

Historical Records on the Giant Genealogy Websites



Sunny Morton is a Contributing Editor at Lisa Louise Cooke’s Genealogy Gems (<http://www.genealogygems.com>); Contributing Editor at Family Tree Magazine (<http://www.familytreemagazine.com>), and Co-Editor of Ohio Genealogy News (<http://www.ogs.org>). She authored “Genealogy Giants: Comparing the 4 Major Websites,” *Story of My Life: A Workbook for Preserving Your Legacy* and the forthcoming *How to Find Your Family History in U.S. Church Records*. She holds degrees in history and humanities from BYU. Find her at Lisa Louise Cooke’s Genealogy Gems booth in the RootsTech Expo Hall or <http://www.sunnymorton.com>.

The Genealogy Giants: Records At-a-Glance

	Ancestry.com	FamilySearch.org	Findmypast.com	MyHeritage.com
Names in historical records*	10 billion** estimated names in indexed and unindexed records	5.79 billion names in indexed records PLUS 1.9 billion browse-only records and 353,000+ digital books	8 billion estimated names in indexed and unindexed records	4.4 billion** estimated names in indexed and unindexed records
Record strengths by place	US, Australia/NZ, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Sweden	US, Canada, Mexico, Central/South America, most of Europe, some of Africa and Asia	England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, US/Canada, Australia/New Zealand	Scandinavia, England, Germany
Languages	English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish	Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish	English	All shown here, plus see https://tinyurl.com/MyHeritageLanguages

*All figures approximate January 2018. These figures aren’t adjusted for variations in defining records and methods of counting unindexed historical records. Figures cited in part from www.ancestry.com/corporate/about-ancestry/company-facts, media.familysearch.org/company-facts, www.findmypast.com/content/company-information and <https://about.myheritage.com>. Additional data obtained from company representatives. **Adjusted figures. Ancestry claims 20 billion records. This includes 10 billion tree names in trees, compared separately in this table. MyHeritage claims 8.4 billion historical records, including 4 billion names in trees.

Cautions: Comparing record numbers at each site

- Total record numbers may include items other than historical records: tree profiles, DNA tests, other user-submitted information and content imported from other free websites
- Total numbers of historical records may include both indexed and unindexed content. Unindexed content may be counted as the number of record images OR an estimated number of record images based on sampling.
- Records may be counted differently (1 birth=1 record (baby), or 3 records (baby, mom, dad))

HEAD TO HEAD FOR US RECORDS: MILITARY DRAFT REGISTRATIONS

Conflict	Ancestry.com	FamilySearch	Findmypast	MyHeritage
Civil War	Yes			
World War I	Yes (2nd overlapping list)	Yes (also ME)	Yes	Yes
World War II, (1942, 4 th reg.)	Yes (also Young Men’s Draft, 1940-1947)	Yes (also AR, GA, LA 1 st reg.)	Only GA	LA (1 st , 2 nd , 1940-1959) AR (2 nd , 1948-59, GA (1940-2)

HEAD TO HEAD FOR US RECORDS: US CENSUSES

Collection/schedules	Ancestry	FamilySearch	Findmypast	MyHeritage
US census population (1790-1940)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural (1850-1885)	Yes			
Defective, Dependent, Delinquent (1880)	Yes			
Indian (1880-1910)	Yes			
Industry & Manufacturing (1850-1885)	Yes			
Mortality (1850-1885)	Yes	Yes (1850)	Yes (1850)	Yes (1850)
Slave (1850-1860)	Yes	Yes (1850)	Yes (1850)	Yes (1850)
Social Statistics (1850-1885)	Yes			
Veterans (1840, 1890)	Yes	1890 only	Yes	
Merchant seaman (1930)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enumeration district maps	1940	1900-1940		

HEAD TO HEAD: BIGGEST RECORD COLLECTIONS FOR ENGLAND

Civil Registration England & Wales (General Record Office)				
	Ancestry	FamilySearch*	Findmypast	MyHeritage
Birth Index	1837-2005	1837-2008	1837-2006	1837-2005, plus 1911-1954 (London)
Marriage index	1837-2005	1837-2005	1837-2005	1837-2005
Death index	1837-2007	1837-2007	1837-2007	1837-2007

*Indexes from Findmypast

MAJOR UNIQUE COLLECTIONS FOR ENGLAND

Who's got it?	What is it?	How many?
Ancestry.com	British Phone books, 1880-1984, UK city & county directories, 1766-1973	321 million
Ancestry.com	Public member photos & scanned documents	233 million
Findmypast	1939 Register	39 million
Ancestry & Findmypast	Passengers leaving the UK, 1890-1960	21-24 million
Findmypast	Westminster rate books, 1634-1900	10 million

HEAD TO HEAD: MAJOR COLLECTIONS FOR DENMARK

Records	Ancestry	FamilySearch	MyHeritage
Censuses 1860-1925		Yes	Yes
Censuses 1850, 1855, 1930		Yes	
Church records, 1813-1919			Yes
Church records, 1484-1941		Yes	
Baptisms 1618-1923	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marriages 1635-1916	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burials 1640-1917	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estate records, 1436-1964	Yes	Yes	

Findmypast is not included because its scope doesn't include Danish records

Searching for records: Use site catalogs to search for specific collections of historical records

© 2018 by Sunny Morton, <http://www.sunnymorton.com>. Please do not copy without permission.

- *Indexed records*: names are typed into searchable databases
- *Unindexed/browse-only*: These are records for which names have not been or cannot be extracted. The handwritten ones may be eventually be indexed. Typed/published records may be machine-searchable (OCR, optical character recognition). Non-text records (such as maps) can't be indexed or OCR-searched.
- *Partially indexed*: only some names have been indexed
 - Wills, probate records, or marriage records that only index the primary parties
 - Published records that have been machine-indexed but don't pick up everything

Record searching by site

Ancestry.com: Search > Catalog

- The Ancestry catalog lets you *filter* by keyword/name, place, record type, time period and language and *sort* by collection size, popularity, date added to site/updated.
- The Title search is finicky; for better luck, search by keyword
- Partially-indexed record examples:
 - City directories or yearbooks with entries not caught (or caught incorrectly) by OCR-indexing. These may include names separated on different lines or pages, written vertically or in a font/style not recognized by the indexing program.
 - Quaker marriage records don't index all attendees/witnesses
 - Probate records that don't name enslaved individuals or other people listed within
- Details about each online collection may include the original publisher of that database/online collection, the source from which it was taken, historical background, general content of the records, search tips and more. Find these details on that collection's search page or at the bottom of a record match summary (click Learn more).

FamilySearch: Search > Records > Research by location OR Browse all published collections

- The FamilySearch catalog lets you *filter* by keyword/name, place, record type, time period and whether images are available, and *sort* by collection size and date updated.
- A more advanced and thorough option to find records that aren't yet in published collections: Search > Catalog > search for individual items. Within an item record entry, look for links to record images.
- Search browse-only records page-by-page. Individual record volumes or collections may have handwritten indexes, tables of contents, etc at the beginning/end.
- **TIP**: Search over 350,000 digitized book volumes under Search > Books. Use keywords such as ancestral names, towns, businesses, schools, churches, etc.
- Details about each online collection may include which records are in the collection, what's in them, search tips, suggested next steps and how to cite the collection. Find these details on that collection's search page or by clicking on the hyperlinked collection title in the list of search results.

Findmypast: Search > A-Z of record sets (then choose country/region)

- The Findmypast catalog is more limited, allowing searches only by keyword/title, and then sorting by title, collection size, and record category or sub-category.
- For best luck finding certain types of records, try using a single keyword or phrase at a time, such as *Revolutionary War* or *Aberdeen*.
- Search separately at <https://search.findmypast.com/search/us-and-world-newspapers>:

- Digitized British, Irish and US newspaper collections
- PERSI: Periodical Source Index, for articles in historical magazines/journals
- Details about each online collection may include what's in the records, historical background and search tips. Citation information is not included. Find collection details on that collection's search page.

MyHeritage: Research > Collection catalog

- The MyHeritage catalog lets you *filter* by keyword/name, place, record type, time period and whether images are available and *sort* by collection name, size, and when updated.
- MyHeritage claims a collection of nearly 450,000 digital books (which you can even find automated record hinting for under Discoveries > Matches by source > Compilation of published sources).
- Details about each online collection may include what's in the records and historical background. Full citation information may or may not appear; sources are not often included for the originator of the database/online collection.

Learn more in “Genealogy Giants: Comparing the 4 Major Websites,” available at <https://www.shopgenealogygems.com/>:

- Survey of record coverage for 30+ countries.
- Explains difference between family trees, access and privacy options.
- Comparison of DNA testing at AncestryDNA and MyHeritage DNA.
- Summary description of each site: what's to love and cautions.
- What you can do with a free guest account.
- Detailed subscription cost comparison and options for free access.

