



The Research Process

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Why a class on the research process? Isn't everything on the Internet? Well, no! As a professional researcher, I feel that the family researcher is relying too much on the World Wide Web

Introduction

- Identify What You Know
- Decide What You Want to Learn
- Select Records to Search
- Obtain and Search the Record
- Evaluate and Use the Information

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU KNOW

Start by reviewing what information you already know. Record that information on appropriate forms or computer family history programs. Keep your records organized.

- Computer Programs for Generating Forms
You could also use computer programs to generate these forms. After you type genealogical information once, these programs can generate many kinds of forms such as completed family group records and pedigrees. You can make frequent updates and share information with others while limiting the mistakes caused by redundant typing or writing of information.
- Pedigree Chart
- Family Group Record
- Prepare a Research Log

DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO LEARN

- Identify candidate families for further research
- One family at a time
- One research objective at a time

SELECT RECORDS TO SEARCH

Selecting a record to search is the most complex part of the research process. You will need to—

- Identify a category of sources.
- Choose a record type.
- Select specific records.
- Describe the record on a research log.

OBTAIN AND SEARCH THE RECORDS

If you have effectively completed earlier steps, you are now ready for the most exciting and rewarding step of finding and searching the records.

- Obtain the Records
 - Internet Resources
 - Family History Library
 - Family History Centers
 - Other Research Libraries
 - Local Libraries
 - Interlibrary Loan
 - Original Record Holder
 - Courthouses and Government Offices
 - Archives
 - Societies
 - Publishers and Booksellers
 - Periodicals
 - E-mail and Correspondence
- View the Records
 - Read and Interpret the Records
 - Formats of Records
- Search the Records
 - Look for Indexes
 - Search for the Whole Family
 - Surname Searches
 - Establish Search Ranges
 - Be Thorough
 - Know Limitations
 - Multiple Families
- Record the Results
 - If the Search Result Is Negative
 - If the Search Result Is Positive

EVALUATE AND USE THE INFORMATION

After you have searched records you are ready to use the information you found.

- Evaluate what you found
- Transfer needed information to the appropriate forms
- Cite your sources
- Organize the new records
- Share your findings

When you have learned all you wish to learn about a family, share your information with others by contributing it to Internet databases like FamilySearch, or by preparing and publishing a book, or article, or putting up an Internet site.

You will also be ready to start the process again and return to Step 1 to research another objective or individual.

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Approved 09/2017