

# You Need a Search Strategy – Maximizing Your Results with Online Genealogical Databases

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## Hurdles in Producing Genealogical Databases

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- Indexing and Keying Challenges
  - Paleography
  - Language
  - Typefaces
  - Context
- Original Document Problems
  - Second and third generation copies
  - Name abbreviations
  - Transcription and spelling
  - Deliberate lies
  - Relationships
  - Suspicion and fear
  - Damage
  - Poor preservation

## Database Gotchas

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- Incomplete data
- Databases are often works in progress
- Field standardization (aka “normalization”)
- Language and translation
- Image digitization

## Search Engine Limitations

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- Name variants
- Phonetic search techniques
- Place names
- One-size fits all
- Too many results
- Not enough results

## HOW DO WE COMPENSATE? – Trying Harder and Smarter

### Searching with Name Variants – Given Names

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- Nicknames
- Middle Names
- Uniqueness
- Abbreviations

### Searching with Name Variants – Surnames

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- Cultural differences
- Surname variants
- Surname translation

### Searching with Places

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- Place names change over time
- Place boundaries change over time
- Political control and jurisdiction of places change over time

### Searching with Dates and Ages

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- Dates are often estimates
- Ages are often estimates
- Honest mistakes and deliberate lies

### Going the Extra Mile

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- Searching with other fields
- Date ranges
- Clever combinations
- Wildcards
- Read and study database descriptions
- Historical context

### Searching Free Text Collections

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- OCR is far from perfect
- Keywords vs. extracted fields vs. metadata.