Genealogical Giants Part 1
FamilySearch.org

Hello everybody and welcome to another edition of Family Digging.   Today we'd like to apologize for not being around for a while, but unfortunately, the pandemic had us down for a little bit. But we're back up again, and here we are today talking about the Genealogical Giants. This will be a series of podcasts on "Who are the Internet's Genealogical Giants?" And which one should you use? I'm here today with Carolyn Lancaster and I'm Paul Hendee. So Carolyn, tell me what's up today?

We are going to spend several sessions exploring the four Genealogical Giants of the records database industry and those are **Familysearch.org**, **Ancestry.com**, **MyHeritage.com**, and **Findmypast.com**. We're going to talk about and emphasize what makes each of these companies unique. And we're going to start with FamilySearch, which is one of the oldest, if not the oldest company that exists of its kind.

So what makes Familysearch.org so unique? Well, it's free for one thing, and it's the only one of the four Genealogical Giants that is free. Free is good (and you'll find out I like that word "free" and it's available to everyone from home.

Second, it has an extraordinary number of records, many with images of the original records, and they are surely going to keep growing for many years to come. And why do I know that?

Because even though they have tens of thousands of people (over 20,000 last I looked) who are digitizing records all over the world, they have only completed about 20% of their record base; and they are in a race against time, as are all the Giants to digitize all the world's records so they can prevent any further deterioration in the records now on paper and film. This is a worldwide problem for all our historic records: paper and film have a shelf life that's not very long. Our history is disappearing. FamilySearch is fighting back by aggressively ramping up the number of digitizers working on their records. In 2020 average monthly additions to their records were in excess of 25 million per month. And since then, since the beginning of 2021 in particular, they have been adding 30-38 million records a month to their online database. This is outstanding.

Hey, can I just interject? Sure. Now these records, are they like PDFs? Books? Photographs? (Ans. All of the above.) Wow.

Further in addition to working on their own records, most of which are not currently available to see, they are also one of the major organizations that digitize for others. Both familysearch.org and Ancestry.com, another one of the Giants, are digitizing partners for the National Archives of the United States (that would be NARA for short), just to give you one example. When they do a project for others, they often negotiate to have an exclusive right to publish those records on their own site, with the images attached, for a period of time.

You know, Carolyn, we would probably be remiss if we didn't mention something that may be of significance to you and our listeners. This is meant as information, not judgment. The **Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints** has several practices that are not common to other faiths, one of which in particular affects FamilySearch users; namely, they baptize for the dead, which is part of what they called Temple Work or Temple Ordinances. If you look on Family Search for those terms, or simply Google them with the churches name, you'll find a number of articles explaining these practices in further detail. We suggest you investigate this before deciding whether to add your family members to their worldwide tree. It is a primary place that the church members go to find the names of those who have not yet had temple ordinances administered. This doesn't mean anything to many people, but to others, it is very important. So if these practices are a problem for you, please do not add your information to their family tree. You do not have to have your information on their site in order to do your research there. You do need to register for a free account with them in order to access their records, and it's really a good deal. It's free. Since the image of the original record is your actual evidence of the facts, not the transcription, that agreement is quite valuable to anyone who is involved in genealogy. The transcription should back up the image to reduce errors from getting into the system and to help those majority of us (who cannot read Latin or old or foreign handwriting) to make the image useful to us. (I can't do that.) How well this works is a different issue and varies from company to company, but I can assure you that FamilySearch

has extensive educational resources to teach their digitizers the things they need to know to do a good job. They also have a huge number of books, periodicals and genealogies to peruse on line, and way more to come.

You know, I'd like to just annex our little discussion here on FamilySearch. One of the most important things that I have found in my genealogical research and my sharing of my genealogical research is a thing called GEDCOM. A gedcom is basically an anacronym that stands for GEnealogical Data COMmunications. It basically is like a little suitcase that you can take anything that you found on your genealogical family tree and put it into this little digital suitcase, and you send it to somebody else. It has all your ancestors' information in it: all of the resources, all the citations, all the images. It has everything to do with whatever you have found. The inventor of this was, believe it or not, FamilySearch.

FamilySearch has so much technological background, and they have been the technological leader in genealogy. But there is a problem, they really aren't into, how should I say, utilizing the gedcom completely? Not so much. In essence, they do allow for uploading of a gedcom to a FamilySearch family tree. However, you can upload to a family tree, but I tried this and it really only allows you to upload something like 300 MB. Well, I have 8256 members in my family tree; that's kind of a large Gedcom - I think it's somewhere around 2 gigs of data, and that includes, of course, photos and and all kinds of other stuff that I have in there - PDFs and everything else I have in that gedcom. This

might work for a beginning family tree, but not so much for somebody who had a lot of information in their family tree.

So then we come to exporting a gedcom. Exporting a gedcom is very important because if you're going to take what you did on FamilySearch and you want to put it on your computer, into an application on your computer (say like Rootsmagic or MyHeritage or Mac Family Tree), now you're not going to be able to do it if you don't have a gedcom from your previous platform. So basically FamilySearch does not allow for direct exporting of your information from FamilySearch. If you do have an application, say Rootsmagic, you are able to export gedcom of the information that you collected from FamilySearch, but you know, the thing is you're also going to export all the other information that you got from other sources as well. So I just wanted to make a note about gedcoms. One of the most important things for any geologist, I think, is the gedcom - to preserve the information that you have collected.

So, for things unique to familysearch.org are:

1. they are the only non-profit of the group – and therefore have a different motivation;

2. they have an abundance of learning opportunities - it's just terrific;

3. it is the only genealogical giant to be completely free to all users; but you must open an account with them so that they can know who they are dealing with. Fair is fair.

4. they have a seemingly endless supply of Records to search, with new stuff coming online everyday – and this will continue long into the future.

So, I guess that's about it. You got anything else there? Carolyn: I have to trust you, you're the techie. Definitely not me. Paul: The editor in chief. We work well together.

 So everybody, we look forward to your being at our next presentation and that will be on Ancestry.com, one of the Genealogical Giants. As usual, if you want a copy of this transcript, go into our podcast transcription file (at http://www.familydigging.com) and pull out the source for yourself. We also have links and genealogical files. Paul will have a PDF in there on Gedcom in particular, and you're welcome to them and we hope you enjoy them. If you want to be notified when our next podcast is available, you need to subscribe so we can send you an email to say "We're up again." Also, just to make note, if you ever want to directly email us, we have a email address: familydigging@gmail.com. Feel free to drop us, a line and add suggestions or whatever for future podcasts. So I guess that's it for this this podcast; we'll see you next time. Bye.
Paul Hendee and
Carolyn Lancaster