

Cyndi's List Keeps on Ticking!

IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE to do a "search" on any genealogy topic or geographic locale and not find yourself landing on Cyndi's List, www.cyndislist.com. This website has been a mainstay of online genealogical research since 1996. Cyndi Howells is the owner and webmaster of Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet. Howells has been a genealogist for more than 31 years, and is the author of three books for genealogical research on the Internet: *Netting Your Ancestors: Genealogical Research on the Internet* (1999), *Cyndi's List: a Comprehensive List of 40,000 Genealogy Sites on the Internet* (2000) and *Planting Your Family Tree Online: How to Create Your Own Family History Web Site* (2004).

For more than 15 years, Cyndi's List has helped hundreds of thousands of people trace their family history online. Each month, the Cyndi's List website gets approximately 250,000 unique visitors and 970,000 pages visited, with more than 31,760,000 successful page requests and, as of early August 2011, contains over 307,000 links!

Already familiar with Cyndi's List? Have you revisited it lately? If not, you will find that it was recently upgraded and has improved navigation, a custom database, and a custom administrative interface. The upgrade means that everything is quicker and easier for both visitors, as well as the site's owner and administrator.

So, what exactly is Cyndi's List?

- A categorized and cross-referenced index to genealogical resources on the Internet.
- A list of links that point you to genealogical research sites online.
- A free jumping-off point for you to use in your online research.
- A "card catalog" to the genealogical collection in the immense library that is the Internet.
- Your genealogical research portal onto the Internet.

As Cyndi has said "the Internet is like a huge library with all its book strewn on the floor ... she started to organize the genealogy section of this library in a helpful and unique manner" and we have definitely all benefited from that.

Besides being a wonderful resource for internet-based

because it wasn't "started as a business or marketing endeavor, but to help and that might be the key to its success."

Remember, this is a one-person operation. Because of that, Howells needs your help. You can help by informing her when links no longer work (follow the directions on the website), submit new links



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genealogical resources, Cyndi's List can also help you understand how to "research". Look at how the information is organized, the categories of records listed, the types of records found and this might "provoke certain thought processes and encourage further exploration" into record types not previously considered and possible genealogical gems.

What makes Cyndi's List so special? Cyndi herself — she is a real person who, as she says "is a genealogist first and then became a computer geek later." This means that she understands genealogy and genealogists. She understands genealogical research. She handles and categorizes each and every link. No bots, or spiders or other technology tools are being used to create Cyndi's List! This allows her to "dig-down into special collections and do deep linking and find the "hidden-web" and all the great websites" that help us better our research.

Howells says she has personally benefitted from, and really enjoyed, her interactions with people through the site, on Facebook, at conferences and simply by the fact that she's been able to help others with their research. As she says, she gets to "do what I love as a job." Howells thinks that Cyndi's List has really been successful

to be included, fill in details (e.g., provide better descriptions) for sites already listed, or by making a financial donation to help cover the costs of maintaining the site. Howells suggests that you visit her site each day to check out what's new, including the rolling genealogy news feed and a link to the Cyndi's List Daily, a daily dose of family history news as tagged in Twitter and Facebook. Don't forget the associated blog, <http://cyndislist.blogspot.com>, Facebook page, www.facebook.com/CyndisList, or Twitter feed, <http://twitter.com/#!/CyndisList>.

And, if you are interested in learning more about Howells herself, the history of the list or any other interesting facts, do check out the FAQs page.

There is so much more that can be said about Cyndi's List and my suggestion is that you simply visit the site and let your fingers do the walking — once you get started, you will find it hard to stop!

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Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for over 22 years. Though she has ebbed and flowed in her usage of FHCs, they have always been an invaluable resource for her. She currently does professional research in NC and DC and can be found online at www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy.