



**NAPERVILLE**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

# Ancestry Basics



## Get Started with Searching

1. Visit the Library's website at [Naperville-lib.org](http://Naperville-lib.org), click on **Services**, then select **Genealogy & Local History**.
2. Under **Genealogy Online Resources**, click on **Ancestry - Library Edition**
3. Click on **Begin Searching**

## There are three ways to search:

### 1. General Records Search

Search billions of records in the AncestryLibrary database using your ancestor's:

- Name
- Life events (dates and places of birth, marriage, death, residence, etc.)
- Family members

Filter searches by record categories, locations, and dates to further narrow your results.

### 2. Special Collections/Card Catalog

Every record is part of a collection. Use the **Card Catalog** to view record collection categories (e.g. Immigration & Travel), search for collections by title or keyword, or filter collections by category, location, and/or date. From here, you can search the records within individual collections.

*Tip: Read the descriptions of record collections to determine if their contents are relevant to your search.*

### 3. Explore by location

Select a continent, country, or state to view a list of records for that location. Click on **See more about...** to view records by category, narrow by region, or view additional resources.

First & Middle Name(s)

Last Name

Place your ancestor might have lived

Birth Year

**Search**

Show fewer options ^

Match all terms exactly

Add event: [Birth](#) [Marriage](#) [Death](#) [Lived In](#) [Any Event](#) [More](#) v

Add family member: [Father](#) [Mother](#) [Sibling](#) [Spouse](#) [Child](#)

Keyword

Gender

Race/Nationality

Historical Records

Family Trees

Stories & Publications

Photos & Maps

**Search**

Clear search

## What is AncestryLibrary?

AncestryLibrary is Naperville Public Library's institutional subscription to the world's largest genealogical database, Ancestry.com. AncestryLibrary provides library patrons many of the same records included in an individual paid subscription. This database is accessible from any Naperville Public Library location, whether you have library card or not.

## AncestryLibrary vs. Ancestry.com

AncestryLibrary provides access to a variety of U.S. and international record collections. You can also view and search public family trees and message boards, and access the Learning Center. You cannot create a family tree using AncestryLibrary.

An individual Ancestry.com account provides access to additional collections (varying by subscription level), and allows you to post to public trees and message boards, create a family tree, access "hints," and use the "Shoebox."

## AncestryLibrary Search Basics

Click on **Begin Searching** and enter information such as your ancestor's name, where they may have lived, and birth or death year. Click on **Show more options** to include other life events, family members, gender, nationality, and keywords.

### Start Searching

- Start with the information you know. You do not need to fill in every search field (the more detail, the narrower your search results will be)
- If you are looking for a specific record (e.g. a birth record), select **Historical Record** type (under **Special Collections**) to perform a more targeted search that excludes other record types.
- Check **Match all terms exactly** to include only exact matches (this will exclude similar names, initials, and misspellings).
- Use **Exact...** under a search field to include similar names, a wider date range, or adjacent geographical areas.

From the search results page, you can narrow or broaden your search by:

- Adding, removing, or editing search terms by clicking on **Edit Search**
- Adjusting the **Broad/Exact** sliders to adjust the exactness of the search
- Filtering your search by a specific **Category, Location, or Date**

**Tip!** Different types of records contain varying combinations of information. Try searching with more, less, or different information to target records that may have been excluded from your initial search.

## AncestryLibrary Features

**Home:** Return to the AncestryLibrary homepage.

**Search:** Search for records by category, location, or collection.

**Message Boards:** Search or browse community posts related to record types, topics, surnames, and locations.

**Learning Center:** Find Research Aids for various record types, ethnic groups, and getting started. View the U.S. state map guide to learn about the location your ancestor lived.

**Charts & Forms:** View or download ancestral charts, family group sheets, research logs, blank census forms. And other resources to keep organized.

**New Collections:** Access a searchable list of Ancestry record collections, sorted by most recently updated collections.

**Quick Links (on Homepage):** Search specific record categories, message boards, and public family trees.

**U.S. Census Records (on Homepage):** Search specific census years using tailored search forms.

**Tip!** Names were often misspelled by record keepers and transcribers. Use wildcards to replace letters in a search: ? to replace a letter; \* to replace zero or more letters. E.g., Sm?th\* will match Smith, Smyth, Smythe, Smithers, Smithson, etc.

Wildcard searches must include at least three non-wildcard letters.

### Learn More About AncestryLibrary:

Learning Center  
<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/LearningCenter/>

Ancestry Support—Search and Records  
<https://support.ancestry.com/s/search-and-records>

Ancestry Academy  
<https://ancestryacademy.com/browse>

Ancestry YouTube Channel  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/Ancestrycom/featured>