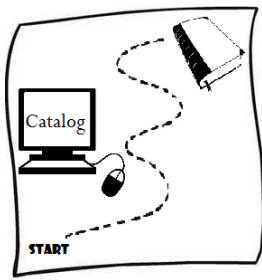


Using the Catalog to Navigate the Local History / Genealogy

Department



The library catalog is your roadmap to locating the wealth of information found in the Local History / Genealogy section of the library. Whether you're a first-time user or an expert catalog searcher, below are some useful tips to help you use the catalog to your advantage!

• **Search GEOGRAPHICALLY**

When dealing with items related to family history, location is very important. That's why the books in the Local History / Genealogy department are organized differently than other parts of the library: **by place**. Be sure to include the place in your search to better locate materials you are trying to find:

Ex. Search *Onondaga County church records*, instead of just *church records*. Or *Ulster County newspapers*, instead of just *newspapers*.

• **Try the KEYWORD search**

Sometimes it's assumed that the best way to find a book is by title or author. But in regards to local history, it's often easier to find a book by subject or topic instead of by author or title. When using a keyword search in the catalog, change the Search by box to "All Fields" to perform a keyword search. This will bring back results for all materials related to your search terms. For instance, try searching for a place along with the word "genealogy."

Ex. Search keywords *Onondaga county genealogy* or use surnames you are researching, *Smith family* or *Smith genealogy*.

Think broadly about your search terms! If your search is not successful, change your keywords.

• **City, town, village, county, or state?** **Judge the JURISDICTION**

Being aware of jurisdiction, or level of authority, is also helpful when searching for materials. For example if your ancestors lived in the city of Syracuse, they also lived in Onondaga County and New York State: all at the same time! If you don't find the records you're looking for by searching for the city, try searching under the name of the county or state; the records might be there, just under a different jurisdiction. Towns and villages can be confusing in New York. Check to make sure your geography is accurate and you are searching all possible locations.

• **How SPECIFIC are your searches?**

When searching the catalog be aware of the terms you are using. Adding more words to your search will make it more specific and limit the number of results. On the flip side, if you get back few results, you can broaden your search by simplifying it to just two or three words.

Ex. For a more narrow and specific search try *Onondaga county birth marriage death*. For a broader search, and more results try just *Onondaga birth*.

• **Tame those WILDCARDS**

The asterisk wildcard (denoted by an *) is a helpful search tool you can use when searching the catalog. It represents one or more missing characters in a word, and can improve your searches. For example, performing a search with "geneal*" will bring back results for the words genealogy, genealogies and genealogical.

• **Meet the NEIGHBORS**

After locating a book in the catalog and finding it on the shelf, look at the other books that are next to it. Because books are grouped by place and subject in the department, browsing through items nearby on the shelf may help you find additional information related to your search. And don't forget to Ask A Librarian!

Additional Information:

For additional help on using the library catalog, click on the Tips and Instructions at the bottom of the catalog search screen at: www.onlib.org/web/catalog