

GOOGLE AS A FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH TOOL

Perry C. Hanavan

1. Google Toolbar

Download and install the free Google Toolbar in your web browser. After installation, the Google Toolbar is available from any web page, so one can Google search by typing in the search box, without going first to the Google home page. Furthermore, the Google Toolbar has a pop-up screen blocker and several additional useful tools.

2. Search Tools

a. Basic and Advanced Google Search

Simple searches can be conducted by typing in names and terms. For more advance searches, select the "Advanced Search." "Advanced Search Tips provides further information and suggestions.

b. Image Search

Select "Image Search" and enter keywords. Locate images that have been uploaded to the web.

c. Maps Search

Maps search is useful when traveling to locations to research family history. Driving directions may help you locate routes to communities, cemeteries, genealogical and historical libraries, etc.

d. News Search

News search is useful for searching newspapers for recent information about a person or family, recent obituaries, births, marriages, etc. Locate the "News Archive Search" and explore links to numerous news archives with some links to the 1800's.

e. Blogs

Genealogists are blogging about their families. Others have created blogs to share information about family history research. Go to Google Blogs and search for "genealogy" and family names.

3. Other Tools

a. Gmail

Gmail is an excellent free online email account to use to contact and store email information as you connect with others to locate family history information.

b. Google Docs

Create online documents, spreadsheets and presentations. You no longer need a word processor and other application tools stored on your computer if you have an internet connection. You can invite others to view and/or collaborate online documents, spreadsheets and presentations

c. Notebook

Notebook is similar to a scrapbook. As you search the internet and locate information and images, this information can be pasted and stored in the Google Notebook.

d. Calendar

Schedule your future family history research activities and events on Google Calendar. The calendar can also serve as a paper trail of your research activities.

e. Photos

Using Picasa and Picasa Web Albums together, you can take family photos from your computer to the web and back again in quick, simple steps. With Picasa you can find, organize, edit and print the photos on your computer. Then Picasa Web Albums helps you to share those photos online with family, friends and the world.

f. Sites

Google Sites enables individuals and families to create and publish a free family website on the internet to share information about families and family history research.

g. Translate

Need to interpret or translate foreign text to English or from English to some other language? Don't bother looking up word translations one by one in webpages in English. With Google Toolbar, you just pause the pointer over an English word, and the Word Translator displays that word's meaning in your own language. You can also go to Google Translate to convert text to another language.

4. Conclusion

As with all computer programs, the best way to learn how to use any of the Google tools is just to jump in and try it. It takes some practice to learn how to use Google most effectively. The more you use it, the more proficient you will become, and the more valuable the program will be.