



# Indexing – The Power to Change Lives

March 27, 2013 By Jen Anderson

<https://familysearch.org/blog/en/indexing-power-change-lives/>



Doing your own family history work can be a challenge—but even more so is getting someone else involved in doing his or her own work. Where is a great place to start? Indexing! Through indexing, a person is introduced to the majesty of discovering and honoring those who have gone before, he or she becomes familiar with handwriting, and is introduced to the information available on different record types. There is no better introduction to family history.

## Indexing is an Essential Part of Family History Work

We all know family history eventually requires some degree of research. Whether that means you find a record that has been indexed and is available on FamilySearch.org or you are visiting archives and parishes to thumb through old books and copying the record by hand, you are doing research. Searching through books and microfilm is extremely time consuming. Imagine if you could simply type a name into a computer and find every record available for that ancestor? This availability is something many can only dream of because there are countless record collections that are not currently searchable online. Indexing makes these simple searches possible. If searching for an ancestor becomes easier, it enables more people to submit names for temple work.

Consultants and stake indexing directors help make indexing possible. If you are currently serving as a stake indexing director, or are supporting one, we have a great new resource for you! The Family History Department and LDS.org have launched a [new callings page for stake indexing directors](#). There are four main resources available for you on the new Stake Indexing Director website. Check them out below.

## Curious what your role and responsibility is as a stake indexing director?

Now you can find training with instructional videos, portions from the handbook that outline the duties for your calling, and the *To Turn the Hearts* guide and videos. Within this main page are two sections called “Why Indexing?” and “Resources.”

## **Wondering how to train members of your stake?**

There is a section on the new website that will assist you in training other indexers and arbitrators. You will find the indexing user's guide, tutorials for reading old handwriting, indexing and arbitration video tutorials, indexing news and updates, and other how-to videos.

## **Need help recruiting volunteers?**

The website includes the purpose and blessings of indexing, lists of projects available and published, and articles in the Church magazines about success stories and inspiring experiences (*Ensign*, *Liahona*, and the *New Era*).

## **Struggling to get priesthood leaders or the youth involved?**

We offer many examples of how other stake indexing directors have worked with priesthood leaders and involved the youth with indexing records. You may hear other members' stories through videos and blog articles. One of the most recent examples is titled ["Youth in Campinas, Brazil, Catch Indexing Spirit."](#) It is an inspiring story about a director at a family history center adjacent to the Campinas Brazil Temple who invited the youth to participate in indexing. This invitation enriched the temple experience of many youth and increased their involvement.

Over the last year, many stakes throughout the world have witnessed the blessing of indexing in the lives of their members. Individuals who get involved with indexing have their hearts turned to their own ancestors and gain a desire to take their own family's names to the temple. Indexing truly has the power to change lives not only for those walking this earth but also for those beyond the veil anxiously waiting to be found so they can receive the blessings of the temple.

# Thank You Arbitrators!

June 13, 2013 By Jessie Davis

<https://familysearch.org/blog/en/arbitrators/>



Because of your service more than a billion of our ancestors can be found on [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org) today. Yes, a *billion*! And you have played a key role. After batches are indexed twice by volunteers they are housed in a database until they receive a final review, called arbitration. Without your help these indexed names cannot be published or made searchable online.

Just this year more than 20 million images—or 75 projects—have been arbitrated. If each of us arbitrate an extra batch here and there, an additional 4 million images could be freed from the database and published on FamilySearch.org. Even more, think what we could accomplish if we recruit our friends and neighbors. Do you know someone you could invite to arbitrate? If so, see the details below.\*

We appreciate your collaboration as the largest group of online indexers in the world! THANK YOU!

*\*If you know other experienced indexers with an eye for detail, please encourage them to explore arbitration to help free over 4 million images waiting to be published on FamilySearch.org. Have them ask their group administrator or stake indexing director for rights; they can also call [support](#) to discuss their options.*

## Be the Buzz, Share the Buzz

June 18, 2013 By Kris Jackson

<https://familysearch.org/blog/en/buzz-share-buzz-2/>



With warmer temperatures and the arrival of spring, orchards with crops of apricots, peaches, cherries, and apples, along with near countless varieties of flowers, all await the attention of the honey bee. Summer's harvest hangs in the balance and depends on the effectiveness of the hive.

Elder M. Russell Ballard noted, "The average hive of 20,000 to 60,000 bees must collectively visit millions of flowers and travel the equivalent of two times around the world. Over its short lifetime of just a few weeks to four months, a single honey bee's contribution of honey to its hive is a mere one-twelfth of one teaspoon". ("Be Anxiously Engaged," *Ensign or Liahona*, October 2012, 29)

FamilySearch volunteers who index records can be compared to honey bees working together to accomplish great things. Thousands of indexers work diligently to contribute their time and energy by volunteering for FamilySearch indexing. Indexers and arbitrators from approximately 134 countries around the world, working tirelessly, have contributed an average of 1.2 million indexed records each day.

Because of industrious volunteers like you, FamilySearch recently celebrated a monumental achievement of a billion records indexed since FamilySearch indexing was launched online in the fall of 2006. Our first billion previously took 80 years to accomplish. The second billion took just 6½ years. This remarkable feat was possible through the efforts of many volunteers. Thank you for contributing to such a great cause. Because of your efforts, researchers have more records freely available to use as they seek out and find their ancestors on FamilySearch.org.

Like honey bees, we haven't finished our work. FamilySearch has been dedicated for over 100 years to gathering and preserving vital records from around the world. Preserving records is a continuing endeavor here at FamilySearch, and thus the cycle continues. We have a monumental task before us; stored in the Granite Mountain Records Vault are 2.4 million rolls of microfilm and one million microfiche waiting to be indexed and published, with more records being added every year.

With many hands working together, we can continue to make a difference. Together, we will make history as we continue in this great work—one batch at a time. Let's see how swiftly we can complete our next billion indexed records.

# U.S. Immigration Project Milestone

July 10, 2013 By Katie Gale

<https://familysearch.org/blog/en/immigration-project-milestone/>



A melting pot, a kaleidoscope, a mosaic—the United States of America has been called many things, but overall it is a nation of immigrants, as much as any country in the world. If you go back far enough, most U.S. citizens came from somewhere else: Europe, Asia, Africa—the list goes on and on. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Community Project aims to make the legacy and stories of U.S. immigrant ancestors easy for everyone to discover.

In June, the project reached a significant milestone of 50 million passenger ship and naturalization records indexed! Add that to the 25 million Ellis Island records indexed years ago—before FamilySearch indexing started—and you’ve got 75 MILLION free immigration and naturalization records ready (or nearly ready) to search to your heart’s content.

Thank you for all of your hard work to make these records searchable. Over 165,000 volunteers have helped reach this milestone, including members of the Federation of Genealogical Societies, the National Genealogical Society (NGS), the Association of Professional Genealogists, and other societies.

The power of the community is truly amazing! If your group would like to join the cause, please send an e-mail to [fsindexing@familysearch.org](mailto:fsindexing@familysearch.org).

Many volunteers stopped by the FamilySearch indexing booth at the NGS conference to celebrate the project. One attendee and indexer named Vikki even found the ship record showing her and her mother entering the U.S. through the port of San Francisco at six months old. Read her story and others in the article [Remarkable Stories Add Value to Genealogy Conference](#).

We still have 60 million more U.S. immigration records and naturalization documents (at both the federal and county level) left to index. If everyone works together, we can finish indexing this project by the end of the year. So tell your friends and family to come join the indexing fun. The more people who help, the sooner these records will be freely searchable.

### Current projects:

- US, Hawaii, Honolulu—Passenger Lists, 1900–1952
- US, Massachusetts, Boston—Crew Lists, 1891–1957
- US, New York—Passenger Lists, 1875–1891
- US, Texas, Del Rio—Alien Arrivals, 1906–1953

### Projects coming soon:

- US, Connecticut—Naturalizations, 1851–1992
- US, Rhode Island—Naturalizations, 1906–1991
- Maryland, Baltimore—Passenger Lists, 1820–1897
- New England—Naturalizations, 1787–1931

### Have you checked out the latest training resources?

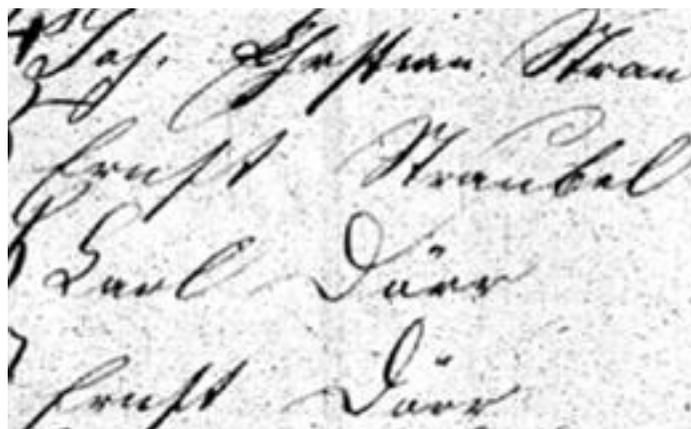
- [How to Index Passenger Lists](#) (slides)
- [Accents: They Aren't Just Punctuation](#) (blog article)
- [Name Changes](#) (video)
- [Birthplace and Nationality](#) (video)
- [Lookup Lists](#) (video)
- [Adding Lines](#) (video)
- [Getting Help](#) (video)

So spread the word! Then jump in, and enjoy indexing the U.S. immigration and naturalization records to make discovering the stories of our immigrant ancestors easier than ever!

## Accents: They're Not Just Punctuation

June 24, 2013 By Katie Gale

<https://familysearch.org/blog/en/accents-theyre-punctuation/>



Last week, I downloaded an intriguing New York passenger list. To my surprise, the customs agent wrote the names and places in German—in beautiful, old Gothic script including letters and diacritics specific to the German alphabet. A batch like this creates some questions: Am I supposed to index letters like ü and ß? Are accents and umlauts considered punctuation or not? If I should index them, then how do I do it?

The short answer is to index them. Accents, umlauts, and other [diacritical marks](#) are part of the letter or character, not separate punctuation. The indexing program includes features to help you index these necessary special characters.

Diacritical marks often change the meaning of words and even create new letters. In Spanish, *papá* means *dad*, but *papa* means *potato*. In French, *congrès* means *congress*, but *congres* means *eels*. In Swedish, *ö* is the 29th letter of the alphabet, completely separate from the letter *o*. You won't find *Örebro* listed next to *Oskarshamn* in a list of Swedish towns.

To index special characters, you have several choices:

- Use the International Characters icon . To learn more, refer to the [indexing user guide](#).
- Use your computer's Character Map  (or Character Palette), or change the keyboard input language.
- Use shortcuts. For example, to get the letter ñ, press Alt+0241 (for PC) or Alt+N+N (for Mac).

If you still feel unsure about indexing unfamiliar characters, here are nine tips to remember:

1. **Get help.** [FamilySearch](#) and local indexing administrators can help answer your questions, and so can the indexing community on the [Facebook page](#) or other online community forums and groups.
2. **Look for clues.** Use other information on the document to determine the origin of the names, such as the places of birth or nationalities.
3. **Use Google.** Search online for alphabets for different languages. For example, a search for the [Hawaiian alphabet](#) reveals that it only has 13 letters, including one called *'okina* which appears simply as '.

4. **Type what you see.** If you struggle to decipher the writing and other resources don't help, fall back on one of our favorite basic indexing guidelines, and type what you see.
  - Also, if a diacritic is lacking or added in where it seems odd, still type what you see when it comes to names. For example, if François is written as Francois, index the name as Francois. Don't correct the spelling of names. Though, most of the time, you can correct the spelling of place names. Review the field helps to know when corrections are okay.
5. **Use wildcards.** If you cannot decipher an international character, use a question mark (?) to replace one letter. If you cannot decipher multiple international characters in a row, use an asterisk (\*).
6. **Arbitrate your native language.** As an arbitrator, the indexers and researchers rely on you to get the answers right. Your arbitration time and skills are vital to the indexing effort, but if you don't know the language, please don't arbitrate the batch.
7. **Have patience with arbitrators.** Even experienced arbitrators have to make tough decisions. Many times, both indexers give great answers, but even a slight difference forces the arbitrator to choose. No matter what, continue to follow the instructions, and do your best indexing work.
8. **Learn to read new languages.** FamilySearch provides many [handwriting tutorials](#) to help you learn new skills. It will take time, patience, and dedication, but you can learn to read a new language. Don't get discouraged; ask for help often.
9. **Return the batch.** You can return batches for other indexers to complete if you don't feel up to the task—no penalty to you.

Diacritics and a world full of languages can give your indexing experience some variety and spice. Just remember to index languages familiar to you and include accents, umlauts, and other diacritics whenever they are present, but do not index punctuation like periods, commas, and parenthesis. There's always help available if you have questions. Happy indexing!