Sample Searches: Ancestry Library Edition

Global Search

Listed below are some of the steps you can take in trying to locate information about an ancestor.

1. **Enter as much name information as you have.**

   If you have a very uncommon first or middle name, you may want to try that by itself. The same is true for a very uncommon last name. You can also choose options describing where the person lived and during what time they lived. The time limit doesn't work in every collection.

2. **Review the Results Overview for the most likely matches.**

   For example, if you know your ancestor was a veteran of the Civil War**,** you might want to look at those military records first. If in doubt, the census records are a good place to start.

3. **If you don't find any matches, check the "Exact Matches Only" box**.

   On the Home or Search pages you can expand your search by selecting the **Soundex** option in the Spelling field. Soundex searching looks for similar names based on the sounds of the consonants. If your family name may have changed spelling over the years, this is a good option to try.

4. **If you still aren't finding the person you want, consider using wildcards or truncation in the name.**

   The **wildcard character (*)** will account for various name endings. For example, searching Sam* will find Sam, Sammy, Samual, Samuel, Sammie, Samantha and any other names beginning with Sam. Note that you must type in at least the first three letters of the name before putting in the wildcard.

   The **truncation symbol (?)** is used when you only want one letter of a name to be different. If you are trying to find the name Hansen that was also sometimes spelled Hanson, you could type in Hans?n to find both variants. Note that you must type in at least the first three letters of the name before putting in the wildcard.

5. **Try searching an individual collection or database.**

   You can find the collections listed on the right hand side of the Search screen. Each collection, and each database within a collection, may have additional search fields beyond the common ones that are listed on the Home or Search screens. You might have a piece of information that matches one of the searchable fields.

   For example, if you are looking for a male ancestor who might have served in the military, you would choose the Military collection by clicking on the Military heading in the More Records box on the right side of the Search screen. Then, browse the list of individual databases and select one from the right state or time period.

   If you are looking for an ancestor who immigrated to the United States, you should try the Immigration Records collection. Search the entire collection if you don't know where the person entered the US, or select a specific collection that pertains to the entry port or departure port of that person.

Search Guide: Ancestry Library Edition

Search Tips

- Use special characters and operators (below) to focus your query. After checking the "Exact match only" option on the search screen you can also choose to use the **Soundex** option to broaden your name search.

- Default searching is a global search with ranked results, but permits the patron to wrap the query around details such as dates, places and record type. This search will drill down all the databases within Ancestry Library Edition. The results are then displayed with additional tools to control the vast results.

  - Use the stars to limit the view from all matches to only 5 star matches (the highest or most likely to be a match).

  - The Results page will also let you narrow down by record type on the left side of the page. For example, only military records may be of interest.

  - Details about Ranked searching can be found in the Help Screen FAQ.

Truncation and Wildcard Characters

* You can use wildcards to view all words that begin with the same stem. For example, a search for **char*** will return hits on words like Charles, Charley, Charlie, Charlene, or Charlotte.

You can search alternate spellings with the asterisk (*), which represents 0 to 5 unknown characters.

A query for **Grif*n** will search for Griffin and Grifen, and Griffan among others.

The use of wildcards is restricted to keywords and names and you must specify the first three letters.

? If you want to search for names that differ only by one letter use the question mark (?) wildcard. A search for **Ta?lor** will return both Tailor and Taylor.