

Top 20 Websites for East

Lisa A. Alzo, M.F.A., suggests several useful

A VAST NUMBER of immigrants came to North America from various areas in Eastern Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a result, researching your Eastern European roots can often be a challenging task. Border changes, language differences, political considerations and exotic-sounding surnames often complicate the process.

Until recently, online resources for Eastern European research were practically non-existent. Thanks to the popularity of the Internet for genealogical research, a number of useful websites are now available to researchers who must search transatlantic records to find their ancestors. This article will provide an overview of websites offering such information as searchable databases, maps and gazetteers, foreign telephone books, ethnic groups and societies, reading and interpreting records, portals with links to URLs for archives in various Eastern European countries, and other useful tools.

I have excluded some of the more familiar websites such as Cyndi's List (www.cyndislist.com) and the Ellis Island database (www.ellisland.org), frequently accessed by genealogists, and the large subscription-based sites such as Ancestry.com and Genealogy.com, in favor of those focused on specific countries and/or ethnic groups.

Here are 20 websites I find most useful for effective Eastern European genealogical research.

1. Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies (FEEFHS)

www.feefhs.org

FEEFHS was organized in 1992 as an umbrella organization that promotes family research in Eastern and Central Europe without any ethnic, religious or social distinctions. The FEEFHS website provides an extensive online "map room", an ethnic, religious and



national index of home pages and resource guide listings of organizations associated with FEEFHS (from 14 countries) and a collection of unique surname databases. This site should be the first stop for any researcher with Eastern European roots!

2. One-Step Web Pages by Stephen P. Morse

www.stevemorse.org

A collection of online forms used to search certain genealogical databases in "one step". The most notable is the frequently accessed "Searching the Ellis Island Database in One Step", which enables researchers to mine data from the Ellis Island Database (containing immigration records of some 22 million immigrants who came to the US through the port of New York from 1892-1924). Users can choose "sounds like" search criteria for first and last names,



as well as town name, and define a number of other more specific parameters. This is especially helpful for locating often-misspelled Eastern European surnames and towns/villages. In addition, a visit to Morse's site will offer researchers the opportunity to discover his other one step forms per-

taining to some US census records, the Social Security Death Index (SSDI), obtaining birthdays, the Jewish calendar and others.

3. Family History Library

www.familysearch.org

Fortunately, the Family History Library (FHL) has microfilmed civil and church records from areas in a number of Eastern European countries, and also has a large collection of atlases, gazetteers and maps essential for research in many countries (especially pre-WWI). The FHL catalog can be searched online for free and the desired films then ordered from your local Family History Center.

4. The Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base

www.carpatho-rusyn.org

This is the resource to consult for anyone of Carpatho-Rusyn ancestry. Visitors may also want to check out the



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websites for East European research

Carpatho-Rusyn Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to manifesting Carpatho-Rusyn culture in the US and supporting Rusyn culture in the homeland in East Central Europe. If your ancestry is Lemko, Boyko, Hutsul or subcarpathian Rusyn, you will find a wealth of information on this site about genealogy, customs, traditions, books and publications and other useful links.

5. HalGal

www.halgals.com

This website offers information on Halychyna/Eastern Galicia, a region that is often misunderstood or ignored in North America. HalGal stands for Halychyna/Galicja. Halychyna is Ukrainian, Galicja is Polish, or as it is commonly referred to in English, Galicia. The site also discusses the repatriation and resettlement of ethnic Poles, as well as

instructions on finding the ancestral village,



Eastern Europe in 1898. Today's boundaries are very different.



locating and interpreting vital records and using gazetteers. In addition, there are links to bulletin boards, as well as many Galician, Polish and Ukrainian websites, including pages for overseas archives, societies and organizations such as the Polish Genealogical Society of America (PGSA) (www.pgsa.org). This site should be the starting point for anyone researching their ancestral roots in Western Ukraine/Eastern Galicia. Many of the pages will be useful for Polish researchers of Western Galicia, as well.

6. The Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI)

www.cgsi.org

The society serves to promote Czechoslovak genealogical research and interest among people with ancestry in the Czechoslovak region as it was in 1918, including families of Czech, Bohemian, Moravian, Slovak, German, Hungarian, Jewish, Rusyn and Silesian origin. In addition to information about the society, its activities and



publications, researchers will find a useful introduction to genealogical research, travel resources, research in the Czech and Slovak Archives and a listing of professional researchers available for hire in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

7. GenealogyLinks.net

www.genealogylinks.net/europe/index.html

This site consists of 3,500 pages of more than 30,000 genealogy links that serve as a directory of genealogy links to mostly online surname databases, including parish registers, censuses, cemeteries, marriages, passenger lists, city directories, military records, etc. A



good portal site for information from Eastern European countries, and the links are indexed geographically (e.g. Albania, Austria, Belarus, etc.).

8. RootsWeb

www.rootsweb.com

"The oldest and largest free genealogy website", RootsWeb serves to connect people so that they can help each other and share genealogical research. The EastEuroGenWeb of the WorldGenWeb project will be of particular interest to those with Eastern European roots. Volunteer genealogists have set up a network of websites to help answer the occasionally daunting questions about research in different countries. In some cases, information is available on a country level, in other cases the support goes down to the level of provinces, counties, oblasts, districts or even villages and parishes. Message boards and mailing lists provide a great forum to network with other researchers.

9. Jewishgen.org

www.jewishgen.org

Often people of Eastern European descent will discover they have Jewish roots. JewishGen is the pri-

many Internet source connecting researchers of Jewish genealogy worldwide. Its most popular components are the JewishGen Discussion Group, the JewishGen family finder (a database of 350,000 surnames and towns), the comprehensive directory of InfoFiles, ShtetLinks for over 200 communities and a variety of databases. In addition, the site includes ShtetSeeker, which enables you to search for towns in Central and Eastern Europe, using exact spelling or the Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex system. This search will display latitude and longitude for each location, the distance/direction from the country's capital city and a link to a MapQuest map. JewishGen's online family tree of the Jewish people contains data on nearly three million people. Even if you are not among those with Jewish ancestors, this website is worth a look!

10. It's All Relative

www.iarerelative.com

The "It's All Relative" Genealogical Research Pages offer tools, resources and information to help you search your Czech, Bohemian, Moravian, Slovak, Lemko or Carpatho-Rusyn family



history and ancestry. You will also find links to a wealth of information on the area formerly Czechoslovakia, now known as the Slovakia and Czech Republic, and related areas. One of the most interesting features of this site is the section on Czech, Slovak and Rusyn traditions, and also a link to the Slovak Pride Database (www.our-slovakia.com/Homeland/db/index.html).

11. Church Record Translations (John Jaso)

www.bmi.net/jjaso/index.html

Reading and interpreting church records written in old world lan-

Church Record Translations			
Index	Search	Info	Help
Marriage Records	Marriage Announcements	Marriage Registers	Index
Marriage Records	Marriage Announcements	Marriage Registers	Index
Death Records	Death Registers	Death Certificates	Index

guages is often a big obstacle for researchers. This site is an excellent resource for anyone who must translate birth, marriage and death records from Hungarian, Latin or Slovak languages. Images of sample records are shown, and an interpretation of information typically found in these records is provided in columnar format, as well as tips for searching records at the FHL.

12. Eastern Slovakia Genealogy Research Strategies

www.iabsi.com/gen/public

A very informative set of web pages that aid English-speaking researchers of immigrants from Eastern Slovakia and surrounding



areas. This website includes genealogical research strategies, methods and unique resources for people with roots in Eastern Slovakia (Slovak Republic)/formerly Czechoslovakia/formerly Upper Hungary. Primary research areas include those of the Carpathian Mountains, borderlands of Southern Poland (Galicia) and Western Ukraine (Carpatho-Rus).

13. Research in Ukraine and Belarus

www.mtu-net.ru/rrr/ukraine.htm

"The Gateway to Genealogy in Russia." Provides links to state



archives, genealogy resources, heritage and history, and much more!

14. Radix — Genealogical Research in Hungary

www.bogardi.com/gen/index.shtml

This website is dedicated to genealogy research in Hungary and aims at helping family historians in finding out more about their Hungarian ancestry. Key available



resources include: industry and trade directory of Hungary in 1891, a searchable 1913 gazetteer of Hungary, and a listing of the most frequent Hungarian surnames (find spelling alternatives of 6,000 surnames in Hungary in the 1890s). Also available is a forum of Hungarian surnames being researched where you can add the names you are searching and a link to a new Hungarian genealogy weblog (blog) called Radixlog with news about Hungarian family history research.

15. PolishRoots: The Polish Genealogy Source

www.polishroots.org

Perhaps the best Polish genealogical site for those researching their Polish ancestry. Its most popular features are the PolishRoots SurnameSearch, which allows users to register surnames they are



researching, translated entries from the Słownik Geograficzny, a 19th-century Polish gazetteer covering present and former territories within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and a variety of databases such as PNA Lodges and Galician Vital Records availability.

16. Slovenian Genealogy

www2.arnes.si/~rzjtopl/rod/rod-an.htm
This site provides many links for Slovenian genealogy including



sources of genealogical data, research methods and resources, archives in the FHL and in Slovenia, information on the Slovenian Genealogical Society, collection of family trees, and more.

17. LinkToYourRoots

www.linktoyourroots.hamburg.de/
Many immigrants from Europe left via Hamburg, Germany. For a long time, the index to these records (1850-1934) has been available on microfilm through the



FHL. The online database, "Link to Your Roots", was launched several years ago by the Hamburg State Archives for searching the Hamburg emigration lists. Currently, the database covers only the years 1890-1906. The year 1890 was selected as a starting point because of the surge in emigration from that time until WWI. The database will continue to grow, until the data of all emigrants is available, initially of the years 1890 to 1914, and finally of all years between 1850 and 1934. If your ancestors traveled from Hamburg sometime in the 17-year period already covered, this website may be a valuable search tool.

The initial search can be performed for free. However, the results show only minimal details (surname, first name, state of origin, marital status, date of birth and destination). For a fee, you can see other details, such as the name of ship and date of arrival. Prices vary depending on whether you are requesting one or more records. The details are provided only in text format, not digitized images.

18. Bremen Passenger Lists 1920-39

http://db.genealogy.net/maus/gate/index_en.html

Bremen was another frequent port of departure for Eastern European immigrants. Unfortunately, from 1875-1908, the staff of the *Nachweisungsbureau*, because of insufficient office space, decided to destroy all lists older than three



years. With the exception of 2,953 passenger lists for the years 1920-39, all other lists were lost in WWII. You can search the database free of charge, and obtain such details as family name, first name(s), sex, age, place of residence, nationality, profession and destination. Even if you don't turn up your ancestor, perhaps a relative or neighbor will appear.

19. Repositories of Primary Sources

www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html

A listing of over 5,500 websites, compiled by Terry Abraham, and describing holdings of manuscripts, archives, rare books, historical photographs and other primary sources for the research scholar. Key sources to look at include links to the websites for archives, libraries and universities in various Eastern European countries.

20. Immigrant History Research Center (University of Minnesota)

www.ihrc.umn.edu

This is a great online reference site for the American immigrant experience. The Center's collection is particularly strong in its documentation of Eastern, Central and Southern European ethnic groups, and includes: newspapers and serials, fraternal society material, church records, and publications, manuscript collections and oral histories. Users can browse the



collection online by ethnic group. The IHRC is open to all qualified researchers. Materials do not circulate; but researchers may be able to obtain photocopies or photographic reproductions for a fee and either purchase or borrow via interlibrary loan microfilm for which the IHRC holds the master negative. Center staff conducts actual research for users only in extraordinary circumstances, at a charge of \$20 per hour.

Whether your roots go back to Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, the Ukraine or other countries, the Internet can open a gateway back to your ancestral homeland. By consulting the websites listed above, help with your Eastern European genealogical research is just a few mouse clicks away!

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