Internet Archive for the Family Historian

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Internet Archive www.archive.org has quickly become a major destination to those researching their family history online. The company, founded in San Francisco, strives to make books, both within and out of copyright available to users for free. What began as a project by a handful of university libraries had grown into a world-wide success; incorporating collections such as government documents, church records, county and state histories, atlases and gazetteers, newspapers, school yearbooks and more!
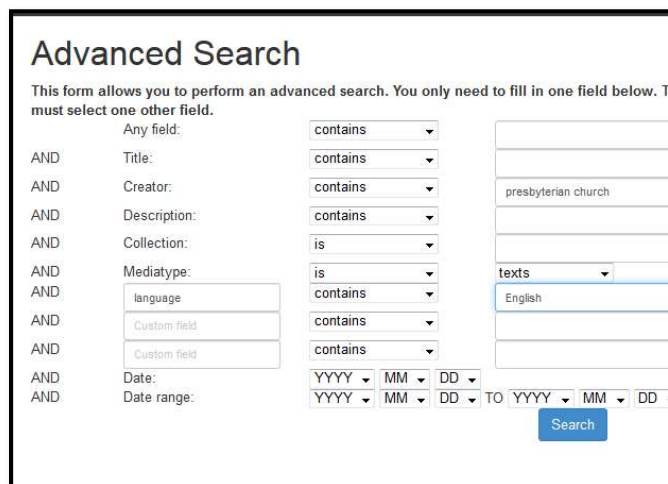
Creating an Account

Find a collection you would like to save for later? Internet Archive gives you the opportunity to create a free account. Once you've created your account you can design your own collections by uploading your own materials, or items to which you own the copyright. Once you sign in, you can favorite any collection or items by clicking on the star, for quick access later.

Creating a free account gives you the opportunity to check-out books through Internet Archive's Open Library. This collection of books includes over 20 million unique titles by popular authors like Bill Bryson and Clive Cussler and classics from Shakespeare and Kipling. These books can be checked out to your account for 2 weeks and can be downloaded to any device using Adobe Digital Editions.
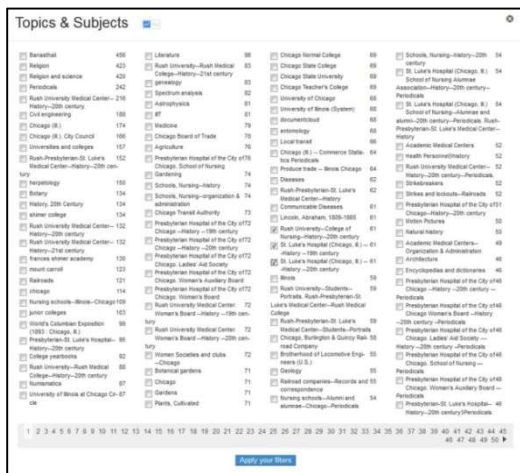
Searching the Collections

Searching by title or keyword can feel daunting the first time you use Internet Archive. A keyword search on genealogy will give you an unending list of over 142,000 titles. How do you make that large of a collection work for you? By using the fields in the advanced search tab. Searching by **creator** can effectively narrow your search results. For example, typing in the name of the high school will limit your search to the yearbooks you seek. Looking for church records? Use the name of the church in the creator field. Narrow your search even further by choosing the **material type** and **language**, or **Date range**. Each of these categories will help narrow your search down to the books you need.

- **Title**
- **Creator**
- **Description**
- **Material Type**
- **Date**

Manipulate your data even more by adjusting how your results are listed. In the right-hand corner of your results are two icons, the first lists your results by image as seen to the right. The second icon lists your results linearly as text. Both formats allow you to sort your results by title, popularity, relevance and creator.

Along the left-hand side of your screen will be a breakdown of your search results by category. It will show you how many titles are available to borrow or are waitlisted. It breaks your results down by **decade, topic, collection, creator** and **language**. Clicking on each category's "more" arrow will give you additional options for narrowing your results down to what you seek. Each checkbox you click tailors your results. Each filter you apply reflects in the search box at the top of the screen. Once your search is just right, you can favorite it for later.

Digging Deeper

Take advantage of Internet Archive catalog to dig deeper into their records collections. The home page provides a list of the top collections within Internet Archive including the American Libraries Collection, Library of Congress, JSTOR Early Journal Content, FEDLINK, and Allen County Public Library.

JSTOR Early Journal Content has some amazing genealogical finds including full transcriptions of scholarly articles on topics ranging from cemeteries, family histories and community schools and events.

Simply click on the collection icon and add your subject, name or location in the box at the top left corner labels *Search This Collection*. The radial button for Metadata will search the fields mentioned above, title, description, location, creator etc. If you click on the **search all text contents** radial button it will search each and every book within all collections (but not non-textual collections). Internet Archive works with Boolean Operators, meaning a search for Chicago, Illinois will look for Chicago or Illinois. Putting the items in quotations, changes your search to Chicago and Illinois. You can also search by adding the words AND or NOT to further limit your search results. Be conscious of abbreviations and acronyms (e.g. Oregon, ORE., OR.)

In the American Libraries Collection, of nearly 3 million items, I entered the words Plainfield, Illinois and received 636,990 hits. By placing my words in quotation marks, I narrowed my results to 579 hits. Along the left I can narrow my results even more by choosing the topics, collections and creator. I suggest you "favorite" your search, by clicking on the star, so you can check for new items added in the future.

As you are searching, remember terminology is key. Use multiple synonyms for the same word (e.g. yearbook, annual, catalog; cemetery, burial ground, churchyard; headstone, tombstone, monument, grave marker).

Collections

Internet Archive has worked tirelessly to build up their collections in multiple formats. An extensive collection of **sound recordings** is available representing over a hundred years of sound. The Grateful Dead Collection includes hundreds of audio recordings from two generations of concert performances across the country. Other famous artists like the rock band Chicago have numerous albums available to download. Caveat to this, when you are searching for Chicago records, be sure to remove audio recordings, or your search will be full of music titles! Other music collections include the Old Time Radio Collection and the Barrie H. Thorpe Batavia Illinois Public Library Collection of nearly 21,000 records, spanning 60 years of music history from 1901-1960. Artists includeJudy Garland, Bing Crosby, Cab Callaway and many, many more.

Film and video is well represented including feature films, WWI Militaryfootage, WWII Newsreels and television broadcasts and commercials. From Bugs Bunny cartoons, to Film Noir, millions of hours of video and film can be found on Internet Archive. Browse by topic or search by creator or decade.

Microfilm is a substantial resource available on Internet Archive. Hundreds of thousands of reels of microfilm have been digitized and made available by government agencies, archives, universities,
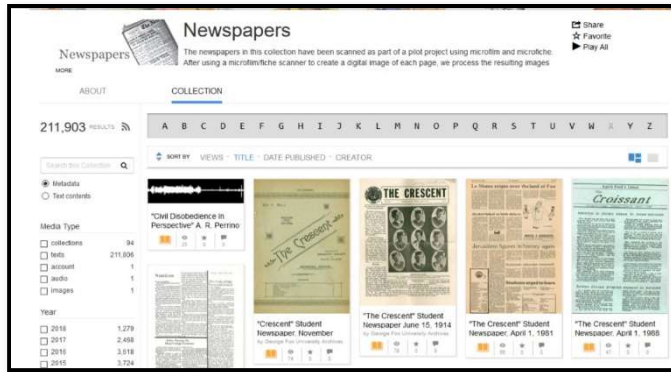

churches and other organizations https://archive.org/details/microfilm. The Provincial Archives of Alberta, Canada has digitized their Alberta homestead applications https://bit.ly/2Ojy4pC. The National Archives U.S. Census available from 1790-1930 https://archive.org/details/us_census.

Other valuable genealogical Microfilm collections include U.S. passenger and crew lists for various ports, and city directories from the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center https://archive.org/details/allen_county_microfilm. Sort the list of microfilm by title at the top of the screen and them change your view from image to list for easier searching.
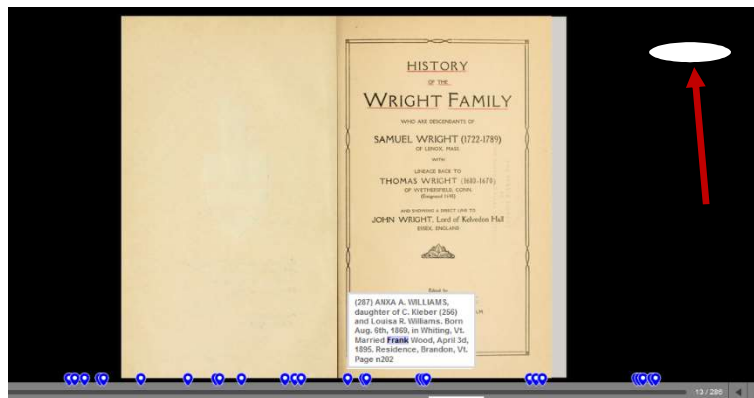
Newspaper Collections have been a fast growing category in Internet Archive. Be sure to click on **Title** on the sort bar to alphabetize your results. Use the filters on the left to narrow your list down to decade, location and language. Newspaper collections can be compiled by issue, month or year. Preview a file in the viewer before you download or change your search parameters. Click here to get started:

https://archive.org/search.php?query=collection%3A%28newspapers%29&sort=titleSorter

Viewing and Downloading Items

Once you have found an item you wish to view, click on the item to see the record information. At the top of your screen you can preview the title using Internet Archive's viewer. Below the image are all of

the formats in which you can download the item including, PDF, EPUB, Adobe ABBYY, Daisy and more.

There are 2 search boxes on this screen. The top box will search all of Internet Archive. The second box to the right of the book, will search only that text. Results will appear along the bottom of the image showing the page and matching text. Click on each blue marker to turn to that page. Didn't find what you needed? Try downloading the PDF version of the title and run your search

using their OCR capabilities. I have had better results than using the viewer's search. Once you download the item, consider changing the file name to the title and date.

Recap

Internet Archive is an amazing resource for genealogists. To get the most out of your experience, be sure to utilize their limiters and categories. Marking a collection, a "favorite" makes it easily retrievable. Take advantage of all that Internet Archive has to offer for accessing books, movies, music and more both within and out of copyright. Download millions of items for your personal use and consider uploading your own items as well.