

# GETTING STARTED IN GENEALOGY

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## **BEGINNING YOUR RESEARCH**

- Consult “how-to” books on genealogy available in the Special Collections Department. General research guides and handbooks are located in the open stacks beginning with call number 929.1. Many are available for check out with a valid St. Louis County Library card.
- The Special Collections Department offers genealogy classes, workshops and presentations. Inquire at the Department’s reference desk for details. Beginning genealogy courses are also available periodically from the St. Louis Genealogical Society ([www.stlgs.org](http://www.stlgs.org)) and local community colleges.
- Gather as much information as possible from family members. Start with yourself and immediate relatives.
- Record family data on pedigree charts and family group sheets (copies are available in the Special Collections Department). Be as complete and consistent as possible. Do not skip generations.
- Record your sources of information. *Evidence: Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* by Elizabeth S. Mills (call no. R 929.1 M657E and 929.1 M675E) offers helpful advice on how to analyze source materials and cite them properly.
- Determine if somebody has already contributed research on your family tree. The Special Collections Department has extensive holdings of published family histories. Inquire at the Reference Desk for help in searching the library catalog. *Genealogies in the Library of Congress*, located at call no. 929.1016 K15C, is a bibliography of published family histories.
- Focus on one family branch at a time to keep your research manageable.

## **COMMON RECORDS USED IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH**

- Vital records—Dates for births, marriages and deaths are often found in family Bibles, church registers, and tombstone inscriptions, as well as official state, county and local records.
- Census records— A rich source of information about individuals and families. The available information depends on the census year.
- City directories—Offer information about residence and occupation.
- Probate records—Wills and estate records often help establish descendents and their relationships.
- Land records—Deeds and other records may reveal heirs and family relationships.
- Church records—Besides important birth, marriage and death information, church records often include the names of parents and god parents or sponsors who might have been relatives.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Researchers have immediate access to more than 50,000 book titles, 850 periodicals, 18,000 microfilm rolls, 55,000 microfiche, and 300 CD-ROM titles. Available electronic databases include *Ancestry* and *Heritage Quest*. Inquire at the Reference Desk for help in locating specific resources.

Research materials in the department include:

- Basic forms, handbooks and research guides
- Cemetery and funeral home records
- St. Louis-area church records
- City and county phonebooks and directories
- Neighborhood, city, county and state histories
- Resources in the Julius Hunter K. Hunter and Friends African American Research Collection include records from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, U.S. Colored Troops, Southern Claims Commission, and materials on southern states.
- European national and ethnic resources
- Published family histories and genealogies
- Immigration and naturalization records
- Land records and maps, including Oscar W. Collett's indexes to grantors and grantees in early St. Louis land records
- Military records, including indexes and abstracts for federal and state records; extensive holdings for the Civil War period
- Newspapers, including African American, German- and Italian-language publications
- Periodicals—extensive holdings of genealogical journals and newsletters
- Probate court records (wills and estate records)
- Materials on various states besides Missouri.
- Vital records for St. Louis City and County and beyond
- Southern Illinois sources, including Kaskaskia records
- Many guides, indexes and finding aids are available in the department on the library's website at [www.slcl.org](http://www.slcl.org).

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT PREMIER RESOURCES

- St. Louis naturalization records on microfilm—An index with more than 58,000 names is available on the library's website
- Yizkor books—More than 100 books memorializing destroyed Jewish communities in Europe with lists of those killed in the Holocaust.

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- Church records—Catholic parish records in the St. Louis Archdiocese and the Belleville, Ill. Diocese, plus records for many Missouri and Illinois German Evangelical (United Church of Christ) and Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations.
- Unique African American Resources—Includes the *Descriptive Recruitment Lists of Volunteers for the United States Colored Troops for the State of Missouri, 1863–1865* microfilm set. An index of more than 5,000 names to this set is available on the library's website.

## SPECIAL COLLECTION DEPARTMENT SERVICES

- The Special Collections Department staff is happy to provide expert guidance but cannot do research for patrons. More in-depth assistance is available from St. Louis Genealogical Society volunteers who are on hand in the department periodically. A list of professional genealogical researchers is available at the Reference Desk and on the St. Louis Genealogical Society's website at [www.stlgs.org](http://www.stlgs.org) for patrons needing more extensive research help.
- Department staff will do quick look-ups for a small copying and handling fee (limit three lookups per request). Requests should be submitted by email or post.
- Microfilm from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City may be borrowed for viewing in the Special Collections Department for the cost of mailing and handling.
- Interlibrary Loan services allow St. Louis County Library card holders access to materials from libraries around the country.
- Heritage Quest and many others electronic databases are accessible by Internet at home for St. Louis County Library card holders living in the metropolitan St. Louis area.

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