

State Archives & Libraries: Free & Amazing Online Sources

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An impressive amount of state historical books and records are available on free, state-funded websites; however, such sites, often with hundreds of different sources, can be hard to find and complex to use. Usually unknown and therefore overlooked by researchers, these state-supported sites are hidden gems; gold mines of ancestral information waiting to be discovered and used. They are free and paid for by tax dollars; it's time we make more people aware of these valuable resources. This session identifies at least one site for every state and a demonstration of sites from popular states.

DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Genealogical Content on State Websites

- Indexes, abstracts or records
- Vital records
- Local histories
- Books and journals
- Biographies
- Military records
- Court records
- Deeds
- Newspapers
- Voter registration
- Photographs and videos

State Agencies Providing Such Websites

- Secretary of State
- Archives or library
- Historical society
- Universities

Searching

- Not user friendly
- Minimal guidance
- Look for “databases” or online/digital collections, etc.
- Indexes vs. images
- OCR issues
- Viewing the images
- Electronic delivery of documents

Cautions for Using State Websites

- Instructions & directions
- Filed under. . .
- Indexing issues
- Completeness (or not)
- Changes (content, location, format, indexes, URLs)
- Records vs. Guides, Inventories, Lists, etc.
- Link lists

Local and Municipal Websites

- Local government
- Public libraries
- Genealogical societies
- Local historical societies

Directories of Sites

Digital State Archives <https://sites.google.com/site/statearchives/>
[focus mostly on state archives websites, mentions others]

71 Digital Portals to State History
<http://blogs.loc.gov/digitalpreservation/2013/09/71-digital-portals-to-state-history/>

Top 75 State Websites of 2012 [Family Tree Magazine, December issues, many repeats]
<http://familytreemagazine.com/article/top-75-state-websites-of-2012>

2009: <http://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/95-Best-State-Web-Sites-3> (-4 & -5)

DeathIndexes www.deathindexes.com

LinkPendum www.linkpendium.com

State Listing (bold are good examples)

Selected examples of digital records

Alabama Dept. of Archives and History <http://www.archives.state.al.us>
Civil War soldiers; 1867 voter registration

Alaska State Archives <http://archives.alaska.gov>
Naturalization abstracts, 1888-1972; Probate index, 1883-1960

Arizona Dept. of Health Services <http://genealogy.az.gov>
Certificates of birth, 1855-1937 and death, 1861-1962

Arkansas History Commission Archives <http://www.ark-ives.com>
Indexes to: Deaths & burials, 1819-1920; land 1853-1956; biographies. Conf. pensions

California Online Archives <http://www.oac.cdlib.org>
Land Case Files, 1852-1904; dozens of personal & family papers; photographs

California Digital Newspaper Collection <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc>

Colorado State Archives <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives>
County probate & divorce indexes; Historical Records Index (2.5 million entries)

Connecticut State Library Digital Coll. <http://cslib.cdmhost.com>
Personal and Family Vital Records; Newspapers; Account books, diaries & journals

Delaware Digital Archives <http://archives.delaware.gov/exhibits/exhibits-toc.shtml>
Civil War Records; county naturalization records; photographs