

Accessing Family History Books Online

ADVANCES IN COMPUTER and Internet technology and the expiration of copyright for US books published through 1923 (meaning that they are now in the public domain) has resulted in a vibrant world of digitally available books!

When you are doing your family history research, remember to investigate digital or electronic books. Many of us are familiar with visiting the library, grabbing a bunch of books off the shelf and sitting at a table, pouring over them as we seek clues to our ancestors. Though I still frequently do that, I increasingly also check out what is available online — there is something about looking at books from the comfort of one's own home that is appealing — never mind being able to search the entire content of a book with the click of a mouse!

I have made some great finds, and, if the book is juicy enough, I have borrowed it through inter-library loan or tried to pick it up via eBay, www.ebay.com, Abebooks, www.abebooks.com, or similar venues for out-of-print books. And, when one may not physically be able to visit the library, this provides a great alternative to access much-needed resources.

Let's talk about a few of the larger online projects!

Million Book Project

<http://www.ulib.org>
In November 2007 (PC World Blog, <http://blogs.pcworld.com/staffblog>), it was reported that Carnegie Mellon University had digitized an astounding 1.5 million books as part of this project. "The ambitious task, launched in 2002, set out to digitize nothing less than all of humanity's published works. In 1000 years, the plan is, there will be

a complete record of all books from the Gutenberg Bible to today's latest romance novel by Danielle Steel. So far, with 1.5 million books digitized, the project estimates it's one percent done, with a long way to go."

According to the Million Book Project's website: "The mission is to create a Universal Library which will foster creativity and free access to all human knowledge. As a first step in realizing this mission, it is proposed to create the Universal Library with a free-to-read, searchable collection of one million books, available to everyone over the Internet. Within 10 years, it is our expectation that the collection will grow to 10 million books. The result will be a unique resource accessible to anyone in the world 24 hours a day, without regard to nationality or socio-economic background."

As you explore the offerings of this project, keep these points in mind.

- There are two ways to search: simple and advanced. For the sim-

CURIOUS ABOUT COPYRIGHT?

TO LEARN MORE about US copyright and the public domain, check out <http://www.llrx.com/features/digitization2.htm> or this quick reference chart at <http://www.unc.edu/~uncnlg/public-d.htm>.

Note that each country sets its own parameters for what is in the public domain. Also check this write-up from the Online Books Page about select copyright durations around the world: <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/okbooks.html>.



ple search, you enter the words that would appear in the title. For the advanced search, you can stipulate language, author, subject, year and other parameters. A simple search on North Carolina resulted in 77 entries, while one for Genealogy resulted in seven entries.

- When you are performing your search, it's important to understand the scope of the search engine. When I talk about Google Books, that project has a global content search engine. For this project, the search engine is directed at book titles.

- Additionally, not all the books included in this project are "fully viewable or downloadable". As with other projects, some books may be available in their entirety and others will have "limited access".

- And, the contents are in a variety of formats, TIFF (image), HTML (web script) and DjVu Viewer were the ones I came across and, for

Digital Books Online

anyone submitting books for inclusion, the requirements are that the files be in PDF, DOC or HTML format.

- With the many partners on the project, many US books have been supplied by non-US partners and vice versa.
- More found entries seem to have limited rather than full access, and titles were often repeated.

Google Books

<http://books.google.com>

This website has really exploded with what it contains. Rumors have it that more than one million books are included, while Google has not yet given out any numbers. To get an overview of the project, check <http://books.google.com/google-books/about.html>.

Though not all books are available in their entirety, there are many whose copyright has expired or that are previewable which is wonderful for genealogists and family historians.

For example, I put in "Wings Over Jordan", an African-American spiritual choir popular in the 1930s and '40s that I recently researched. Google Books came up with 130 entries and for most of these, you could at least see a preview of the content and then get detailed information on the book referenced.

Using the search engine, you will then be able to see either the entire book or a snippet to decide if you want to either purchase and/or use inter-library loan to obtain the book. If you go to <http://books.google.com/intl/en/googlebooks/screenshots.html>, you can see the various "views" that are available on Google Book Search.

When the entire content is online, you will be able to download it in PDF format.

A nice feature is that if you are only interested in books for which a "full view" is available, you can select that option. I put in "Wake County" (a uniquely named North Carolina county) and selected "full view". Six hundred and ninety entries were found. It is important

to recognize that this search engine searches the title, author and full content of the available books; this differs from some of the other projects where your searches are limited to words in the title.

In my cursory glance at a few of the 690 entries, some of the more

VIEW TO A THRILL!

PDF documents can be viewed using Adobe Reader, free downloadable software available online at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html> or other software, such as xPDF, <http://www.foolabs.com/xpdf>, GPL Ghostscript 8.54, <http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~ghost>, or Foxit Reader, http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/rd_intro.php.

interesting points to me are these — they each either inform about Wake County or make connections to individuals linked to Wake County (either via a compendium of family information or a book about a locale, religious denomination, etc.) and give you a flavor of the types of books now available digitally that would be relevant to research in 17th- to 19th- century family history research.



Google Book's Result Page.

- *Historical Raleigh: With Sketches of Wake County (from 1771) and Its ...* by Moses Neal Amis. Raleigh, North Carolina, 1913.
- *Biographical History of North Carolina from Colonial Times to the Present* by Samuel A'Court Ashe, North Carolina, 1906.
- *The Office and Duty of a Justice of the Peace, and a Guide to Sheriffs ...* by Henry Potter, 1816.

Notice that only one of these books had the phrase "Wake County" in the title. This means that more than likely, a conventional library search would not have identified these books as having any relevance to Wake County, yet they do!

This is probably the most powerful feature of digitized books which are searchable. All references to a term can be ferreted out, no matter how small! A recent important find was the 1846 edition of a digital book entitled *Reports of Cases in Equity Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of North Carolina* by James Iredell, North Carolina Supreme Court (eight books covering 1843 to 1854), which had information about a court case involving the heirs of Reuben Boswell that was moved from the Mecklenburg Court of Equity in 1844 to the North Carolina Supreme Court. This court case listed the maiden name of the wife of Boswell (previously unknown), it confirmed the names of his children and grandchildren (whom I had previously speculated about) and provided several other details. Many of these details were not previously included in any of the found original documents consulted.

Open Content Alliance

<http://www.opencontentalliance.org> and www.archive.org

The Open Content Alliance (OCA) represents the collaborative efforts of a group of organizations from around the world that will help build a permanent archive of multilingual digitized text and multimedia content. The OCA was conceived by

the Internet Archive, www.archive.org, and Yahoo!, www.yahoo.com, in early 2005 as a way to offer broad, public access to a rich panorama of world cultures.

The actual archive is stored and maintained at Internet Archive — its elements include the following sub-archives:

- Project Gutenberg www.archive.org/details/gutenberg

- American Libraries
www.archive.org/details/americana
- Canadian Libraries
www.archive.org/details/toronto
- Universal Library
www.archive.org/details/universal_library
- Open Source Books
www.archive.org/details/opensource

As well as other online digitizing projects, including various types of media.

Though there are these distinct projects, you can search across all projects or limit your search to a particular project or media type. In addition to the basic search, there is also a very powerful advanced search, <http://www.archive.org/advancedsearch.php>, which has a great explanation of the search syntax rules. You can limit your search by inputting general search terms, which are concatenated (using essentially “and contains” or “and does not contain”) with options such as title, creator, descriptor, collection, media type, custom fields and date fields. Additionally, you can use quotation marks in a basic search to limit your search to a phrase.

I did a search on Raleigh, and as you can imagine, most of the entries were about Sir Walter Raleigh, though I did come across *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, NC* and some entries where there is no apparent connection to Raleigh and yet were revealed by the search, including the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, as mentioned in *Records of Wachovia and Sketches of Pitt County, a Brief History of the County, 1704-1910; Illustrations and Maps*. A search on “genealogy” yielded 423 results and the phrase “Society of Friends” found 114 entries includ-

ing titles, such as *The Annual Monitor for 1851: or, Obituary of the Members of the Society of Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, for the Year 1850* and *Letters of Isaac Penington: an eminent minister of the gospel in the Society of Friends and Quaker strongholds* [microform] — all of which could be of interest to a genealogist.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Project Gutenberg

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This site is hosted by ibiblio, <http://ibiblio.org/index.php>.

Project Gutenberg was founded by Michael Hart, who invented eBooks in 1971 and continues to inspire the creation of eBooks and related technologies today. You can do a simple search by inputting the author’s name and/or words in the title. The advanced search features include these fields, as well as subject, language, category, LOCC (Library of Congress Catalog) and more. There is also a “full text” search which they are experimenting with. Or you can browse an online book catalog by author, title or recently posted.

The website states that “There are over 20,000 free books in the Project Gutenberg Online Book Catalog... [for] A grand total of over 100,000 titles are available at Project Gutenberg Partners, Affiliates and Resources.”

I will say that I had a harder time finding “hits” when searching this collection, but, as with most resources, there is always a hit or miss element — my misses may end up being your hits!

The Online Books Page

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu>
In November 2007, this page listed more than 25,000 free books on the web. It is a project founded and edited by John Mark Ockerbloom, a digital library planner and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania. You can learn a lot about this project and also the digitizing of books for online access by reading the FAQs.

You can “Search our Listings” or check out New Listings, Authors, Titles, Subjects or Serials. When you search, you can enter information on the author and/or title.

When I did a check using “North Carolina”, I noticed that the entries came from Making of America, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa>, another project which currently contains approximately 10,000 digitized books with 19th-century imprints, UNC — Documenting the American South, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/texts.html>, ECU — Eastern North Carolina Digital Library, <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/historyfiction>, Internet Archive — American Libraries, <http://www.archive.org/details/americana>, Library of

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

THERE ARE OTHER projects/finding aids out there. Also try:

- Your local university website; two examples of this are University of Michigan’s Digital General Collection (more than 24,000 volumes), <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/g/genpub>, and the Case Western Reserve University’s Digital Books, <http://library.case.edu/digitalcase/>.
- A national or multinational project, such as the European Library, <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org>, which is a free service that offers access to the resources of the 47 national libraries of Europe in 20 languages. Resources can be both digital or bibliographical (books, posters,

maps, sound recordings, videos, etc.) or the Library of Congress, Digitized Books from the Rare Books and Special Collections Division, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/digitalcoll.html>.

- A state archives with a digital presence such as Archives of Maryland Online, <http://www.aomol.net/html/index.html>.
- Websites for listings of where to find online digitized books such as The Online Books Page: Archives and Indexes, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/archives.html>, Sites Linking or Containing Digital Books, <http://www.ditext.com/etexts.html>, and the Digital Book Index, <http://www.digitalbookindex.org/about.htm>.

Congress — American Memory, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html> and Dinsmore Documentation, <http://www.dinsdoc.com>. This shows you the diversity of online repositories where digital books can be found! I found just as many, if not more, diverse sources when I spot-checked with a few other topics.

Digital Books Online

COMING SOON

World Digital Library

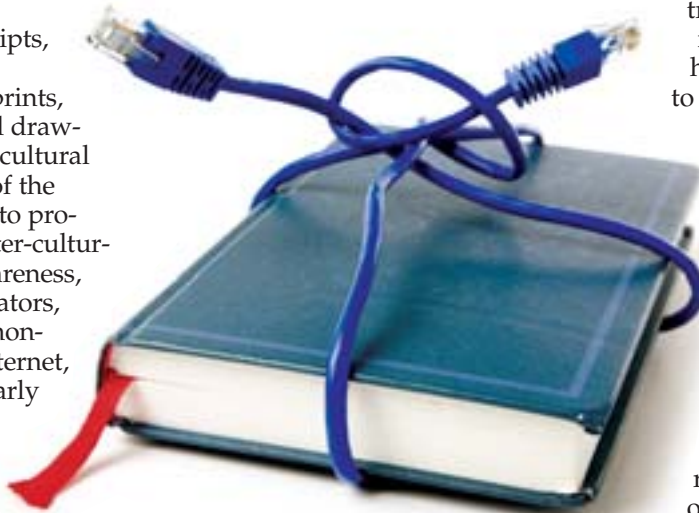
<http://www.worlddigitallibrary.org/project/english/index.html>

This project is to be unveiled sometime in 2008; so watch for it. The purpose of this project is “[to] make available on the Internet, free of charge and in multilingual format, significant primary materials from cultures around the world, including manuscripts, maps, rare books, musical scores, recordings, films, prints, photographs, architectural drawings and other significant cultural materials. The objectives of the World Digital Library are to promote international and inter-cultural understanding and awareness, provide resources to educators, expand non-English and non-Western content on the Internet, and to contribute to scholarly research.”

The prototype was unveiled in October 2007 by the Library of Congress, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the National Library of Brazil, the National Library and Archives of Egypt, the National Library of Russia, and the Russian State Library. “The prototype features books, manuscripts, maps, films, prints and photographs, and sound recordings contributed by the partner institutions. It functions in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, and includes content in additional languages. Other features include search and browse by place, time, topic, type of item and contributing institution; a ‘Memory

of’ section devoted to in-depth exploration of the culture and history of individual countries; and videos by curators that explain why particular primary source documents are important and what they tell us about a culture.”

Though this project is not currently up and running, you can still



get a feel for its scope and capabilities — the website has a three-minute video about the project (a mostly visual presentation) and a longer video (also mostly visual) giving you the ability to “experience the prototype”. (You can choose between either a 9MB version or a 35MB version — the larger sized one requires the latest version of Quicktime, free at <http://www.apple.com/quicktime>.) You can get a sense of the capabilities viewing the smaller version and if you really want to experience the

prototype, I recommend viewing the larger version. It looks to have a very powerful search engine, high-quality images, video and content, and linguistic flexibility.

Whether you are unable to physically access materials at a local library, archive or history society or choose not to, there is a

tremendous amount of digital material online. Some of the hardest books to gain access to are those that are older and in the public domain.

These are the books that eventually deteriorate and are removed from a library’s shelves, these are the books that are too fragile to be sent via inter-library loan or didn’t have big print runs to begin with and so are few and far between. Yet, these are the books that are such rich resources as we research our ancestors. Do check out digital books from the comfort of your home or local library — you may even be able to do it while sipping your favorite beverage!

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