

Don't Forget the Librarian: an essential genealogy research tool

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Description

With so much information being available online, it is easy to overlook resources in our own community. During this session, you will learn the benefits of consulting with a librarian concerning your research. They may even have the super power of knowledge that will break down that brick wall.

Benefits of Consulting with a Librarian

Getting Started

It can be overwhelming getting started with your genealogy research. Meeting with a librarian can help as the librarian can assist you in breaking the process down into individual steps.

If you want to prepare before meeting with a librarian, print off a four pedigree chart such as the one provided by the National Genealogical Society (https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ngs-basic-pedigree-ancestor-chart_ngs_final/). Fill in as much as you know. There will be information that you will need to leave blank. That is fine. The librarian can use the blank information as the starting point in getting you started with your research.

Knowledge of the Sources

The librarian is going to have a knowledge of the materials available in the library. As they look at what you are trying to locate, they can suggest materials within their collection that may have information that you are searching.

Examples of materials that may be physically available in the library are:

- Books
- Microfilm/Microfiche
- Newspapers
- Maps
- Vertical Files

Not all materials are available online. As for books, authors and organizations produce books to help develop revenue to pay their expenses. Their material is covered by copyright and cannot be placed on the Internet for free access without the permission of the author/publisher. Many items related to genealogy only get printed once. Once they are out of print, it is hard to obtain the item. Even though

an item is out of print does not mean that it is in the public domain and can be made available on the Internet. Many items within the library are hard to find items that are no longer available for purchasing.

Sometimes it may be more beneficial to search for a name in a printed index compared an online database. Surnames can have many spelling variations. Most databases have developed ways to provide variant spellings as well but sometimes the variant spelling is so unique that the database may not bring in up in search results. It may be easier to spot some of these variant spellings when using a printed index.

Knowledge of Local History

The librarian can have an understanding of historical events that have taken place in the area and how these events affected the people in the area. They can help lead you to records that were created during the time period of the event.

Knowledge of Online Sources

Several libraries provide online databases that can be helpful for genealogical research. While some of these databases have to be used physically at the library, some of the databases may be able to be accessed away from the library using your library card or library account.

A librarian can help with searching techniques within the databases. As each database can be a little different when searching for information, the librarian can give you suggestions for searching within each of the database. Also, most databases can provide an overwhelming amount of information when a search is conducted. A librarian can have the knowledge of what collections within a database have a local interest. The librarian can help narrow the search to just that collection to help limit the amount of information provided in the search.

With some databases, such as FamilySearch, not all of the digitized materials have been indexed. The librarian can also help with accessing the non-indexed material and how to find material in the collection.

The librarian can also have knowledge of other resources available from other organization that are of interest to people searching for local individuals for their genealogical research.

Other Resources

The library may contain other resources that you help you with your genealogy such as scanning equipment for scanning family letters, pictures, or other family materials that you have passed down that you would like to preserve and share. The librarian can assist you in knowing the proper way to scan the material including the file type, the resolution, and how best to share the files with others.

Many libraries provide educational programs and classes that relate to genealogy. Attending these sessions can help expand your knowledge of resources benefiting your genealogical research.

Local Resources

Other than the library, there are other organizations in the community that will have information that will benefit your genealogical research. The librarian can have knowledge of what is available at other locations and refer you to others in the community that can also assist you. This can be courthouses or other government agencies, museums, and other archival repositories.

Before you leave the library

After meeting with the librarian, provide them with your contact information. If the librarian comes across additional information or has someone else that is also research the same family, they can provide you with additional information.