyperlinks if you will have more than one page in your site or you want to link to another site.

Domain Name

If you want your site to have a unique name on the Internet, you will have to come up with what is called the domain name and then get it registered. A domain name is the website address that visitors will need to type into their browser to view your site. For example, 'FamilySearch.org' or 'JewishGen.org'.

NetworkSolutions is a domain name registrar. They keep track of which domain names have been taken and can register new names. They have a search screen that allows you to search existing domain names to see if a desired name has already been taken. Once you find an available and desirable name, you can register for a fee to use the name. There are different pricing models but a common one is a yearly fee for the use of the domain name. If you pay for multiple years at a time you will often get a reduction in the price per year.   You can see the current prices at NetworkSolutions' website: http://www.networksolutions.com/.

Hosting Service or Personal Web Server

A hosting service or personal web server will make your website available on the internet. A hosting service is much easier but you will have to pay for it. There is typically a monthly fee. Since we are talking about genealogy sites, some websites such as RootsWeb will host personal genealogy web pages for free. If you do take advantage of a service like this, you will have to use RootsWeb domain name but you will be given a specific page that is your home page. From this home page, you can add additional other pages.

If you choose to host the site yourself, you will need a computer that you can use as a web server. Using this approach, you will set up the web server software and your website on this computer and leave it on continually to allow visitors to access your site. This approach requires that you have an 'always on' internet connection such as cable or DSL internet service.

Hosting your site yourself obviously takes more resources in knowledge, computer equipment, and money. However, if you are willing to put these resources into it, you will have much more flexibility in how your website is run.

6 Privacy and Information Protection

After talking about many types of genealogy resources available on the internet, and about creating your own website, it is time to say a few words about privacy and information protection. The short of is: "Don't put anything on a website that you want to keep private." There are methods of protecting websites with passwords to limit access but these take additional resources and there is always someone out there who probably has the time and knowledge to find a way around it. If you information is so valuable that you really want to restrict it, it is best to find professional help to create a secure website.

With that said if you are thinking about putting any information on a website, think hard about what you want to make available. It may be personal information about you or a family member or deceased relative.   Take into account the ramifications of the information being available to the general public. In short, if you are unsure about whether you or someone you know wants the data on a webpage, don't put it on the page. Even if you only tell family members about the page, it is just a matter of time before the page becomes logged in a search engines database allowing anyone to view the page.

7 Addendum: Bill's Web Page Picks

- Ancestry.com - Not cheap, but worth it (in my opinion)
- Census Tools - Useful worksheets & downloads
- Jewish Web Index - Potpourri - a little bit of everything
- Jewish Genealogy Links - Not sure it is maintained, but appears to be valid)
- CIMO - Ships Arriving in USA from Europe
- Genealogy Search Help from Google - Takes the mystery out of Boolean logic searches
- RootsWeb - hosts our web page, plus much more
- HeritageQuest - free census search - use library card
- The Genealogy Guys Podcast - George Morgan and Drew Smith - two local guys are smooth & polished

8 And the Winners Are…….! (In Bill's opinion)

- Best Overall (by far) - JewishGen
- Best Search Tools (by far) - One-Step Search Pages by Stephen P. Morse