CHEAT SHEET: Google for Genealogy

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Are You Taking Full Advantage of Google?

For most genealogists and family historians, Google is just a search engine and a way to locate research records, websites and other resources. With over 251 different apps, products and services, Google offers so many tools for genealogy problem solving as well as increasing research efficiency.

19 Google Tools Every Genealogist Should Be Using

Here are my recommended Google tools for genealogy research. Remember that many require that you have a free Google Account in order to get the full benefit.

Google Alerts (https://www.google.com/alerts)
Description: Get notified when new items related to your research added to Google.
Best Uses: Set up Alerts for surnames (ex: Henneberg genealogy), addresses, terminology (ex: German baptisms) and more.

Google Books (https://books.google.com)
Description: Over 25 million digitized books covering a variety of subjects.
Best Uses: Search for surnames within titles and text (ex: Crandall genealogy or Elder John Crandall). Note that some results are only "previews" with limited access. Full access titles can be saved as PDFs or even opened in Amazon Kindle. Use the My Library feature to organize favorite titles. All 15 years of Ancestry Magazine (US) are at https://books.google.com/books/about/Ancestry_magazine.html?id=FTgEAAAAMBAJ.

Google Dashboard (https://myaccount.google.com/dashboard)
Description: The best way to see what services you are using with your Google account and what information you have stored on Google.
Best Uses: Check account details, remove services you no longer use, check the devices and locations where you've logged into Google to protect against hacking.

Google Docs (https://docs.google.com)
Description: Similar to Microsoft Word, a document production program to be used for research notes, reports, family stories and more.
Best Uses: Part of the Google Drive platform, take advantage of the free cloud storage to safeguard genealogy and family history research in written format. Voice to text feature also available!

Google Drive (https://www.google.com/drive/)
Description: A "productivity platform" similar to Microsoft Office; it is the "home base" for Google Docs, Google Forms, Google Sheets and other programs. Includes 15GB of free online storage (shared with Gmail and Google Photos if used).
Best Uses: Store all research documents in the cloud using Google Drive including research logs (Google Sheets), ancestor bios (Google Docs), family group sheets (Google Forms), etc.

Google Earth (https://www.google.com/earth/)
Description: Similar to Google Maps, except that Google Earth presents a 3-D representation of almost any location on earth. A standalone program installed on your computer, you can easily see city streets as well as rural landscapes based on GPS locations.
Best Uses: Use Google Earth to view the locations of your ancestors based on your research; enter addresses of ancestral homes to see the current view of the location.

Google Forms (https://docs.google.com/forms)
Description: Part of the Google Drive platform, an easy to design and use forms program that allows you to create input forms, send them to others, and the results are instantly dropped into a corresponding Google Sheets document!
Best Uses: Create a form input version of your research log; create a family group sheet form to send via email to relatives.

Google Groups (https://groups.google.com)
Description: A variety of online discussion groups/forums covering a variety of topics including genealogy and family history. Some groups and content date back to 1995.
Best Uses: Search for surnames, place names and other keywords related to your specific genealogy research. Although many groups are no longer active, you may find clues relevant to your family history.

Google Image Search (https://images.google.com)
Description: A search engine over well over 10 billion images that locates digital images within the Google search results. Users are able to search based on size, date as well as usage rights.
Best Uses: Search for images of ancestors, relatives, locations, and more based on surnames and other keywords. Also, use the "camera icon" to upload one of your digital images to locate a "matching" photo; this can help identify people and places in your photos plus you may be able to contact that person who owns or posted the image.

Google Input Tools (https://www.google.com/inputtools)
Description: Available as a web tool and an app, Google Input Tools helps you type uncommon characters such as accents, symbols and diacritical marks that can then be transferred to other typed media such as documents, search fields, etc.
Best Uses: Use when searching for surnames and place names with accents and diacritical marks (such as tilde ~ or umlaut ö).

Google Keep (https://keep.google.com)
Description: Similar to the popular Evernote program, Google Keep is a note-taking service available in web format as well as app format. Tools included allow the user to take notes, capture web content, images, create lists and more.
Best Uses: Use Google Keep to track online research, to create research to-do lists, and to maintain a research log.

Google Maps (https://maps.google.com)
Description: A web mapping program more commonly used to get driving directions, Google Maps also allows user to create customized maps with pinned locations.
Best Uses: Create custom maps based on migration patterns of your ancestors; embed maps into websites and blogs.

Google Newspaper Archives (https://news.google.com/newspapers)
Description: A digital archive of over 25,000 historical newspapers from around the world. New content is no longer being added and images are difficult to save.
Best Uses: Search ancestral surnames, place names and keywords. Use Evernote Web Clipper or Pinterest to capture images in usable jpg format.

Google Photos (https://photos.google.com)
Description: A photo share and image storage service, Google Photos should not be confused with Google Images (which is a search engine for photos located on the Internet). Part of Google Drive (see above), allows up to 15 GB of free storage (shared with Google Drive and Gmail).
Best Uses: Backup scanned family photos to Google Photos. Share photos with family and friends and also use built in editing tools on images.

Google Plus (https://plus.google.com)
Description: Google Plus (also written as Google+) is an Internet-based social media platform similar to Facebook. Users can share images, updates, and more.
Best Uses: An alternative to Facebook with many genealogists sharing information, posting queries and lookups and more. Google Plus is a great way to connect with family members and share family history information.

Google Search (https://www.google.com)
Description: Over 4.5 billion users monthly, the world's most popular index of available websites. Google Advanced Search (https://www.google.com/advanced_search) offers more options including the ability to search within specific websites.
Best Uses: Use keyword search to locate various records, blog posts, and more related to your genealogy research. Use the "site" function (e.g., site:rootsweb.com Henneberg) paired with a keyword to search within a website (the search is often better than the site's own search capabilities).

Google Sheets (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/)
Description: Similar to Microsoft Excel, a spreadsheet production program to be used for research logs, timelines, and more.
Best Uses: Part of the Google Drive platform, take advantage of the free cloud storage to store research logs, project lists and more. Also serves as the data collection program for Google Forms (see above).

Google Sites (https://sites.google.com/)
Description: Google Sites is a FREE website and wiki creation program similar to sites such as Wix.com and Weebly.com
Best Uses: Create a family history website to share research finds with friends and family.

Google Translate (https://translate.google.com/)
Description: A multiple language translation service, Google Translate covers 103 languages and also allows users to hear the pronunciation of words and phrases.
Best Uses: Create lists of common genealogical terms (baptism, death record, widow) in the language of your ancestors and use in searches. Do not rely upon Google Translate for long blocks of text due to the artificial intelligence and automation used; it cannot compare to working with a native speaker.

Caution: Google is NOT REALLY FREE!

While Google, with its over 251 different apps and services, has helped many genealogists and family historians locate valuable content in the search for their ancestors, understand that there really is a cost in using Google. While from a price standpoint Google is free, some users find its ability to store and utilize your usage of Google disturbing. You may see advertisements in certain programs, and they will be related to recent search or even recent email topics. Please make sure you understand both the **Google Privacy Policy** (https://privacy.google.com/) and the **Google Terms of Service** (https://policies.google.com/terms) before you use Google or set up a Google account.