Tips for Descendant Research

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The goal of descendant research is to determine both the identities and locations of lender descendants so communication can be established. In regard to old loans, museums are tasked with conducting a "reasonable search" for the lender or their heirs. Therefore, throughout the entire process, it is critical to document every step in the unlikely event that the museum is asked to justify that it did indeed conduct a diligent search. The amount of effort put into the search should be commensurate with the estimated value of the object (i.e. do not spend 20 hours researching a lender's heirs for a glass vase that is worth $20).

The geographic lender constituency for most museums can be divided into local, national and international segments; and, although the search process basically involves the same steps toward discovery, the tools available vary.

These types of records can be very helpful in any search:

- Probate records
- Telephone directories
- Real estate records
- Vital (death) records

Other records can also be helpful depending on the lender including:

- Social register lists
- Cemetery records
- Records of personal or professional organizations with which the lender was associated

If your museum does not have a library that can assist with descendant research, reach out to your local public library. Public libraries assist genealogists with their personal research frequently, which uses many of the same online tools and databases. I have attached an example of a handout from Toledo's Public Library that outlines both national and local online resources. Your local public library likely has something similar.

Some tips:

- Probate records are maintained on the county government level, so you need to determine in which county a person's estate may have been probated and search that county's website.
- Online telephone directories are unfortunately becoming more unreliable as many people abandon their landlines and switch completely to cellular service.
- The Social Security Death Index is helpful to determine whether a lender has passed away.

Descendant research is least complex when it centers on lenders who had connections to the same locality as the museum. This is because descendants also may continue to reside in that community, and may even have continuing involvement with a museum or other community institutions. A good beginning point for identifying descendants is to consult newspaper obituaries, census records, cemetery records, etc. Obituaries and cemetery records (such as can be found in local library databases or on websites like *Find a Grave*) can deliver the identities of descendants living at the time of a lender's demise, and those identities can become the first stepping stone of a search. The *googling* of descendant names also can bring up articles from old newspapers, including society page engagement and wedding announcements, accounts of travels, recognitions, and other anecdotal information that often contains descendant names. These are particularly useful when searching for female descendants whose names can change with marriage. It is also extremely helpful when dealing with local lenders to identify a staff person or close contact who has lived in the community for a long time and is in tune with the social network of the locale; potential people who can assist include development officers, docents and other donors.

However, lenders often have little connection with the communities in whose museums their loans have been placed, having been motivated by a museum's reputation in specific fields, by a friend or business associate's involvement with an institution, etc. In many instances, such lenders enjoyed a degree of national celebrity – perhaps within an academic discipline, a business category, or in the public sector. Again, by *googling* a name, frequently personal information – the names of spouses, children, etc. – will be revealed. Sometimes a lender-descendant search reaches an international scale as one becomes involved with art dealers and ex-patriates. Although the search process essentially is the same, the kind of specific resources can vary by country.

Once you have successfully located an heir, the next step is to request information on any other remaining heirs. All the heirs must agree as to who can physically claim the property. Make sure you have this decision documented in writing along with their names and current addresses. If the property being claimed is quite valuable, you may want to request both the lender's and his/her spouse's wills for verification of the appropriate heirs.

Given that the primary purpose of lender descendant research is to find physical locations of individuals often many generations distant, the reality is that regardless of how thorough a search was, it will not always lead to a good current address or telephone number. If all your meticulous searching yields no tangible results, you will have to resort to constructive notice. However, your documentation throughout the process will prove your diligence in satisfying the requirement of a reasonable search.

GENEALOGY ON THE INTERNET
TOLEDO-LUCAS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY, LOCAL-HISTORY & GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

General

Access Genealogy	www.accessgenealogy.com
**Ancestry ($)	www.ancestry.com (Library edition available in T-LCPL libraries)
Archives.com ($)	archives.com
Cyndi's List	www.cyndislist.com
Family Genealogy & History Internet Education Directory	www.academic-genealogy.com
**Family Search	www.familysearch.org
**Fold3 ($)	www.fold3.com
**Genealogy Bank ($)	www.genealogybank.com (T-LCPL databases)
GeneaNet	www.geneanet.org (International Databases, especially France)
Heritage Quest	Census records, family histories, Revolutionary War, PERSI
	Available from home with barcode and pin number
**My Heritage	www.myheaitage.com
My Trees.com ($)	www.mytrees.com
*Olive Tree Genealogy	www.olivetreegenealogy.com
Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness	http://raogk.org
**RootsWeb	www.rootsweb.ancestry.com
*U.S. Gen Web	www.usgenweb.org
We Relate	www.werelate.org
*WorldGenWeb	www.worldgenweb.org
World Vital Records	www.worldvitalrecords.com

Lucas County

T-LCPL	www.toledolibrary.org (photos, obits 1990-present)
Toledo's Attic	www.toledosattic.org
Lucas County Auditor	www.co.lucas.oh.us/real_estate/AERIS/aerismain.asp
Toledo Blade	www.toledoblade.com
Digital	https://news.google.com/newspapers?hl=en
Oregon Cemeteries	http://oregonohio.org/cemeteries
Toledo State Hospital Cemetery	www.toledostatehospitalcemetery.org
Genealogy- Northwest Ohio	http://nwogenalogy.blogspot.com

Ohio

BGSU	www.bgsu.edu/library/cac/index.htm
Cleveland Public Library Obituaries	check google
Ohio Death Index, 1958-2007)	available on Ancestry & Family Search
Hayes Presidential Library	http://index.rbhayes.org
Ohio Dept. of Health	www.odh.ohio.gov/
Ohio Genealogical Society $	www.ogs.org
OHGenWeb	www.ohgenweb.org
Ohio Historical Society	www.ohiohistory.org (Death Certificate Index,1913-1944; Roster of Ohio Soldier 1812)
Ohio in the Civil War	www.ohiocivilwar.com
Ohio Memory Project	www.ohiomemory.org

Michigan

Genealogical Death Indexing System	www.mdch.state.mi.us/gendisx/search.htm
Library of Michigan	www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan
	www.michigan.gov/familyhistory

Cemeteries

*Find a Grave   www.findagrave.com

*Billion Graves   billiongraves.com
Interment.net   http://www.interment.net
Funeral Home Directory   www.funeralhomedirectory.com

Immigration

Ellis Island   www.ellisisland.org; libertyellisfoundation.org
Castle Garden   www.castlegarden.org
Passenger lists   http://stevemorse.org; www.theshiplist.com

Land Records

Bureau of Land Management   www.glorecords.blm.gov

Libraries

Allen County, IN, Public Library   http://www.genealogycenter.org
**Library of Congress   www.loc.gov/ (Chronicle America)
**National Archives   http://archives.gov/research/genealogy

Lineage Societies

Daughters of the American Revolution   www.dar.org
New England Ancestors   www.newenglandancestors.org (T-LCPL home page)

Maps

Mapquest   www.mapquest.com or www.maps.google.com
USGS Mapping Information   geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnispublic
Global Gazetteer   www.fallingrain.com/world
*Ravenstein Atlas Des Deutshen Reichs   uxdc,library.wisc.edu/.collections/germans/ravenstein

Military

*Civil War Soldiers & Sailors System   www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm

American Battle Monuments Commission www.abmc.gov/

Newspapers

Google news   http://news.google.com (Blade, Newsbee & other cities)
Newspaper abstracts $ www.newspaperabstracts.com
Historical newspapers   see T-LCPL web page
Newspapers.com   www.newspapers.com

Patents

USPTO   www.upsto.gov ; http://www.google.com/patents
European Patent Office   www.epo.org

People finders

Search Systems Public Records Locator   http://www.searchsystems.net
Zabasearch $ www.zabasearch.com
Vital Records   www.vitalrecordsus.com

Ethnic groups

African Americans   www.afrigeneas.com
British Isles   *http://genuki.org.uk | www.a2a.org.uk |
          **http://www.findmypast.co.uk | www.freebmd.rg.uk/
Canada   http://www.archives.ca|
Eastern European   *http://feefhs.org
 Croatia   http://www.croation-geealogy.com/
 Hungarian   www.bogardi.com | www.rootsweb.com/~wghungar
 Polish   http://www.pgsa.org http://polishroots.org

France	www.genealogie.com/
German Roots	http://www.palam.org | www.geocities.com/german_genealogy
	www.germanroots.com |
Irish	www.local.ie.genealogy | www.rootsweb.com/%7Enirwgw
	www.irelandgenweb.com
Italian	http://www.cimorelli.com/pie
Jewish	www.jewishgen.org | www.cjh.org/family/genealogyrecords.cfm
	www.yadvashem.org
Mexico	**Mexico.archives.com**
Native Americans	http://www.indians.org | www.accessgenealogy.com/native
Norway	http://www.arkivverket.no/eng/Digitalarkivet
Scotland	www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/ | http://www.findmypast.co.uk |
	archirchive.scotsman.com
Spain	www.gen00m.com
Sweden	www.augustana.edu/administration/swenson | www.genline.com **$**
Google translator	

BLOGS

Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter	http://blog.eogn.com; The Genealogue www.genealogue.com