**Finding Your Ancestors in Digitized Books – Handout**

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**What Kind of Books Will Help Us in Genealogy?**

* Surname books
* Historical books – for early settlers in states, counties, towns, and other regions
* Immigration/Emigration books – and passenger lists
* “Vanity” books – short bios of many citizens in diverse communities

**The Major Digitized Book Repositories**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Repository | Number of eBooks | Comments |
| Google | 30 million | Google Books.Corpora is the best search site to find Google Books, better than Google’s own Advanced Search. |
| Hathi Trust | 11 million | About 35% are in the public domain |
| Internet Archive | 8 million | All of these are available for free. Use archive.org to access the site. Follow the directions; within the site, go to OpenLibrary.org, put in your eBook request, and you get book access immediately. |
| Digital Library of America | 7 million |  |
| Amazon.com | Unknown | Sells more eBooks than paper books |
| Ancestry.com | Unknown | Use the Card Catalog to find surname (or other) eBooks; then, for a specific book, insert the name of your target person and ancestry will give you “hits” as appropriate. We had an example to show how this procedure works. |
| Family Search | 120,000 | These are all genealogy books, available for free. Use the Family Search Catalog to identify a candidate book. Then, click on the book and find out if it is available as an eBook. If so, you have immediate and free access. We had an example that showed exactly how this process works.An alternate approach (to searching the Catalog) is to go directly to BOOKS, insert the name of the book, and go from there. |
| Heritage Quest Online | 25,000 | These are all genealogy books; available for free at the FHL. |
| Project Gutenberg | 40,000 |  |
| Others at universities, foundations, and city/state libraries | Varies | Many of these are free online |

**Example of Finding a Book and an Ancestor in a Book: Steuben County, NY**

* Background: I knew an early ancestor had lived in that county in the 1790s, had paid taxes, bought land, and was in the census – but what else?
* Searched for a Google book using Google.Book.corpora, looking for Jonathan Tracy.
* Scrolled through 240 hits to find 3 different books relevant to the specific Jonathan needed
* Found references to Jonathan in those 3 books
* These references turned up a lot of data on him, his family, and his relationships.

**Useful Sites for Finding Books**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Site | Comments |
| Linkpendium | This free site is arranged two ways: (1) by surnames, and (2) geographically – by state and county. Within each county, pertinent websites are listed for a sizable number of categories. The most pertinent categories will include “History.” For the Steuben County example, Linkpendium showed the same example books that we had found via the Corpora site. |
| Mocavo | This free site (also has a Premium version) has a capability to connect an ancestor’s name to different hits for that ancestor, including eBooks. For our Steuben example, Mocavo offered hits similar to those we had found via the Corpora site. |
| US Gen Web | These free sites are arranged by states and counties. While the data for each county is variable, it might include a listing of relevant eBooks. In our example, we checked the US Gen Web site for Steuben County, and found that this site had posted a link to one of the same books we had originally found via the Corpora site. |
| WorldCat.org | This free site is the most comprehensive site in the world for identifying book titles. It also lists the locations of the libraries that contain a book. But, for our purposes, its most valuable feature is that it lists the sites where eBook formats can be found for a book. We checked some of our example books for Steuben County and found that World Cat had successfully identified the locations where those books could be found in digitized format. |
| Google Search | The regular Google Search capability can be used to search for digitized books. Insert the title of the desired book and see what hits you might get. We had an example in which an emigration book in eBook format for found quickly on Internet Archive. Sometimes this approach might be the easiest and quickest to find a desired book. |

**Different Formats**

* Images
* PDF
* Electronic Text

**How Much of the Book Do You Get to See?**

* Full Text (this is preferable)
* Limited Preview
* Snippets
* No Preview

**Problems in Searching for eBooks**

* No centralized place to do a one-stop shopping
* Searching may involve two steps: (1) finding a candidate book, (2) finding your ancestor within the book
* OCR process is not perfect for indexing purposes; too many old pages are either smudged or faded, or have unusual hard-to-read fonts, so the indexing results are only about 95% accurate. This means you may need to do some heavy-duty searching if you feel your ancestor should be in a book but is not indexed properly.

**Variability for the Finding/Repository Sites**

* Because the various sites use different processes for their search engines and indexing, different finding sites may offer different results. As you search for relevant books, or as you search for your ancestors within the books, you may find that you get different “hits” via the different sites. In other words, Google, Mocavo, Linkpendium, World Cat, and others are likely to produce somewhat different results as you seek for books and ancestors. This means that you really need to check a multiple number of sites to accomplish a thorough search for your ancestors.

**The Big 10 Take-Aways**

1. Corpora
2. Linkpendium
3. Mocavo
4. World Cat
5. Ancestry.com
6. Family Search
7. Google
8. Internet Archive
9. Look for Free eBooks
10. Be flexible and persistent