

# Using the Internet to Solve Difficult Research Problems

by Karen Clifford, AG, FUGA, karengra@aol.com

Genealogy Instructor, Monterey Peninsula College, California www.mpc.edu



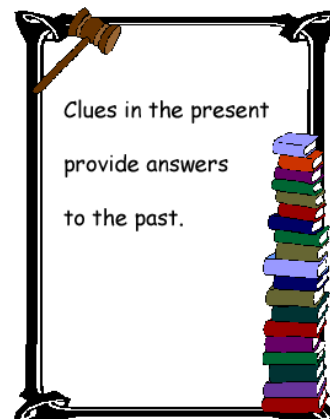
Do you know who you are? Once you find out what you **do not know** it is a great time to start the research process . . .

## The Research Process for Internet Usage

1. Set a goal to establish
  - ✓ An individual identity
  - ✓ The complete name
  - ✓ The rest of the family
  - ✓ A date
  - ✓ A location
  - ✓ A relationship or cement a relationship.
  - ✓ Proper evidence
2. Select the web source most likely to have any missing elements of the identity.
3. Select the repository where the source is found.
4. Search the source until you find what you seek.
5. Copy the information properly.
6. Evaluate the information.
7. Use results to set a new goal.
8. Organize or reorganize your information.

## A Complete Identity

- *A name*, give me a name.
- You search it online and find nothing, why? Onomastics, phonetics, misspelled words, misunderstandings, ink blots, torn papers, burned courthouses, record destruction, & records not kept in the first place require a different way of doing research.
- If you can't find it consider A More Complete Identity!
  - ▶ The complete name (variants, nicknames, aliases)
  - ▶ The rest of the family (other names)
  - ▶ A date (estimated time period)
  - ▶ A location (as known in the time period)
  - ▶ Relationships
  - ▶ Proper evidence supported by customs of the time.
- Understand how names are recorded online.
- How given names can give you problems as well.

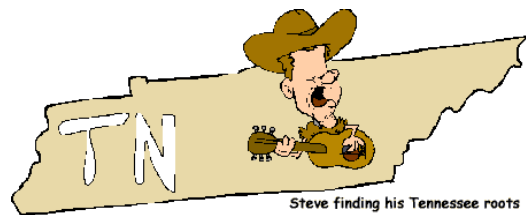


- Customs include understanding how names . . .
  - ▶ Are captured and recorded online (keys to using search engines, error rates, etc.) - **the key to translation**
  - ▶ Were recorded in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries - **the key to solutions**
  - ▶ Were formed in various parts of the world - **the key to naming patterns**
  - ▶ Changed spellings due to their evolving sounds “Onamastics”

### **Naming Patterns Differ During Different Time Periods & Localities**

When stuck, study the naming customs of neighbors in the same time period and in the same part of the country. But remember a complete identity includes:

- ✓ Occupation, education, social status
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Locations of residence for three generations
- ✓ Time periods and proper location



### **Make Adequate Preparations BEFORE Going Online**

1. **Record one goal at a time by recording what is already known about the person.** If you have already entered your family into a genealogy computer program, including your documentation and sources, then just use a copy of the Family Group Record and the pedigree chart as you begin.

If this is your first time on the Information Super Highway, study what is already known about the two generations prior to the one being sought. Lots of folks have the same name in the same time period. Focus on each family sketch or pedigree view during the time period being sought. This takes deep concentration when pop-up windows suddenly distract you and other fun distractions.

If the notes on the person you are seeking are not in chronological order, do that first as it will save you lots of time and wasted effort.

Separate facts from traditions. Traditions are anything not substantiated by documents or primary witnesses to events. **CAUTION:** Use traditions as vague clues because they can throw you off the correct path very easily.

2. **Are You In the Right Place for Your Records?**

Compare family time lines as you enter your sources with specific area historic time lines and you may find it was impossible for the people you are seeking to be where they are said to have been. What are the jurisdictions for the records you seek. Records are normally kept at the place where they were created unless moved for preservation

elsewhere. If they are moved the original place will tell you where they have gone. By studying the locality more sources will be found.

### **Time to Enter the Internet**

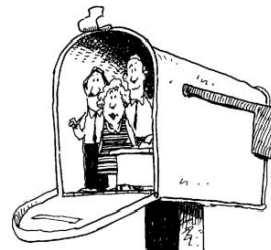
1. Get a feel for the territory - use Regional and Local Histories - ProQuest; Heritage Quest (gives you an overview of the jurisdiction you are seeking).
2. GO FROM KNOWN TO UNKNOWN - get a visual picture of the then and the now! If you don't know much about how to research in a specific locality, you can learn more about it online using research guidance.  
[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)  
[www.byu.edu](http://www.byu.edu)> independent study> free web courses in genealogy
3. Use maps and finding aids - AniMAP (automated mapping program) [www.Goldbug.com](http://www.Goldbug.com) ProQuest; [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov); university archives and libraries.

### **FOCUS ON NAMES - DO A PRELIMINARY SURVEY ON SURNAME ASSOCIATES**

- ▶ Definition of a preliminary survey
- ▶ *Genealogies in the Library of Congress* available at Genealogy.com
- ▶ FamilySearch.org Surname List, Ancestral File, IGI
- ▶ World Family Tree at Genealogy.com
- ▶ Ancestry World Tree at Ancestry.com
- ▶ MyTrees.com

### **NEW APPROACH WHEN NAME SEARCHING DOESN'T WORK**

1. Locality approach - ProQuest, Ancestry, USGenWeb, Rootsweb, FamilySearch, GenealogyBank, etc.
2. Historical approach - ProQuest, Ancestry, USGenWeb, Rootsweb, FamilySearch, etc.
3. Timeline approach - Unique Web Sites
4. Associates approach - ProQuest, Ancestry, USGenWeb, Rootsweb, FamilySearch, etc.
5. USE SEARCH ENGINES TO GUIDE YOU TO SOURCES
  - ▶ [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com)
  - ▶ [www.Ask.com](http://www.Ask.com)
6. LOOK FOR KEY TOPICS AS WELL AS SURNAMES (Case study demonstration)
  - a. Water courses
  - b. References to other localities.
  - c. References to religion.
  - d. Read occupational histories from area
  - e. Use [www.historychannel.com](http://www.historychannel.com)
  - f. Use [www.historyseek.com](http://www.historyseek.com)
  - g. Use [www.hyperhistory.com](http://www.hyperhistory.com)



## FREE OPTIONS PROVIDE INFORMATION

- a. [www.USGENWEB.org](http://www.USGENWEB.org)
- b. State Libraries
- c. Genealogical Societies
- d. [www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com)
- e. [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)
- f. [www.surnameweb.org](http://www.surnameweb.org) good engines for locating surname sites on the Internet.
- g. [www.familytreemagazine.com/search](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/search)
- h. [www.uscitydirectories.com](http://www.uscitydirectories.com) guide you to city directories nationwide

## When You Lose Your Ancestor

### Do Regional Searches

- Study land areas of ancestors
- Study water courses ancestor lived on
- Study the records of the ancestor's leaders

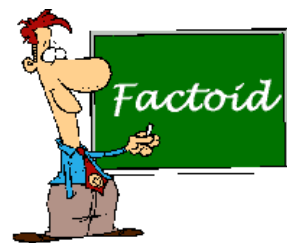
### Do Key Topic Searches

- Study occupations of ancestor
- Study religions of ancestor

### Learn to Find Original Manuscripts

- Use the Library of Congress aid known as the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections online at [www.locweb.loc.gov/coll/numuc/numuccat.html](http://www.locweb.loc.gov/coll/numuc/numuccat.html)

Think of the Internet as just one of the many repositories you are going to use.



Analyze the Name Again if Problems Arise–Did the name change, was a step missed?

## Draft Your Hypothesis

- Review previous research.
- Organize, data enter, and analyze paperwork.
- Put together a comparison chart of your work against that of others or previous work.
- Be sure you have ultimately obtain copies of original sources.

## Technology Alone Can Not Solve Our Research Problems

## Success is Still Dependent Upon

- The time period you are searching
- The location you are searching
- Your personal evaluation skills
- Your ability to use the technology available
- And whether information on the above elements have been put into electronic format.