FamilySearch
Indexing:
Easier Than Ever!

You can index anytime or anywhere—even in your pajamas. All you need is a computer or a tablet.

By Margot Hovley
Church Magazines

Indexing! People are talking about it. Our leaders are encouraging us to get involved. But what is it? And why is it important? And how can each of us help?

Maybe you always thought you'd try indexing but:

- You didn't know how to get started.

- You didn't think you'd have time.
- You tried it once or twice and it seemed too confusing.
- It didn't seem as important as other family history tasks.

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions to help you get comfortable with indexing.

What is indexing?

Indexing is a process that helps us organize the data contained in many kinds of records. There are several types of records to choose from—birth, death, immigration, military, census, deed, probate, and so on. You can also choose from records in many different languages (the indexing of non-English records is greatly needed at present). Individuals log on to a web-based system to look at images of genealogical records and record what they see into forms on their computers.

Indexing began in the year 2006, and in 2017, work shifted to the new web-based system (see familysearch.org/indexing/my-indexing).

Why do we do indexing?

Indexing makes records available and searchable. As one grateful researcher put it, "An unindexed record is an unfindable record." Before indexing began, those who did family history had to manually look through old records, sometimes spending endless hours pouring over microfilms, hoping to find family names. The indexing process now transforms the information into digital format, and searches that used to take hours, days, or even years can now be accomplished in seconds.

Indexed records make a wonderful new tool possible called "hinting." The computer looks at the information in your family tree and compares it to the FamilySearch database—all 3-plus billion records. When it finds a record that matches most or all of the information about an ancestor in your tree, it's posted as a "hint" on that person's FamilySearch profile page. These hints can springboard you into

George Hadley
England, Derbyshire, Church, England Parish Registers, 15

Name:	George Hadley
Event Type:	Marriage
Event Date:	30 Apr 1838
Event Place:	Duffield, Duffield, Derbys
Gender:	Male
Marital Status:	Single
Father's Name:	Joseph Hadley
Spouse's Name:	Hannah Brown
Spouse's Marital Status:	Single
Spouse's Father's Name:	George Brown

many temple and research opportunities. Indexing is the engine that fuels the hinting feature.

The descendancy view of your family tree shows you the descendants of your ancestors, helping you find missing cousins. This powerful feature is also made possible by indexing.

What does it provide the system?

Millions of names are added to FamilySearch through indexing efforts. It is the main source of new information added to the system, ready to be utilized by family members.

What does indexing provide me personally?

Through indexing, your computer can bring your ancestors to you. The days of hunching over microfilm readers are all but gone. Once records are digitized, they aren't just searchable—you can even view many of them in their original form right on your computer screen. Seeing the original records is like reaching into the past.

Maybe you're at a temporary standstill on your own family's genealogical research but would nevertheless like to help with the saving work of temple and family history. Indexing is one way to stay involved. Who knows? You may be the person who indexes a record that breaks down someone else's research barriers. Participating in indexing will bring blessings into your life and the lives of others.

I tried indexing but couldn't read the handwriting. How do I overcome this obstacle?

If you've tried indexing in the past, give the new web-based system a try at familysearch.org/indexing/my-indexing. It's easy to select what difficulty level you want—some projects have easy-to-read handwriting or typescript and can help you gain confidence and experience. There is an incredible array of helps available online, from training videos to interactive practice sessions to live help from a host of trained missionaries who can look at the project with you and get you back on track.

I would like to help, but how can I fit it in when I'm so busy already?

Indexing has been designed so you can do it in small chunks. You can sit down and do a name or two in five minutes or several batches when you have a free afternoon. All you need is a computer or tablet with a web browser and access to the internet. Think about those small free moments you have each day, like on your lunch break or when you're waiting in a doctor's office or even after meetings on the Sabbath. You could make a huge impact in a small amount of time.
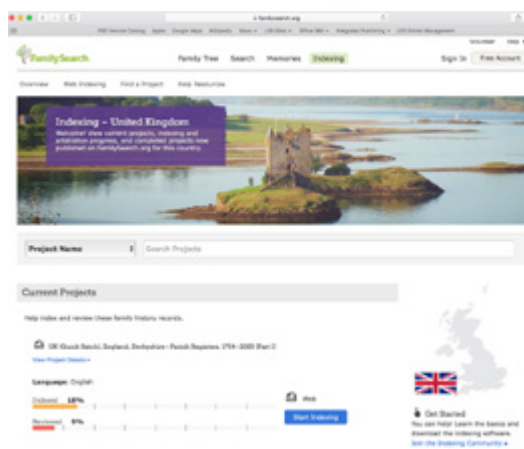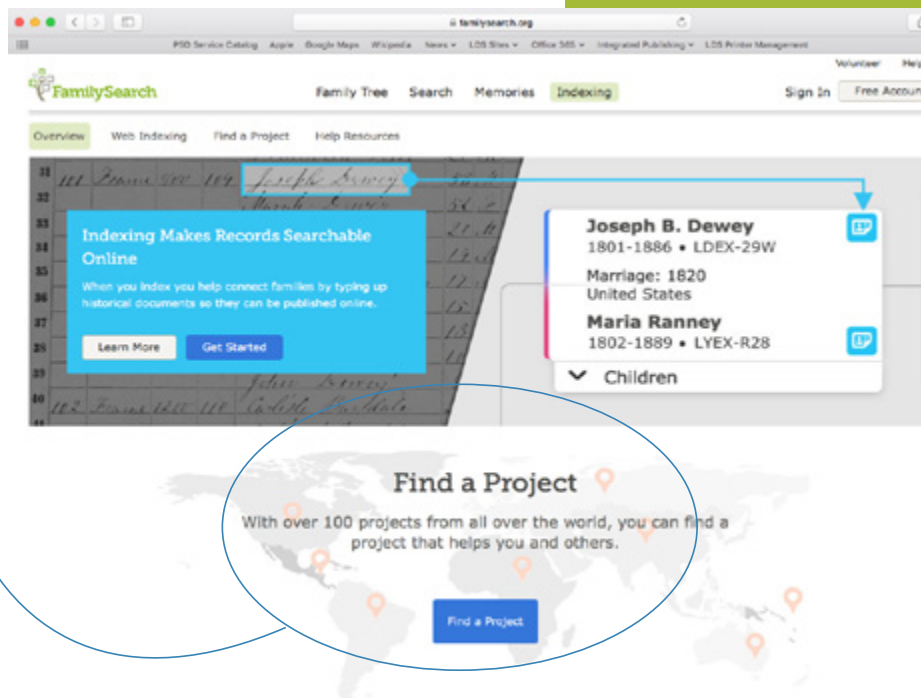
New this year are "quick batches," which are indexing batches consisting of only one or two images. These are great for beginners, people short on time, and volunteers who want to try new languages or difficulty levels.

I'm nervous that I'll do it wrong. What if I make a mistake? Won't that make the name unfindable?

Relax! Many simple errors are caught by the system as you submit a batch in a computerized quality check. But in addition, every indexed name is checked by an experienced indexer in a process called reviewing (formerly arbitration). So don't worry—your efforts don't need to be perfect in order to be of great benefit.

What is reviewing? What are the requirements for becoming a reviewer?

Once you have some experience indexing and understand how it works, you can volunteer to review. In reviewing, your computer screen will display a genealogical record, along with the indexing work that's been done for it. Your job is to simply check that it has been done correctly. Then the record is ready to be added

to FamilySearch. Just as with indexing, reviewing work can all be done online and at your convenience.

If you have previously worked as an arbitrator, you automatically qualify to volunteer to help with reviewing. Once qualified, volunteers can

easily switch between indexing and reviewing.

Help with reviewing is greatly needed, as there are not nearly as many volunteers helping with reviewing as indexing. Training and mentoring for reviewing is readily available.

My children are great with computers. Can they help with indexing?

Anyone who has a FamilySearch account, including children over the age of eight, can participate. Young children should be supervised by an adult who is familiar with indexing. Children should also understand that the records are for temple work and need to be handled with care and be as accurate as possible.

Persons of other faiths are also welcome to sign up for a free FamilySearch account to help with indexing efforts.

I'm used to the old indexing system. What are some things about the new web-based system that will help me feel more comfortable with it?

The web-based system gives you the ability to filter and sort the long list of projects, or even mark your favorites, so that you see just the batches you want. In addition, the web-based system includes simple tutorials, or "Tips," that can help you learn how to use the indexing program. You can customize your indexing experience to your preferences.

The web-based system also has a feature that allows you to get help at each input window and easily check your work when needed.

The old indexing system was restricted to desktop computers and laptops, whereas the new web-based system can be used on tablets for even more accessibility. It requires no programs to be installed, so you can be up and running quickly, and your hard drive space is conserved.

Never has service been so easy or convenient. You can help build the kingdom as you serve at home in your pajamas! In just a few clicks of your computer mouse, the blessings of temple and family history work can start flowing into your life. ∎

A REFINING INFLUENCE

"Family history work has the power to do something *for* the dead. It has an equal power to do something *to* the living. Family history work . . . has a refining, spiritualizing, tempering influence on those who are engaged in it."

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Your Family History: Getting Started," *Ensign,* Aug. 2003, 17.