



A CALL FOR INDEXERS WORLDWIDE

Since the introduction of FamilySearch indexing in 2006, over 800 million records have been digitized. But the work is not done, and the need for indexers worldwide is growing.

By Heather F. Christensen
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When Hilary Lemon of Utah, USA, returned home from her mission, she had a few months before she would start school again. Looking for ways to productively use her time, she began to help with online FamilySearch indexing. She started indexing in English but soon realized there were indexing opportunities in other languages—including Portuguese, the language she had learned on her mission.



FAMILYSEARCH IS EASY TO USE

Along with the rest of the youth in the Chorley England Stake, Makenzie, age 15, was invited by her stake presidency to index 200 names. “Two hundred turned into 2,000!” recalls Makenzie. “It’s really fast and easy to index. There are prompts to help you understand names and places. I’ve shared my knowledge of indexing with my family and friends by showing them how to create their own account and demonstrating how simple and enjoyable it is.”

“Since I served my mission in Portugal, I was interested in the indexing projects listed for Brazil and Portugal. My interest spiked when I saw a project from Setúbal, Portugal, one of the areas where I served,” says Hilary.

Hilary is one volunteer who is helping meet FamilySearch’s ever-growing need to index records in non-English languages. Like the other 127,000 active volunteers, Hilary is extracting the names and events of those who have passed on so that members can find the information they are seeking and complete their ancestors’ ordinance work in the temple.

What Is Indexing?

FamilySearch indexing is the process of reading digitized versions of physical records—such as census, vital, probate, and church records—and typing the information they contain into an online searchable database. Through this work, indexing volunteers make it possible for members and other family history researchers to easily locate their ancestors’ information on the Internet.

Indexing has brought a simplicity and ease to family history work. “In the past if you were looking for relatives, you had to wind through microfilm. When you found a family

member you were looking for, you might be able to find connecting names. So you would rewind and wind the microfilm again and again,” says József Szabadkai, an indexer in Hungary.

Today FamilySearch continues to gather historical records from governments and record custodians all over the world. But instead of simply filming the records and making the films available to researchers, FamilySearch employees scan them into the indexing program. Volunteers pull up these images on their computers and type in the information as they see it. In this way, the information is digitized and can be found through the search function on FamilySearch.org while researchers sit in the comfort of their own homes.

How Far Has Indexing Come?

Since FamilySearch indexing’s introduction in 2006, volunteer indexers have made significant progress—transcribing about 800 million records thus far. But the work is far from done. The Granite Mountain Records Vault in Salt Lake City, where the filmed records are stored and protected, contains some 15 billion records—and more records are constantly being added. These records





FINDING TIME FOR FAMILY HISTORY

Many people can't seem to find time to work on family history. Jonni Sue Schilaty of Utah, USA, found a way to fit indexing into her schedule. "I love indexing!" says Sister Schilaty. "When my husband and I take road trips, I download batches to my laptop, then go offline while I'm in the car. When we arrive, I go online, upload the completed batches, and then download more for the way home. I take advantage of every minute I can to index and find that these car trips work well for me."

hold information about billions of people from over 100 countries and include more than 170 languages.

Robert Magnuski, a Church-service missionary and active indexer from Poland, is experiencing firsthand the demand for more non-English volunteers. "Due to partition of the country from 1772 to 1918, Poland's records were kept in four languages: Russian, German, Latin, and Polish," he explains. Because most of Poland's indexers speak Polish, they started by indexing the Polish records. This still leaves work to be done on the Russian, German, and Latin records. With the help of volunteers worldwide who have experience with various languages, family history seekers throughout the world can find their ancestors—no matter the language their vital information was recorded in.

To make these records accessible, the indexing program has been made available online in 11 languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. People who speak any of these languages—whether it's a native language or acquired through

missionary service, schooling, or other training—are encouraged to sign up and begin indexing records.

How Do I Get Started?

Getting started as a volunteer indexer is quick and easy. Follow the instructions at indexing.familysearch.org to download the program onto your computer. Next, set up an account, and then select a group, or "batch," of records to index. Records have been grouped into small batches of 20 to 50 names to allow volunteers to spend as little or as much time as they would like indexing. Each batch takes about 30 minutes to complete, but you can stop partway through and return to it later because the program will save the work you have done. If you are unable to finish the batch within a week, it will automatically become available for others to complete.

Batches from countries around the world are being provided for indexing as records from those countries are acquired by FamilySearch. Brother Szabadkai is from Hungary, but he began indexing records in English and Afrikaans until records from his own country were available. "It was one of the happiest moments when the first Hungarian batch was announced in the beginning of 2011," says Brother Szabadkai. "Many Hungarian members—young and old—have registered and become 'maniac' indexers since that time." Brother Szabadkai's enthusiasm stems from the hope that many of his own ancestors will be found as these records are transcribed. "As we build up this



fantastic database, we will be able to find more of our family names, saving time and helping our ancestors receive their saving ordinances faster.”

What If I Don't Have the Latest Technology?

In various parts of the world, obtaining a computer and Internet access presents a challenge for some who are eager to index. This is the situation leaders in the Mexico City Zarahemla Stake faced when they decided to get the youth involved in indexing. Because not all of the youth had computers in their homes, stake leaders decided to reserve a local school's computer labs after hours for them to use.

The youth then worked to index Mexican census records from 1930. “As the youth reviewed the documents,” says Bishop Darío Zapata Vivas, “they imagined people moving from house to house collecting all this information without knowing that someday their efforts would assist the Lord's work of bringing 'to pass the immortality and eternal life of man'” (Moses 1:39).

Through the creative efforts of the stake leaders to obtain the needed technology, the youth and other members of the stake were able to index over 300,000 records within one month.

As demonstrated by the youth of the Zarahemla stake, if you don't own your own computer, you can still participate. The indexing program can run on any computer with Internet access, including at other members' homes, in family history centers, at



meetinghouses, and even at schools or libraries where permissible.

The Blessings of Indexing

The Portuguese documents Sister Hilary Lemon indexed were baptismal records from over two centuries ago. The pages were faded and the elaborate handwriting was hard to read, but she persevered through the project as she thought of the names on the page as people waiting for their work to be performed in the temple.

“More than once as I indexed, I felt a sweet, firm impression that one day a Portuguese Latter-day Saint would open up that baptismal record that I had indexed and find his or her ancestor,” says Hilary. “Now that a temple is planned for Lisbon, Portugal, I know that there will come a day when the members there will find their ancestors because of the work that's being done through FamilySearch indexing.”

With the help of volunteers like Sister Lemon, more records will be preserved and the way will be opened for those who have gone before to partake of the full blessings of the gospel. ■

For more information, please visit indexing.familysearch.org or contact your ward or branch family history specialist.

ANYONE CAN INDEX

Indexing is designed for people in all stages of life—including students, stay-at-home moms, businesspeople, or retirees. David and Bernice Blyde served seven full-time missions and are settled at home in New Zealand, where they continue to serve. “There is always something you can do within the Church to keep busy and active,” says Sister Blyde. “Indexing has fulfilled that need for us.” Since 2009 Sister Blyde has indexed over 180,000 names. “It's exciting to be engaged in this wonderful resource,” she says. “This work is vital to finding our ancestors and giving them the opportunity to progress.”

