

## Using the Genealogy Center from Home for Research

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### **Why A Genealogy Center in Fort Wayne?**

What was old is new again! In the mid-20th century, genealogists in the public library space were clearly an atypical class of customer. They were active consumers of many resources in every library they visited. They were power-users of collections, they actively and consistently engaged reference staff, and they appeared to “camp-out” in every place they visited, seeming to virtually take over the place. This was a challenge for traditionally trained library professionals. Then Allen County Public Library director Fred Reynolds decided that Fort Wayne would sport a library that offered the best possible service for these library customers. From that service philosophy grew an amazing collection of resources and services.

### **Our Goal is to make your search successful!**

#### **The Print Collection**

The Genealogy Center of the Allen County Public Library contains more than 516,200 printed volumes & 667,200 items of microtext (microfilm & microfiche). This collection grows daily through purchases & donations. Indeed, more than five hundred physical items are added to the collection each month.

The best way to begin accessing the print collection is to use the library's catalogs. And we are sporting a brand-new catalog system. The challenge to that is this new catalog is still be developed; however, it is useable, and should be used. The book catalog as well as the microtext database can be found as links on the GenealogyCenter.org homepage.

While most all of the microtext resources have at least a brief listing in the Center's book catalog, the microtext database is still a valuable tool to check just to make sure you have identified all useful materials. As with every institution's online catalog, it is wise to initially take some time to do some sample searching to see what defaults are in place and how searching works.

Compiled Genealogies: Nearly 70,000 volumes of compiled genealogies represent work already done on American and European families, and range from brief typescripts to well documented multi-volume works. Nearly five thousand family histories on microfiche and many family newsletters complement this print collection as well as thousands of family history compilations online. Since the Center's inception, a preservation photocopy program has been offered. We have morphed that into a preservation scanning program in which a customer loans the Center an original work or manuscript; the work is scanned, a copy is placed online and a bound copy is made for the manuscript owner. An increasing number of library patrons are not interested in a complementary paper copy, but rather, prefer having digital copies of their works.

Directories & Yearbooks: The Center has a depository collection of more than 66,000 R. L. Polk directories dating from circa 1964 to the present (among the last remaining Polk repository libraries), with significant earlier runs for a number of cities. The Center also holds many directories for smaller cities and rural areas produced by other publishers. A guide for the format of the holdings of United States city directories is in the following.

- 1785-1860—microfiche
- 1861-1901—microfilm
- 1902-1935—microfilm
- 1964-present—books

To complement the collection of city directories, the Center also has an enormous collection of school and college yearbooks, numbering over twenty-five thousand volumes. A growing number of these yearbooks are being placed online at one of our partner websites.

Geographically Based History Materials: The Center is aggressive about collecting as many materials as possible that document people in a place during a time period engaging in activities that are documented. Though the collection sports a North American and British Isles focus, materials from other areas of the world are also represented. Of particular note is our collection of South Africa materials.

### **The Virtual Collections**

The Genealogy Center provides a very significant number of databases for on-site researchers and a notable number of free data files for any interested individual accessing the GenealogyCenter.org site from anywhere in the world.

### **Our Free Online Resources**

Categories of freely accessible online databases are listed in following. Records in all of these categories total nearly six million records and images. Those numbers grow with new additions and updates every month.

#### **Periodical Source Index (PERSI)** [www.GenealogyCenter.info/persi](http://www.GenealogyCenter.info/persi)

PERSI is the largest subject index to genealogical, historical and ethnic periodicals in the family history space. The index contains over three million subject entries; it grows by many thousands of entries each month, and it was made freely available for the first time this year—2022. There is an amazing number of abstracts, transcriptions, indices, researched family histories, organizational and geographic histories, photographic images, and so much more published in periodicals. They are well worth the exploration. The Genealogy Center has all the periodicals indexed in PERSI. One can search PERSI by the following categories.

- **Surnames**
- **Geographic Areas**
  - United States
  - Canada
  - British Isles
  - Other Countries
- **Research Techniques**
- **Article Title Keyword**

#### **Gateways to Large Ethnic Collections**

- African American Gateway—a growing resource for African American research, it includes information from the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean, and well as a few other countries. The links to websites in this gateway are paired with bibliographies of resources for African American research found in The Genealogy Center collection.
- Native American Gateway—a resource for those exploring First Nations family history. Information on how to begin such a research endeavor, links to materials from the National Archives and links to popular data are complemented by a continually updated listing of resources held by The Genealogy Center.

#### **Geographic Collections**

- Allen County, Indiana Resources—a collection of databases that includes indices of local obituaries, cemeteries, marriage, death and other courthouse records, as well as African-American material. More than thirty-five thousand photographic images are also available.
- Indiana Resources—a widely varied collection of databases created by researchers who have donated their work to The Genealogy Center, as well as Genealogy Center staff.
- Other States Resources—a widely varied collection of databases created by researchers who have donated their work to The Genealogy Center, as well as Genealogy Center staff.

### **Surname Specific Data Files**

- Family Bible Records—a collection featuring transcriptions and images from family bibles donated to The Genealogy Center. Details include births, marriages, and deaths as well as information from items inserted in the Bibles, such as newspaper clippings, photographs, and funeral cards.
- Family Resources—a section featuring unique family histories and family files submitted by researchers who have granted permission for their material to be hosted on The Genealogy Center site. Contributions of additional data are always most welcome.

### **Extras**

- Genealogy Center Surname File—a resource that can be searched to identify others researching a surname of interest. Contact information is provided to encourage collaboration. Contributors to this file are Genealogy Center customers.
- Our Military Heritage—a growing collection of images of books, pamphlets, government documents, original letters, diaries, biographies, photographs, videos, unit histories, and rosters as well as service and pension records. A project of The Genealogy Center, this collection of data files offers materials from the Colonial era through the Afghanistan and Iraqi Wars.

### **Collaborative Initiatives—Building Free Libraries of Family and Local History Materials**

- FamilySearch (FamilySearch.org)—the Genealogy Center is one of twelve partner organizations that have collectively placed more than 530,000 works online for free searching, reading, and downloading. [https://books.familysearch.org/primo\\_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD\\_PUBLIC](https://books.familysearch.org/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD_PUBLIC)
- Internet Archive (Archive.org)—many tens of thousands of Genealogy Collection materials are available for free use, including free downloading, on the Internet Archive. [https://archive.org/details/allen\\_county](https://archive.org/details/allen_county)

### **Online Guides**

- National Archives Finding Aids—Hundreds of National Archives & Records Administration descriptive pamphlets, preliminary inventories, and special lists are available in searchable form. <http://www.genealogycenter.info/nara/>
- State and Subject Snapshots—Guides to key resources for those researching particular states, geographic areas, and subjects are available for free downloading.

### **Social Media**

- An e-zine, *Genealogy Gems*, is published on the last day of each month that highlights collection resources, delivers some methodology and technology tips, and provides a list of upcoming programs.
- Genealogy Center Facebook—<https://www.facebook.com/genealogycenter>
- Genealogy Center Instagram—<https://www.instagram.com/genealogycenter/>
- Genealogy Center Twitter—<https://twitter.com/ACPLGenealogy>
- Genealogy Center YouTube—<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8AE558B5D8661B31>

### **Technology Extras**

- Very strong, library-wide, free Wi-Fi in addition to a complement of public access computers dedicated to genealogy research. One can log-on to the library's network and get access to the licensed, onsite databases from one's personal computer devices for easy downloading of data and images.
- An HP Digital Sender to email scanned page images to personal accounts—or to other researchers with whom one is collaborating.
- An array of digital imaging systems for printing or saving microtext images to a USB drive.
- Special Vivid-Pix scanning stations for scanning old photographs and fragile documents. It comes with the latest face-up scanners and special state-of-the-art image correcting software.

## **Special Collections & Services**

**Military Records:** In all of its collections (monographs, serials, microtext, and online data files) the Center has very deep military record holdings. The Revolutionary War, the War Between the States, and twentieth century conflicts are particularly well represented in the collection. Examples of record types include adjutant generals' reports, lineage society publications, and soldiers' diaries and letters as well as thousands of unit, regimental, and divisional histories.

**Canadian Collection:** The department houses a significant collection of Canadiana, especially for the eastern provinces. Print sources include county and town histories, cemetery records, and almost all available published French-Canadian parish registers and marriage repertoires. Please consult the three pathfinders, or snapshots, that can assist in navigating this substantial collection: Canada-General, Canada-Atlantic, and Canada-British Columbia/Pacific.

**British Isles Collection:** The Center has a substantial collection of materials from England, Ireland and Scotland, with more than 20,000 printed volumes including county histories, monumental inscriptions, heraldic references, early parish registers and most English county record society publications. We just recently acquired a substantial collection of materials from Cornwall that will be cataloged and available in the collection at the end of 2020. The Irish Collection is especially rich with plentiful local and family history resources. Further details can be found in the department's Irish & Scots-Irish and British, English & Welsh international snapshots.

**Snapshots:** States, Subjects, and International. These are quick guides to help one get started in our collection, or in any research situation. These snapshots not only indicate a sampling of materials held in the Center, they can provide one with suggestions on types of materials to look for in other research settings, both in our library and other facilities.

**Family History Archives:** Your free access to hundreds of thousands of resources.

- ++Family History Books
- ++FamilySearch.org→Search→Research Wiki
- ++Internet Archive
- ++WeRelate.org
- ++Linkpendium.com

**Consultation Services:** The Genealogy Center provides complementary consultation services for those who request via email at [Genealogy@ACPL.info](mailto:Genealogy@ACPL.info). Articulating in advance with what one has researched and what one wants to accomplish helps make the consultations more meaningful.

**Virtual Programming:** The Genealogy Center is committed to at least four, free virtual programs per month. Right now, we are doing two each week—Tuesday afternoons at 2:30P ET and Thursday evenings at 6:30P ET. These are great opportunities to learn and network.

### **Hours of Operation All Year:**

- Monday-Thursday: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Friday-Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Sunday: 12 noon to 5 p.m.

