Using the Emerson History & Genealogy Center's Print Collection

Emerson History & Genealogy Center | St. Louis County Library
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Objectives

- Learn about the history of the collection
- Discover what it contains
- Explore how to find what you are looking for

When to Use Print Resources

- Books can give you names of ancestors, connections, context, "meat on the bones," additional places to look, and more
- Start with online sources–Ancestry.com/Ancestry Library Edition, FamilySearch.org, Newspapers.com, etc.
- Move into print collection when you have more specifics on surnames and places

Emerson History & Genealogy Center

- Located in the Clark Family Branch
- Started in 1998 as "Special Collections" in a storeroom of the Headquarters building
- On map in 2000 when acquired the National Genealogical Society's collection
- Name changed to "History & Genealogy at St. Louis County Library" in 2008
- Called "Emerson History & Genealogy Center" since 2024
- NGS collection contains over 30,000 books reviewed by the society and circulate
- Other named collections: St. Louis Genealogical Society Collection, Julius K. Hunter & Friends African American Research Collection, Lewis Bunker Rohrbach Collection, Joyce A. Reisinger Collection, William C.E. and Bessie Becker Collection, Mary Berthold Collection, St. Louis Jewish Genealogical Society Collection
- Budget for acquisitions, strategic about how we spend tax money
- Try to meet the needs of patrons/researchers, regularly review
- Currently houses 118,665 books

Scope/Areas of Concentration

- "The History & Genealogy Department collection consists of resources that support local history and genealogical research pertaining to St. Louis, Missouri, the colonial United States, US westward migration, and immigration to Missouri. Items selected for the collection are chosen for their genealogical or historical value and their practical long-term preservation and access."
- "United States and international selection is regularly reviewed and revised to ensure locations of collection development meet contemporary needs."
- Collection is strongest for:
  States east of Missouri and migration routes into Missouri
  International locations of heavy immigration to Missouri
  Items that are still under copyright

Highlights /Examples

- Guides
  Teach how to do something
  Methodology
  Ethnicity
  Types of records
  Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy and *Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree* examples

- Periodicals
  Regularly published from genealogical and historical societies
  Contain family research, reprints of family bibles, biographies, photos, indexes, queries, and more
  Over 1200 titles, actively subscribe to around 300
  Use the PERSI index at the Allen County Public Library's website
  Shelved separately at front of collection
  The New England Historical and Genealogical Register example

- Family Histories
  Written history of a family
  Published or bound
  Many different formats
  Over 17,000
  Alphabetical order so easy to find
  Snipes Family of South Carolina and Connections with the Early Virginia Colony, Barbados and England example

- Ortsfamilienbücher
  German town/parish books
  Compiled using church and other records
  Utilize numbers and symbols
  Like a family history, but for a German town
  Around 5000, largest collection in the U.S.
  Ortsfamilienbücher List by Place
  Familienbuch Dieburg, 1603-1900 example

- Military
  All conflicts
  Soldier and pension lists
  Regimental histories
  Journals and diaries
  Nonfiction
  Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies and *Germans in the Civil War* examples

- States, Counties & Towns
  Histories similar to Goodspeed
  Will & probate abstracts
  Vital records
  Cemetery records
  Newspaper clippings
  Dewey Decimal System puts areas together geographically
  A Fairfield Sketchbook and *Fairfield County Marriages, 1775-1879 as Implied in Fairfield County, S.C. Probate Records* examples

- St. Louis/Missouri
  History and genealogy books related to St. Louis area
  Call numbers 977.866 & 977.865
  SLCL Local History Indexes
  Florissant, Missouri and *Beer, Brats & Baseball: German-Americans in St. Louis* example

- Other Significant Print Resources
  History nonfiction
  Immigration lists
  Norwegian Bygdebøker
  French Canadian resources
  Other countries and so much more
  St. Louis City and County directories now digitized on the SLCL Digital Archives

The Dewey Decimal System

- Dewey Decimal Classification, known as the Dewey Decimal System, is a proprietary library classification system which allows books to be added to a library in the appropriate location based on subject
- Gives each book an “address”
- First published by Melvil Dewey in 1876
- Also referred to as “call number”
- Different genealogy libraries may have different call numbers for the same book
- Library of Congress is another cataloging system
- Many of the center’s books are older and require original cataloging by two H&G catalogers
- *History of Cecil County Maryland* example

Using the Catalog

- St. Louis County Library Online Catalog
- SLCL (St. Louis County Library) & SLPL (St. Louis Public Library) catalogs are combined
- Gives genealogists double the resources
- Make sure you are looking at SLCL, but SLPL has a wonderful collection as well
- Cardholders can pick up and return items in either system

- “R”=reference, no “R”=circulating
- Blue dot on spin=circulating
- Best to search catalog before visit, but catalog computer and Dewey county guide are available
- York County, Pennsylvania example

Moving the Shelves

- Books located on high density, movable shelves or “stacks”
- Researchers are welcome to move the shelves according to the posted instructions or feel free to ask a staff member for help
- Signs with types of books/call numbers on ends
- Oversized books can be found along outer walls

Research Spaces & Copying/Scanning

- Several tables with built in chargers for research
- Copy machine available at 10¢/page, SLCL cardholders have $5 in print credit each month
- Zeta and SimpleScan are free to use, phone apps are great, too
- Please allow staff to reshelve by placing books on blue carts

Other Options

- Lookup request
- Worldcat.org
- SLCL Interlibrary Loan
- Books before 1930 digitized on websites like Archive.org and FamilySearch.org

Final Thoughts

- Print collection is a great way to advance or corroborate your genealogy research
- The Emerson History & Genealogy has over 100,000 books
- Caution: may find a lot or very little depending on time period, place, ethnicity, etc.
- We hope to see you soon!

St. Louis County **Library**