

Net Notes

NAME VARIANTS PROJECT

http://www.werelate.org/wiki/WeRelate:Variant_names_project

THE PURPOSE OF this project is to create a comprehensive database of name variants that should be searched whenever a particular name is searched. As anyone who has done research knows, sometimes in every document you find a surname or forename is spelled differently. Eventually, your list of name variants can get pretty long! When you are starting out, you might not know, or remember, all the different spellings that you need to be searching on. This project will help with that.

As stated on the project page:

“Currently, providers of genealogical records use algorithms like Soundex, or home-grown solutions to the problem of returning records with names that are spelled similarly and are likely matches for the searched-for name. A large part of genealogical expertise involves learning alternate spellings for the surnames in your tree. Why not share this knowledge with others?”

The goal is to create a free resource that all genealogy websites use, so that genealogy searches are consistent across the web.

Ancestry.com and WeRelate worked together to create an advanced algorithm for determining the level of similarity between two names. That algorithm was used to create the starting point for this database. The algorithm was used to find similarly-spelled names for the 200,000 most-frequent



surnames, and 70,000 most-frequent given names, in Ancestry's database. On average, 26 variants were found for each surname, and 32 variants were found for each given name. In addition, BehindTheName.com donated their list of given name variants, along with additional variants from the WeRelate community, *The New American Dictionary of Baby Names* and *A Dictionary of Surnames*.

You can help by reviewing the database and providing your input at http://www.werelate.org/wiki/WeRelate:Variant_names_project#How_you_can_help.

— DIANE L. RICHARD

USING ARCHIVES, A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE RESEARCH

<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives>

ARCHIVES CAN BE a great resource for genealogists, yet visiting and using one can be intimidating. I remember that I was actually nervous the first few times that I visited some — they each have their own rules and, sometimes, one wasn't always made to feel welcome. Now that I have visited many kinds of archives, big and small, private and public, I know that if I do my homework about what the archive holds, how it operates, etc., I enjoy and value the access that I gain to the records. Given that, I think that you'll find the following online guide *Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research*, published by The Society of American Archivists, very helpful.

Some select entries from the table of contents are:

- “What Are Archives and How Do They Differ from Libraries?”
<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/whatarearchives>
- “Types of Archives”

<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/typesofarchives>

- “Finding and Evaluating Archives”
<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/findingandevaluating>
- “Planning to Visit an Archives”
<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/planningtovisitanarchives>
- “Typical Usage Guidelines in Archival Repositories”
<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/typicalusageguidelines>
- “Visiting an Archives”
<http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/visitinganarchives>

There is also a pdf version available at <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/UsingArchivesFinal.pdf>.

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