A Guide to *Ancestry*

About Ancestry
Ancestry.com is the largest online genealogy database in the world. As of the end of 2013, Ancestry provides access to over 12.7 billion records. These records come from partnerships with libraries, archives, historical societies, churches and many other organizations.

Ancestry is also home to more than 20 million user-contributed family trees — public trees can be browsed by all ancestry users. As a whole, Ancestry's collection of records is unparalleled, which makes it a universal source of genealogical information. It's the best place to start for those just beginning their family history research.

Navigation Bar
Home
Clicking *Home* when on another page of Ancestry Library Edition will bring you back to the home page.

Search
Clicking here will open a drop-down list of links to different search forms: *All Categories* is the **basic search form**, but you can also select from *Census & Voter Lists*, *Birth, Marriage & Death*, *Military*, and *Immigration & Travel* to use the specific search form for those record types. The **Card Catalog** (see below) is also accessible here.

Message Boards
Here you can view interactions between Ancestry members including research questions, volunteer look-up solicitation, and collaboration between genealogist researching the same topics, geographic regions, and families. (*A personal account is needed in order to contribute and interact with other members on these boards*.)

Learning Center
Allows access to research aids, tips and tricks, and informational material from the experts at Ancestry.

Charts and Forms
Download and print genealogy forms like ancestral charts, research calendars, family group sheets, and source summaries prepared by Ancestry.com. You can also find blank census forms here.

New Collections
Clicking here connects you with a Card Catalog list of the newest and most recently updated record collections available on Ancestry. Checking this is a good way to stay up to date with new resources in the database.

Searching

Basic Search Form
This form can be accessed either by clicking on Search in the navigation bar and then on *All Categories* or simply by clicking on the green *Begin Searching* button on the main page. The basic search form will allow you to *search all of Ancestry's records simultaneously*.

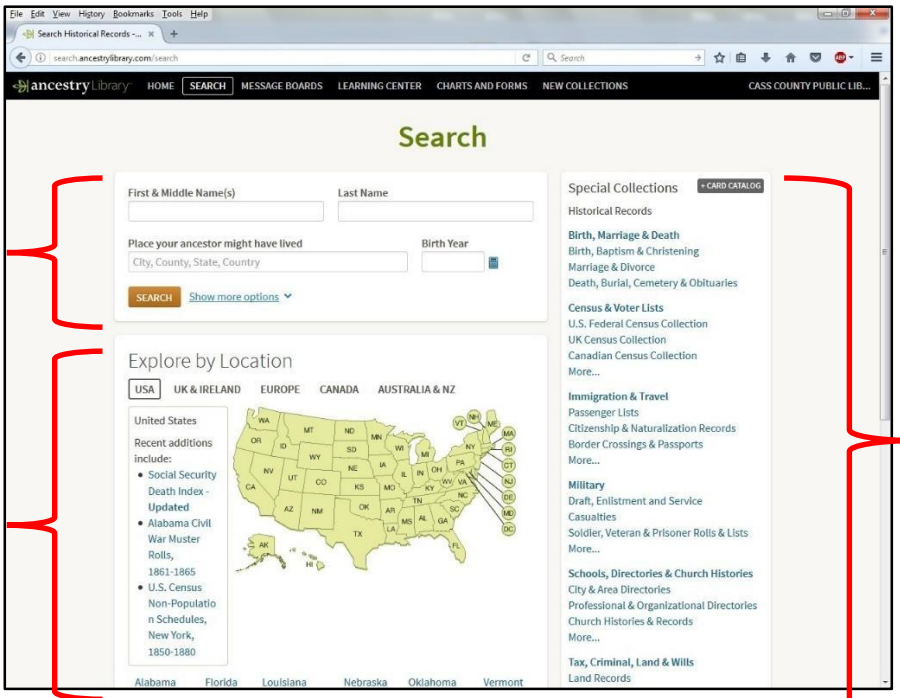
Pros	**Cons**
Gives a cross-section of Ancestry's records	Searches for common names can be ineffective
Best place to start with new research	Amount of results can be overwhelming Can
help locate basic records quickly	Requires additional filtering of results

Beginner's Search Form Tips
- Before searching, make sure you have the basic information for the individual you are searching for; fill out a basic family tree first to *clarify names, dates, and locations so you are prepared to fill out the search form*

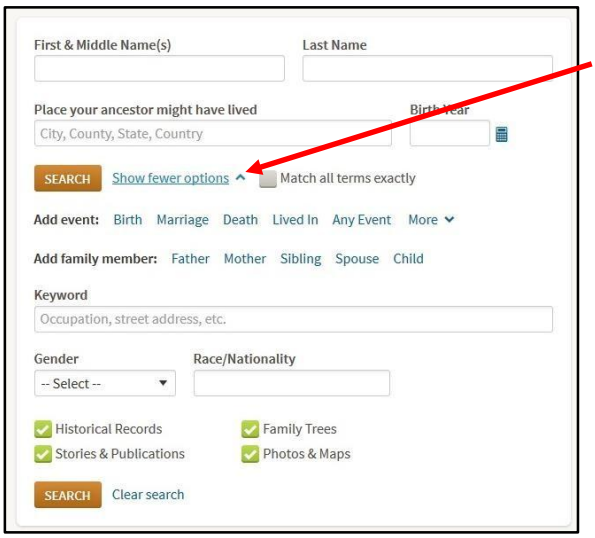
- **Start with a general search** – *a first and last name, location (city and/or county, state), and date of birth*
- Keep in mind any possible *spelling variations* and try all of them to see if it changes your results

Search Form

Links to search forms specific to *records from a particular location*



Links to the search forms for *specific record types*



Advanced Search

In order to access the longer version of the basic search form, click on "***Show more options***" next to the orange *Search* button.

This will allow you to provide more detailed information and conduct a more specific search. These new options include the date and location of a life event (to find records related to that event), and family members' names (to find records where those members are included, i.e. census records).

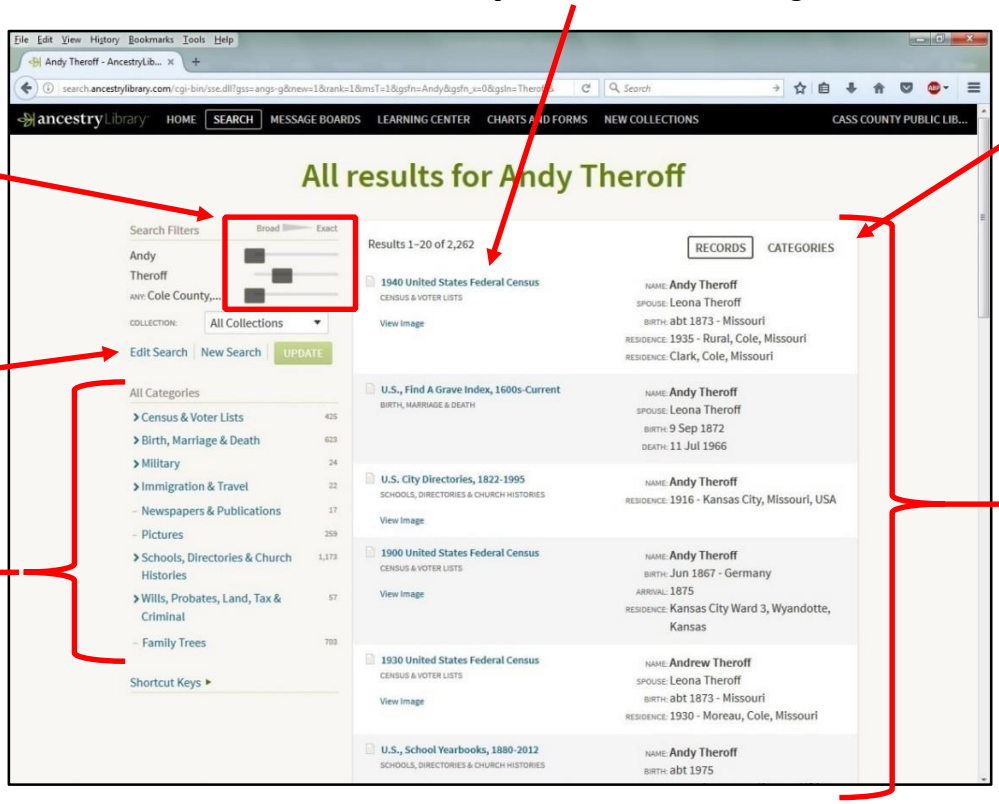
Here you can also *determine the types of results that are included*. If you don't want Ancestry members' family trees to be included in your search, remove the check in its box. Alternatively, if you only want to see results from members' family trees, uncheck all other boxes.

An Important Note on Filling Out the Search Form

Filling out <u>every line</u> of the search form with detailed information is rarely beneficial. If the record itself doesn't include that information, then searching for it will not help. It is a common mistake beginner's make with Ancestry – and it is why basic search results often have census and directory records at the top. For example, if you include a mother and father's name in your search, it may help Ancestry put a census record where they are living together up at the top of the search results. However, doing so will also push records that do not include that information much lower in the results or may not include them in the results at all. The same goes for including middle names and especially for dates and locations of life events – unless you are looking for records specifically related to their death, it is often not helpful to include a date and place of death into the search form.

Search Results Page

Hold your cursor over the record title to view a preview without clicking



Filter sliders (adjust *from broad to exact* matches)

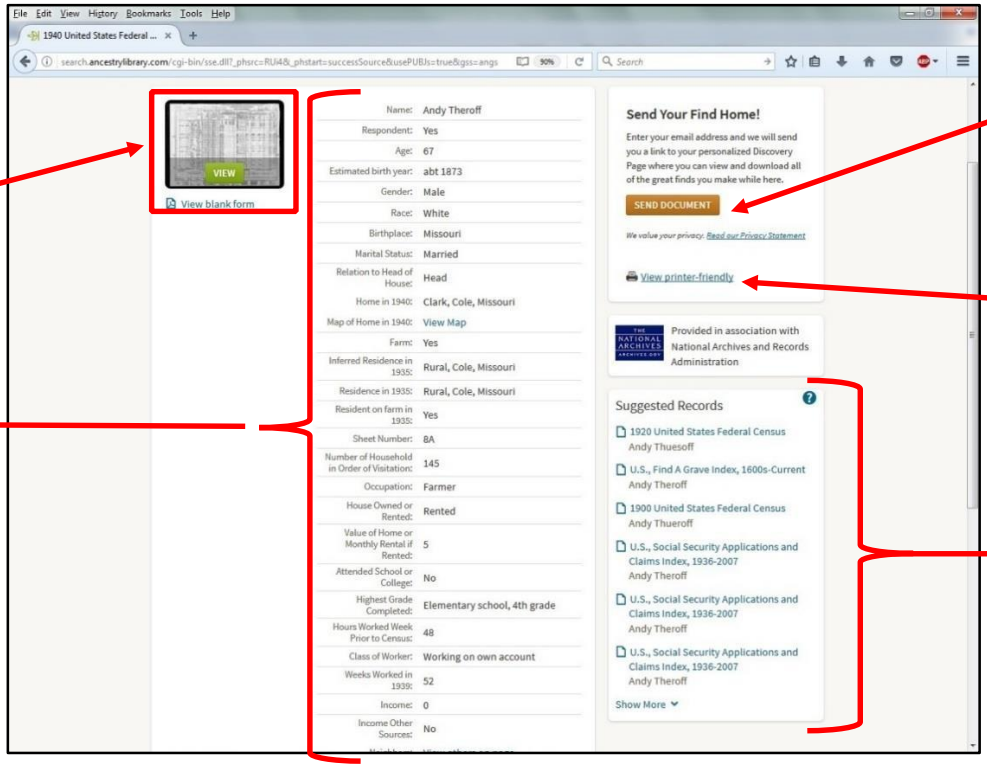
Click here to edit the information entered into the search form

Click here to filter results by *record type*

Click here to view results grouped by record type (shows a list of record collections)

Results are listed by relevance based on the information you entered into the search form

Record Summary Page



Click here to view the document (*not always available*)

Transcription of document (only as accurate as the transcriber; always confirm by looking at the image, if possible)

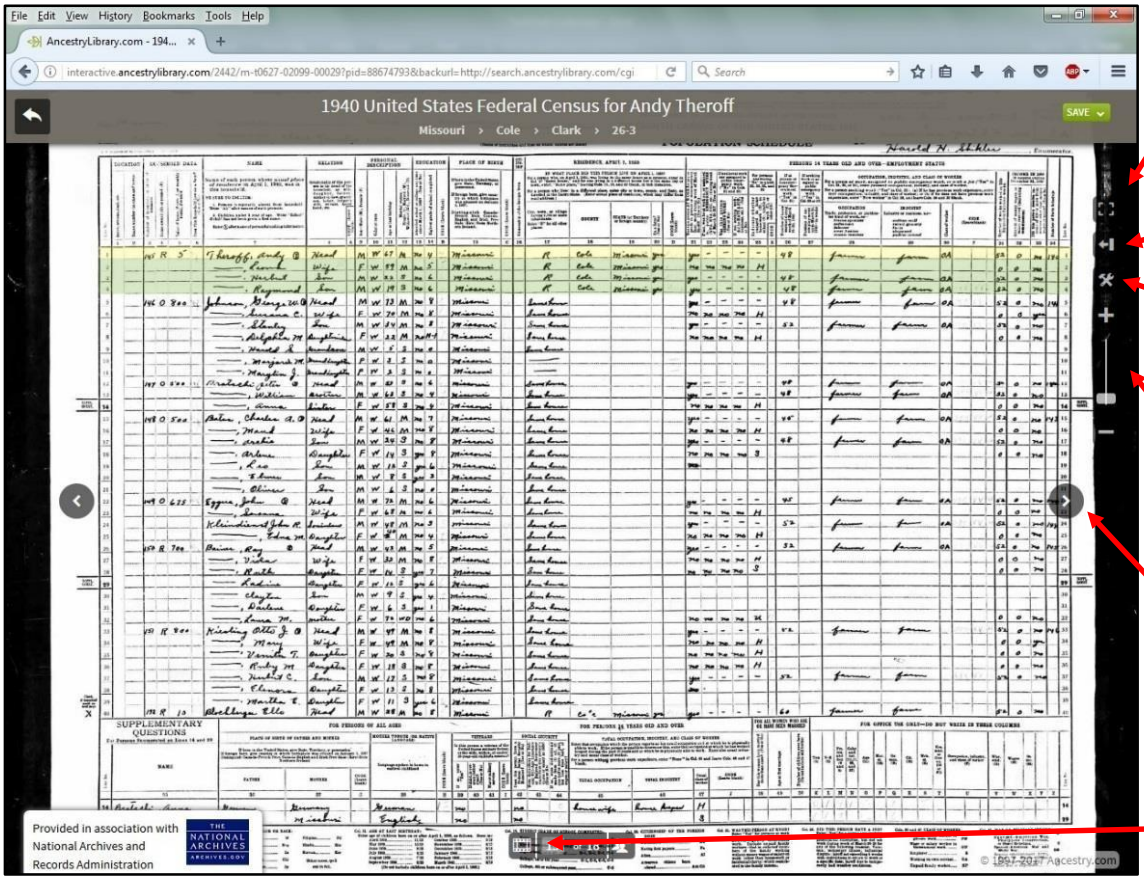
Click here to send a link to this record home via email

Click here to view a *printer-friendly version* before printing (*recommended*)

Suggested Records (may or may not be same person)

Viewing Digital Images

Using the Image Viewer



Full screen view

Toggles transcription on/off

Tools
(flip and rotate image, invert to negative, etc.)

Zoom slider

Click here to go to the *next image* in series; the arrow on left goes back
(helpful when browsing)

Filmstrip
(helpful when browsing and looking at multiple images in a collection)

Saving Documents

Any documents or images you locate can be accessed again later from home by clicking on the green **Save** *in the top right corner of the screen*. You have the option to save a copy to the computer (and a flash drive) or send a direct link to the image to yourself via email to be viewed at home later.

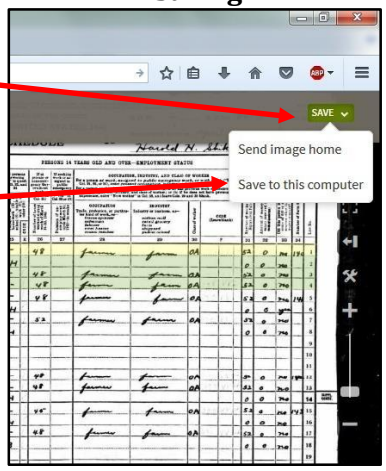
Printing Documents

To print the image, click on the *Tools* button located above the Zoom slider on the right side of the screen. You will be prompted to print the whole image or just the zoomed portion visible on the screen. The window will also notify you whether to print in *portrait* or *landscape orientation*, which can be adjusted by clicking the *Properties* button when the print window opens before clicking the *Print* button.

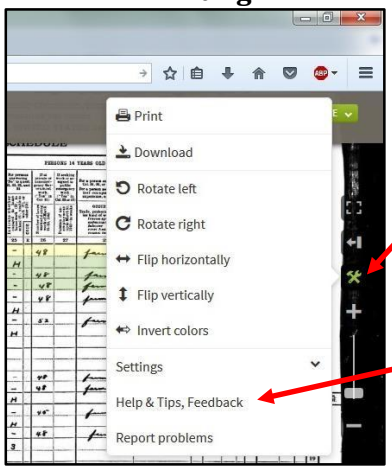
Saving

Save button

Click here to *save a copy of the image to a flash drive*



Printing



Tools button

Still have questions? Click here for more help using the viewer

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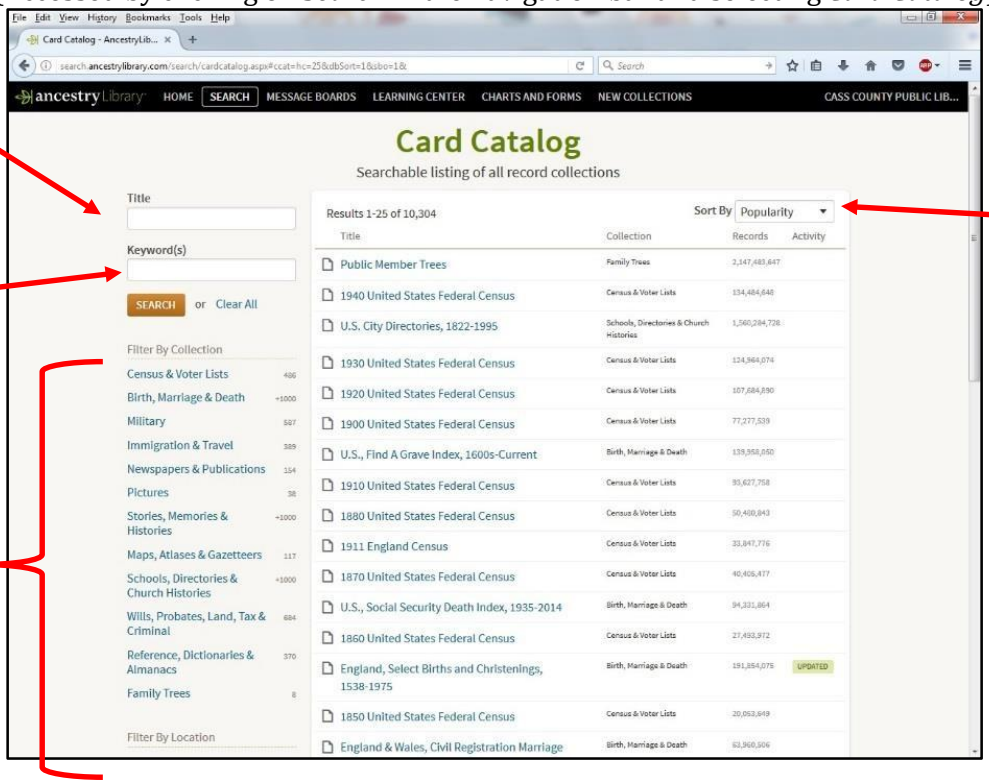
Card Catalog

(Accessed by clicking on *Search* in the navigation bar and selecting *Card Catalog*)

Search by title

Search by keyword

Filter results here by selecting a specific record type, location, date, and language



Sort search results here (*by popularity, title, date added, date updated, and record count*)

Using the Card Catalog

The Card Catalog allows you to search for specific collections of records (i.e. *1930 United States Federal Census* or *Missouri Marriages, 1766-1983*) and also manually browse for record collections. This way, you can discover new and unique collections of records on Ancestry that may not show up in the results of a basic search. The Card Catalog can be searched two ways, a title search and keyword search. Also, the filter column on the left side helps you when browsing for collections as well. It allows you to filter collection results based on record type, location, date, and language.

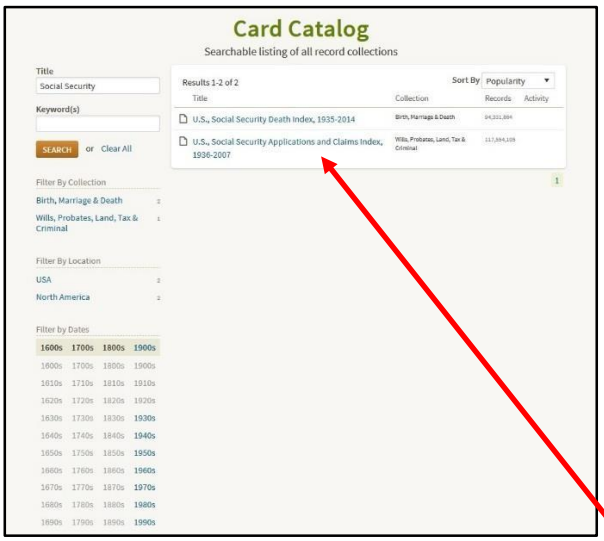
Title Search
This will provide a list of all record collections with the search term in the title. If you enter multiple words here, they *must be an exact match* to the way they appear in the collection title.

Keyword Search
This will search for the term(s) you've entered in both the title and the description of the collection. *It does not have to be an exact match*.

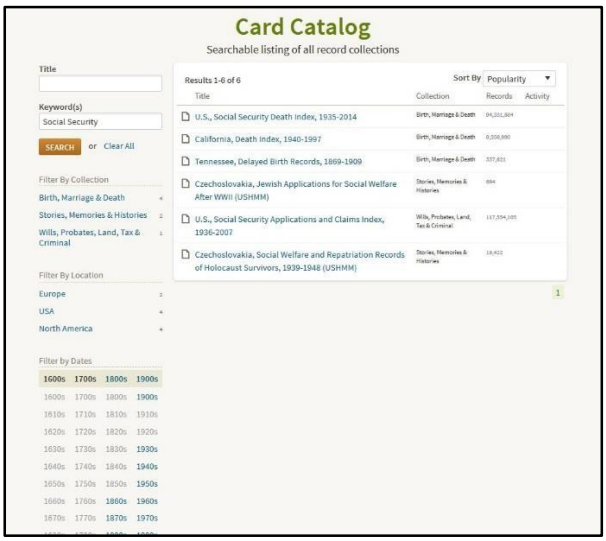
Note: It can be beneficial to try searching one way and then another to see how it changes the search results.

Example:

Title Search: *Social Security*
Only includes collections where the words "Social Security" appear



Keyword Search: *Social Security*
Includes all collections where the words "social" and/or "security" appear in either the title and the description



Once you find a record collection you wish to search, click on the title to go to the search form for that specific collection.