

DIANE L. RICHARD LOOKS AT PETER CHRISTIAN'S FOURTH EDITION

The Genealogist's Internet

JUST BEFORE THE 2009 National Genealogical Society conference, I learned that the fourth edition of Peter Christian's *The Genealogist's Internet* had been published by the UK's National Archives.

Fortunately, they had a booth at the conference and I acquired a copy.

Given how quickly a book about the Internet can become obsolete, combined with the particular needs of genealogists and family historians and their use of the Internet, I wanted to see if this book lives up to its sterling reputation.

Despite a UK-centric approach, Christian's book lives up to it well. *The Genealogist's Internet* will be most helpful to those researching their UK roots given the majority of the resources identified. However, there are some useful tips for other researchers.

Records of England and Wales are typically discussed separately from those of Scotland and Ireland. The fourth edition is very up-to-date, as it discusses the 1911 UK census, which only recently became available.

The first few chapters provide an extended introduction on using the Internet to conduct genealogy research. The book then looks at various record types — civil registration (what we consider vital records), census, church records and several others. It then shifts to an overview of related information, including print sources, surnames and geography. Next up are tools, like discussion forums and search engines.

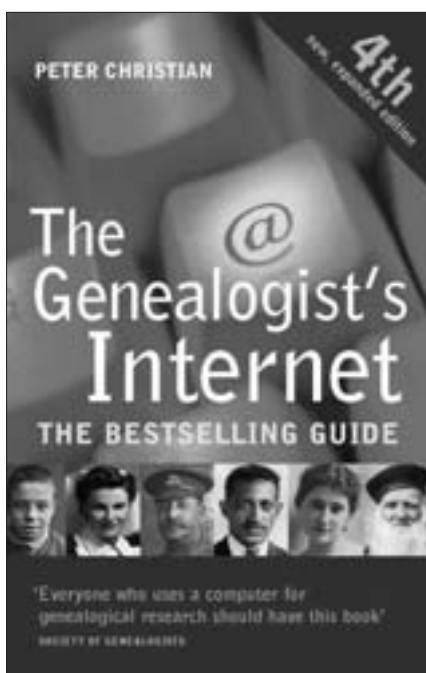
The book then takes a look at offline or "non-virtual" resources in the chapter titled "The World of Family History", which includes a reference to *Internet Genealogy*, as well as the explosion of newer media, such as blogs and podcasts.

Each chapter on record types gives a general overview of what is available along with specific information regarding select online

resources for that record type.

These descriptions typically include screen captures of either a site's main page or an example of a digitized document found there.

The chapter on migration and colonies caught my eye. It first focuses on those who traveled to former British colonies, then discusses immigrants to Britain from continental Europe by examining the available records for various ethnic groups — Jews, Huguenots and Gypsies.



The Genealogist's Internet also discusses the explosion in the availability of digitized records, something we have seen in the United States as well as in the UK. Multiple kinds of records (newspapers, books, etc) that just a few years ago were only available at locations like library archives are now being digitized and made available online in rapidly increasing numbers.

Though direct transcriptions indexes to primarily genealogical sources only scratches the surface, the chapter on "Surnames, Pedigrees and Families" addresses information that is either compiled

by societies or available on public sites. The chapter also discusses some uniquely British topics, such as royal families, clans, heraldry and locating living people.

The chapter on history provides resources for topics that impact everyone's research — handwriting, dates and calendars, translation, technical, legal, medical and measurement terms, and the value of money.

This book discusses useful sites to try out when dating old photographs — something that I always find fascinating.

Given the complexity of using the web to try and locate pertinent record sources, efficiently and effectively using search engines are critical to the Internet genealogist. Christian reminds us that even though a specific record may prove difficult to find, there are other ways. These "hidden" databases may be held in a database only accessible via a specific website's search form, an archive that requires user registration or a database that deliberately excludes general search engine access.

According to Christian, no search engine is truly comprehensive. By using several different search engines, you are more likely to locate well-hidden bits of information.

Using guidance from *The Genealogist's Internet*, I have identified some Internet sources and record groups that I was not previously familiar with. Even if you are not of British descent, any Internet-focused guide to genealogy resources can help your research anywhere in the world by reminding you of all types of digitized records and resources available.



Diane L. Richard has researched genealogy for over 22 years. She currently conducts professional research in NC and can be found online at www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy