

Google for Genealogists

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The Google You Know

For many genealogists, Google is a search engine where you type what you're looking for and *voilà!* links appear to other websites.

But did you know that there are many more components in the Google family of applications and websites that can be used to amplify your research? Let's take a closer look at not only these often-neglected parts of Google, but we'll also discuss improving your search strategies when using the Google search engine.

The Google You May Not Know

Google is more than just a search engine. However, due to its popularity and domination of the market (66% as of November, 2009), most Internet users only use Google Web Search and don't venture to the other Google applications which include:

- **Google Alerts**
- **Google Books**
- **Google Data**
- **Google Docs**
- **Google Earth**
- **Google Groups**
- **Google Images**
- **Google Mail**
- **Google Maps**
- **Google News**
- **Google Patents**
- **Google Scholar**
- **Google Sites**
- **Google Translate**
- **Google Voice**
- **Picasa**

A complete list of Google products can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Google_products

Google Web Search

The most popular search engine, Google Web Search can be used to search for websites that may contain information on your ancestors or your research topics.

- **Advanced Web Search:** allows you to narrow search results by specific words, dates, and even websites.
- **Google Cache:** every search result contains a link labeled "cache." Click this to see what the previous version of the website looked like. This is also useful when a website is down – click cache to see the snapshot of the site taken by Google.

Books, Journals, Magazines

- **Google Books:** did you know that you can search the text of almost 130 million books – over 4 billion digital pages? Many of the titles are in the public domain (copyright free) and the entire book can be accessed. Search Google Books for surnames, locations and other topics involving your genealogy.
- **Google Scholar:** similar to Google Books but the results are limited to scholarly journals. While you may not find specific ancestors unless they were historically significant, Google Scholar is good for researching topics such as sociology and the forces which caused our ancestors to migrate to new lands.

Photographs

- **Google Images:** a search engine to find photographs tagged with labels such as location, name of subject, etc. Use to locate ancestor photos posted on other sites, as well as historical location photos for your family history stories.
- **Picasa:** a Google application (downloadable and web-based) that allows you to store your photos for free. Use as a way to backup your scanned family photos.

Office Productivity

- **Google Docs:** a free, web-based version of programs such as Microsoft Office or Open Office. Use Google Docs to write your research reports, create spreadsheets to track your research data, or even create forms for family members to fill out online and gather information. Download free cheat sheet for Google Docs at <http://www.lulu.com/product/ebook/getting-started-with-google-docs/11717058>.
- **Google Calendar:** a free calendar to track various dates. Can be embedded into blogs and websites. Some genealogists use it to trace family and ancestor birth dates, death dates, etc. and incorporate into family history documents.
- **Google Mail:** a free email account similar to Hotmail or Yahoo Mail. Use this to set up an email account specifically for your genealogy research.
- **Google Voice:** allows you to make free phone calls from your PC to any phone in the United States. Also free PC to PC calls around the world. Use this for research or to check on archives hours, etc. before a research trip.
- **Google Sites:** allows you to build simple websites for an easy-to-use web presence. Post your genealogy research or other information about your family history.

Collaboration

- **Google Docs:** described above, one of the best features of Google Docs is the ability to share documents with other users and collaborate on research.
- **Google Groups:** a message forum similar to Ancestry message boards. Search for surnames and other information on various genealogy-related groups or create your own group to post queries.

- **Google Sites:** described above, also offers collaboration. Use to allow other family members to contribute to a family history website.

Transcription

- **Google Translate:** a free translation service that allows you to enter text and translate to and from a variety of languages. Also integrated with websites not in your native language – you will see a prompt to translate to English, etc. Use to understand the meaning of foreign words and phrases.
- **Google Docs:** a little know feature is the ability to convert a PDF or even text on a picture to searchable text.

News

- **Google News:** covers about 25,000 news sites and aggregates the articles into one search engine. Use to track current genealogy stories; but the best use is the News Archive search which goes back almost 200 years. New York Times articles from 1851 – 1923 are available for free.
- **Google Reader:** allows you to read various blog posts and other news using RSS feeds. News items can be shared, tagged and categorized for later research.
- **Google Alerts:** wouldn't it be great to know when there was a new item on the Internet related to one of your surnames or your genealogy research? Google Alerts is a free content monitoring service that will email you when new items appear.

Geography

- **Google Maps:** provides free maps of locations around the globe. Use this to track where your ancestors lived. You can even create your own personalized maps with pinned stories and photos about your ancestors. Also map out directions to archives and repositories for your research trips.
- **Google Earth:** uses satellite imagery to map geographical locations. Similar to Google Maps but with real images rather than maps.

Research

- **Google Patents:** a search engine indexing patents and patent applications from the USPTO (United States Patent and Trademark Office). Use this to look up inventions created by your ancestors.

Links

Google

<http://www.google.com>

Google Advanced Web Search

http://www.google.com/advanced_search

Google Alerts

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

Google Books

<http://books.google.com>

Google Calendar

<http://calendar.google.com>

Google Data

<http://googledata.org>

Google Docs

<http://docs.google.com>

Google Earth

<http://earth.google.com>

Google Groups

<http://groups.google.com>

Google Help

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

Google Images

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

Google Mail

<http://mail.google.com>

Google Maps

<http://maps.google.com>

Google News

<http://news.google.com>

Google Patents

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

Google Reader

<http://reader.google.com>

Google Scholar

<http://scholar.google.com>

Google Sites

<http://sites.google.com>

Google Translate

<http://translate.google.com>

Google Voice

<https://www.google.com/voice>

Picasa

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picasa>