



# A New Dawn for Online Databases

DIANE L. RICHARD LOOKS AT SEVERAL NEW AND UPCOMING MAJOR ONLINE DATABASES

SEVERAL EXCITING Internet-based genealogy resources have just become available: World Vital Records, GenealogyBank and ProQuest Obituaries. And, in the near future, Iarchives will introduce its Footnote website, plus 1837Online will unveil a new name and its AncestorsOnBoard website! We've also learned that the 1851 Canadian census (through Ancestry) and other new databases will be online soon. What exciting times for Internet genealogists!

First, we'll take a quick look at two new subscription-based databases that have recently come online. Then we'll introduce the Iarchives and AncestorsOnBoard websites which are scheduled for launch in early 2007.

## WORLD VITAL RECORDS

[www.worldvitalrecords.com](http://www.worldvitalrecords.com)

This website is the brainchild of Paul Allen (one of the founders of Ancestry.com). Its stated aim is to become the number two player in the genealogy industry, behind MyFamily.com. The website currently contains both free and subscription-based content.

To get an idea of what World Vital Records (WVR) offers for free and paid content (an annual subscription is \$49.95 US), visit [www.worldvitalrecords.com/wvr/content.aspx](http://www.worldvitalrecords.com/wvr/content.aspx).

The majority of the free content currently includes the Social

Security Death Index (SSDI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) records and several Colorado, Tennessee and Texas databases.

One feature of WVR is that, when you explore an entry, you can also see what historical events are associated with that month. Searching in the SSDI, I learned that on the day my mother was born (15 October 1937) Ernest Hemingway published *To Have and Have Not*, and on the day she died (21 January 1990) John McEnroe became the first person expelled from the Australian Open! Since my mother's residence at death is not listed, I couldn't explore another feature, the Geocoding. However, my grandfather's entry did include his residence at death and so a map was displayed (Microsoft Virtual Earth) with a push-pin showing where he lived at the time of his death. This is a feature that can be fun to play with and it can help you correlate individuals. Also, if you click on "Neighbors", you can learn the names of others who also shared the same zip code for their last residence and died within a year of the chosen individual's death date.

Some of the content that is included in the subscription version is: the 1871 Canadian census for Ontario, (<http://allcensusrecords.com/canada/ontario/ontario1871.shtml>), 1880 United States census,

([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)), membership records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1848 (50 volumes), Scottish death records (1747-1868), SmallTown Papers, ([www.smalltownpapers.com](http://www.smalltownpapers.com)) and more. Some of the paid content is unique to this website and some of it is available elsewhere for free. Part of the promise of WVR is that you can "one-stop" search for the data instead of visiting a myriad of different websites.

You will also find the WVR Blog, Press Room and Newsletter that are all ways to stay informed. The newsletter contains a lot of interesting information about the project and its happenings, including new databases and upcoming data sets on WVR, and you can have it delivered via e-mail or simply read it online.

Another new feature is the Blogger Planet, containing blogs from a variety of genealogists including "Genealogy and How", "Legacy News", "Genealogue", "Gen Weblog", "Family and Local Histories Project" and many more. This feature also includes a list of genealogy blogs to which you can subscribe.

WVR has a few interesting features, but we get the impression that it has been rushed to the market, possibly because they are aware of so many other launches due at this time. It seems very

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much like a work in progress and \$49.95 US for one year is a lot to pay for what is currently available.

Their pedigree and potential resources could make them an important player down the line, but they have a ways to go.

### GENEALOGYBANK

[www.genealogybank.com](http://www.genealogybank.com)

Unlike World Vital Records, the data on this website is only available via subscription (\$19.95 US per month). On the other hand, this website currently contains a unique combination of collections of data (currently available only through Newsbank and its library subscription service) and some data not currently available elsewhere. The major strength of this website is that these resources were previously only available through libraries; they are the kind of resources that help you to not only use source documents to learn more about your ancestry, but they also help you to put "meat on the bones" of your genealogy as you work to create a family history.

The databases available are:

- Historical Newspapers (1690-1977).

funeral sermons, local histories, cards, charts and more — all published in the US prior to 1900.

- Historical Documents (1789-1930). Find military records, casualty lists, Revolutionary and Civil War pension requests, widow's claims, orphan petitions, land grants and much more including all the American State Papers (1789-1838) and all genealogical content carefully selected from the US Serial Set (1817-1930). There are more than 81,000 reports, lists and documents.

- America's Obituaries (1977 to present). Obituaries contain helpful information such as names, dates, places of birth, death, marriage and family information. More than 22 million obituaries make this the most complete collection from the 20th and 21st centuries from more than 800 US newspapers.

- The SSDI.

Of these, the most unique data can be found in the Historical Documents area. Dick Eastman, in his Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter provides an excellent overview of the data that can be found in this collection. You can read Eastman's review at [http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans\\_online\\_genealogy/2006/03/americas\\_geneal.html](http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2006/03/americas_geneal.html).

As far as the other components of the website, there is some overlap between what GenealogyBank has for Historical Newspapers and America's Obituaries and what other services such as Ancestry, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), ProQuest and Newsbank (via a library or subscription service), Small Town Newspapers, [www.smalltownpapers.com](http://www.smalltownpapers.com), individual newspapers (e.g., *New York Times*, [www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html), Godfrey Library, [www.godfrey.org](http://www.godfrey.org), etc.), also have.

Additionally, there is some overlap between what is available on GenealogyBank.com for Historical Books and what you can find on Project Gutenberg, <http://promo.net/pg/index.html>, ProQuest Heritage Quest (through libraries), Brigham Young Family History Archives, [www.lib.byu.edu/fhc](http://www.lib.byu.edu/fhc), et al.

Though I can't point to any great finds, I should say that I had already previously accessed many of the underlying databases independently or they are not relevant to any recent research projects. Some time was spent looking through "social news" for Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania (in the Philadelphia newspapers) to see if my

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**MODERN**

[America's Obituaries 1977 to current](#) [title list](#)  
Obituaries contain helpful information such as names, dates, places of birth, death, marriage and family information. Over 22 million obituaries make this the most complete collection from the 20th and 21st centuries - includes more than 800 U.S. newspapers. New content added daily!

[Social Security Death Index 1937 to current](#)  
Search more than 78 million death records and get genealogical information

*The data on Genealogy Bank is only available via subscription.*

Millions of articles, obituaries, marriage notices, birth announcements and other items published in more than 500,000 issues of more than 1,300 historical US newspapers.

- Historical Books (1652-1900). A unique source that provides you with complete text of more than 17,000 books, pamphlets and printed items including genealogies, biographies,

husband's family was mentioned (they were not). I looked for individuals in California and New York, but when I researched a figure of some renown, L.S. Thorne (of railroads and Dallas) the results were 1,744 newspaper articles and 12 historical documents!

GenealogyBank has come out of nowhere with a very impressive database, which you can try for about \$20 US. We estimate that they are offering between 200 and 300 million names, many of them not available anywhere else or only accessible through library-based subscriptions and Newsbank products. Now, individuals have access to a wide array of great resources, which are centralized and available through a single subscription service. We can see GenealogyBank quickly becoming a major player in the field.

**PROQUEST OBITUARIES AND UPDATED PERSI**

ProQuest Obituaries is a little different than the other databases discussed above. It is part of the ProQuest Genealogy Center, which is typically not available to individuals directly and only available through a library with a subscription.

The new database offers access to obituaries and death notices from the full runs of major national newspapers dating back to 1851. During the introduction of the new database, there is an associated e-newsletter that will be issued weekly during September, October, November and December. To sign up, go to [www.proquest.com/mailing list/](http://www.proquest.com/mailing list/).

In other news, PERSI has just been updated with articles from 2004 and 2005. PERSI is the Periodical Source Index and now contains nearly two million citations from more than 6,500 periodicals published in the US, Canada and abroad. It is available via HeritageQuest Online, or through a library with a subscription.

**1837ONLINE AND ANCESTORSONBOARD**  
[www.ancestorsonboard.com](http://www.ancestorsonboard.com)

This is another ambitious project planned for 2007 in which 1837Online is working in association with the UK's National Archives. The website will feature a new database of the BT27 Outward Passenger Lists for long-distance voyages leaving the British Isles from 1890 to 1960. This database will help not only those researching British

roots, but many others who traveled from Europe. Most Scandinavians and those who traveled from the German, French and other European ports, frequently went through Southampton or Liverpool.

To receive news about the project, you can sign up to get the latest news and developments. And, registered customers will get a special sneak preview of these passenger lists that will include a sample of data from 1890-99.

*Ancestorsonboard.com is scheduled to launch in 2007, however, you can find out more about the site and its content by signing up for e-mail updates.*

**IARCHIVES AND FOOTNOTE**

[www.footnote.com](http://www.footnote.com)

This is an ambitious project, tentatively scheduled for early 2007, to place digital versions of historical documents online. Many people previously associated with Ancestry.com are involved. At the moment, we don't know much about the planned scope, but at the website you can currently see a preview. This preview focuses on select documents from the Pennsylvania Archives and includes information on Early Settlements, the Revolutionary War, the Whisky Rebellion and more. You can search these documents and get a feel for how the search results are presented, as well as the interface for viewing the documents. Additionally, you can sign up to receive updates concerning the latest news and developments concerning the site.



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