

FamilySearch - What's Coming

This presentation is about the products and services of FamilySearch. I am not an official spokesperson for FamilySearch and do not intend to make any announcements about future products. However, several items have already been announced, previewed, or tested. I will show some where you can find out more about these official pre-release products or services.

The most up to date information with links to prototypes, alpha and beta tests is <http://labs.familysearch.org>. Here, present and past projects are listed with links to the tests or prototypes. There are also blogs (<http://labs.familysearch.org/blog>) which give information about what the tests are intended to do and what progress is being made on making it more widely available. The following are current links on FamilySearch Labs:

RecordSearch – the result of the project to digitize the Family History Library's collection of microfilm. Includes several significant technology improvements (Daims viewer, search). It is an amazing collection of hundreds of millions of digitized records, growing weekly. They are organized by region of the world, with a list for each country. Each project has a description, telling which records are included and whether the project is complete or still in progress.

Most records are indexed, but some unindexed records are added if available before the index is available. Because of double blind extraction methods, indexes are among the best available. The future is to include more and more records as rapidly as possible. As projects are put on the pilot site, notices are also added telling what has been added. You can view the notices at <http://labs.familysearch.org/blog>. Record search can be found at <http://pilot.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html>.

Family Tree – a viewer which allows you to navigate from yourself, to your ancestors, and beyond. Users of the Family Tree collectively and collaboratively organize information into its appropriate node on this shared tree. Ultimately, each node will be a folder containing or linking to all known information for an individual. Navigate the tree. Open the Folders to discover additional information about individuals. Search for records not found on your part of the tree. It requires Adobe Flash player—check it out at <http://labs.familysearch.org/familytree/Main.html>.

FamilySearch Alpha – a preview of what's planned for layout (and some content) of the new FamilySearch website. Tutorials and videos are included. Your feedback about the new layout will be appreciated (and listened to!).

Forums – a project to provide the most up to date information to anyone who uses FamilySearch products to work on their family history. Through the Forums anyone can ask questions about product features, research techniques, hints and tips, or even about specific families in specific locations. And anyone who knows the answer can reply. Instead of a limited number of support agents available to answer the questions there will be tens of thousands of users collaborating together. There will even be special forums for Family History Consultants, or leaders assigned to foster local family history participation. Come participate and give us your feedback. The more who use it the better the information. Now at <http://forums.familysearch.org>.

Research Wiki – forms a community of research experts and interested genealogists that share up to date information on how to research sources for information about your ancestors. Special finding aids and tools from the Family History Library and other archives around the world are being gathered and placed in the Wiki to help you in your research. The larger the community the more useful the data is, so come and be a part. Navigate to <http://wiki.familysearch.org>.

England Jurisdictions 1851 – a project which simplifies research by consolidating jurisdiction data from many finding aids into a single searchable repository that can be accessed by clicking in a parish boundary. Features include contiguous parish and radius search lists and relevant jurisdictions as they existed in England in 1851. Data includes changes to parishes prior to 1851 and lists of non-conformist denominations in a parish. (requires Internet Explorer 7, Firefox 3, Safari 3 or newer), online at <http://maps.familysearch.org>.

Standard Finder (<http://204.9.231.95/stdfinder/PlaceStandardLookup.jsp>) displays standards for names, dates, and places. You can view what FamilySearch considers variant spellings of a surname, what nicknames are associated with which names (e.g., Biddy=Bridget), how place names are standardized, and standards for dates. A newly added feature displays the Family History Library Catalog for each state of the United States on a map in any of three different formats – Google Earth, Google Maps, or ArcReader.

FamilySearch Indexing – actually released into production at www.familysearchindexing.org. This is the volunteer project to index all of the FHL's microfilm.

Life Browser – a past prototype of a compelling way to display records and artifacts about a person. Includes video and audio files. The prototype was created around a few specific individuals as examples. Maps, documents, photos, and a video are included. See <http://labs.familysearch.org/lifebrowser/>.



Pedigree Viewer – See and interact with a large pedigree or descendency which comes from “new” FamilySearch or a GEDCOM which you upload. Surprising ability to navigate through a family pedigree in a new, unique way at <http://labs.familysearch.org/em/Main.html> (requires Adobe Flash Player)



Cooperation with other companies and individuals through APIs.

API stands for Application Programming Interface, but basically it’s a library of programs which specify how other programs can interact with it. Two years ago, FamilySearch announced that the new FamilyTree application on FamilySearch would have a set of APIs which would allow other programs and web sites to interact with the data in FamilySearch. Some of these sites are now working, and many more are in the development or pre-announcement stage.

Databases and websites other than FamilySearch will undoubtedly also work with APIs, which will increase the ability to interact. Along with this comes the ability for a family database to interact with other programs. Thus, one can store scanned personal documents on one site while having their family history data on another site which points to the documents on the first site. One’s family history data online at FamilySearch or another online site can point to documents stored on the archive website rather than having to copy and store the document on their own website.

One great new tool is called GenSeek, which will launch sometime soon at www.genseek.com. In partnership with FamilySearch, GenSeek plans to create a social Family History Library Catalog (FHLC 2.0). Plans are for the new release of the FHLC to:

- increase search relevancy,
- mashup with other things,
- add user-generated content
- be social - build a community around it, adding support and direction
- tie into other media and platforms (mobile, facebook, etc.)
- have an API which facilitates 3rd party development

For examples of other online applications which tie to newFamilySearch, see

- www.jamestowncousins.org,
- <http://journals.byu.edu>, or
- www.generationsmap.com.

In addition, there are a number of software products and web services from companies which have signed up as “FamilySearch Affiliates.” Each has a product which has been certified by FamilySearch to work with new FamilySearch. You can see a list of these products, together with a brief description of what each one does at:

<http://www.familysearch.org/eng/affiliates/index.html>.



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