

Expanding Your German Research Beyond Ancestry and FamilySearch

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Description

This presentation will help German researchers learn about some powerful resources beyond the “standards” so you can chip away at brick walls in your German research. We’ll review each resource and talk about how to navigate them even if you don’t speak German.

German Research Resources

Archion: Paid service that provides online access to church records, primarily Lutheran (a few Catholic, Mennonite, Reform), which may not be in Ancestry and FamilySearch.

- www.archion.de/en/

Matricula: Free service that provides online access to church records, primarily Catholic. Also includes records from Austria, Luxemburg, Slovenia. Again, may include records not available in Ancestry or FamilySearch.

- <https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/>

Meyers Gazetteer: Online gazetteer of locations in the German Empire (1871-1918), including maps and key information about civil and religious jurisdictions. It’s a great resource for identifying where your ancestor came from, and where the archives would be that might have more records.

- www.meyersgaz.org

Kartenmeister: Database of German place locations east of current-day German borders. You can search by German or Polish name of the location.

- www.kartenmeister.com/preview/databaseuwe.asp

FamilySearch Wiki on Germany: Great source of information on all things related to genealogy in Germany. It's also the best source to identify the right state, local, and church archives that might have additional information on your ancestors. Site includes contact information (websites, email, postal address) and some form letters to help you communicate in German.

- https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Genealogy
- https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Archives_and_Libraries

Ortsippenbücher or Ortfamilienbücher: These books focus on one town/village, and are a compilation of all family data for people who lived in that village, generally using church records as a source. Pro – these are printed and easy to read and show all family connections. Con – they're transcribed from the original records, which creates the possibility for error. But using these can help you more easily locate your ancestors in the original records. Where to find these books:

- Purchase: Try eBay (www.ebay.com) or Abe Books (www.abebooks.com)
- Libraries: Worldcat (www.worldcat.org) can identify which libraries have the one you're searching for. Of course, many are in the Family History Library (search Catalog at www.familysearch.org). The St. Louis County Library also has a large collection (www.slcl.org/content/ortssippenb%C3%BCcher-familienb%C3%BCcher-held-history-and-genealogy-department).
- Online at CompGen (aka Genealogy.net): Compgen has nearly 1,000 of these books digitized and online (<https://ofb.genealogy.net/>)

CompGen aka Genealogy.net: This is an association in Germany that has provided online genealogy data since 1990. Site is in German; use Chrome to translate. www.comngen.de Some of the key parts of this site are:

- DigiBib (Digital Library): Digitized books such as directories, government and church histories, etc. <http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Portal:DigiBib> or www.digibib.genealogy.net/viewer/index/
- Networking: Includes ways to connect with others, including discussion forums and how-to videos www.comngen.de/kommunizieren/
- Databases: Includes searchable databases that include gravestones, war casualty lists, directories, individual members' trees, etc. www.comngen.de/researchieren/#datenbanken
- GenWiki: Includes articles on many German genealogy-related topics <http://wiki-de.genealogy.net/Hauptseite>
- Name distribution map: Enables you to map the primary locations your surname was found in 1890 and 1996 www.comngen.de/researchieren/#namenskarte

Geogen: This is another website to map locations where your surnames are found, based on current-day information (directories). Provides links to similar maps for nearby countries.



- Current version is 4: <https://geogen.stoepel.net/>
- Legacy version (with more functionality): <https://legacy.stoepel.net/en>

MyHeritage: This is a commercial genealogy site that provides DNA testing and some indexes and records. Although their record collection is small compared to Ancestry or FamilySearch, it's worth checking. It is also the most popular DNA test in Europe, which may help you find distant cousins in Europe.

- www.myheritage.com

German Handwriting: There's no substitute for learning German handwriting to help you in your research. But one helpful hint is to use this online handwriting generator to see what the name or village you're searching for should look like, enabling you to scan records more quickly.

- Kurrent (first choice to click on) and Sütterlin (third choice to click on) generator www.deutsche-handschrift.de/adsschreiben.php#schriftfeld
- Fraktur generator <https://fancytextdecorator.com/bold-fraktur-text-generator>
- General information on the handwriting and links to tutorials www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Handwriting

Name	Description	Example
Kurrentschrift	German cursive handwriting	
Sütterlin	1911 handwriting modernization	
Fraktur	Typeface used until 1941	