






INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES GENEALOGY RESOURCES


*Global archives, free-first repositories, visit prep, online access tactics,
and AI prompts for family historians*

 **Overview:** Archives preserve original and official records created by governments, courts, churches, notaries, businesses, organizations, families, and communities. Genealogists use them for civil registration, church/synagogue/mosque records, military files, immigration and naturalization, notarial records, land, probate, courts, taxes, schools, institutions, maps, photos, newspapers, oral histories, and manuscripts. Archives differ from libraries because archives emphasize unique primary-source collections, provenance, and record creator; libraries emphasize published works; repositories is the broad umbrella for archives, libraries, museums, historical societies, courthouses, and religious archives.

HOW TO USE THIS CHEAT SHEET

Start with free official portals, then move to fee databases or in-person requests only when they save time or unlock originals.

 FREE online	 Mixed / restricted	 Fee / subscription	 In person / request
View/search from home, usually no charge. A free account may be required.	Free search, but images, copies, onsite use, or privacy windows may varv.	Credits, subscription, certification, copy order, membership, or commercial partner.	Contact repository; verify appointments, ID, pull slips, copying, and lanuaage needs.
1. Place + date	2. Record creator	3. Archive portal	4. Image / request
Name the jurisdiction at the event date, not the modern country only.	Who made the record: state, church, court, notary, military, school, or family?	Search national, regional, local, and cross-border catalogs before paying.	Download/cite if online; otherwise note call numbers and contact the archive.

 **Fast scan:** Every entry below includes a category, a short genealogy use note, a full https:// URL, and the most likely in-person access route.

🏛️ 2. INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES DIRECTORY



Scan by region. Each resource includes category, genealogy use, full URL, access model, and in-person path.









⚠️ **Access note:** Current as of May 2026. Repository hours, prices, digitization status, privacy rules, and geopolitical access can change. Confirm the specific collection before ordering, traveling, or citing a paywall as the only source.



🌐 North America








🆓 Free-first note: national and provincial catalogs are usually free to search; certified copies, digitization, and restricted images may cost.

Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	📄 Online Access	👤 In-Person Access
National archive U.S. National Archives (NARA) - Genealogy	United States	Federal census, immigration, naturalization, land, military service and pensions, federal courts, Freedmen's Bureau, and agency records.	🆓 Free guides + catalog https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy https://catalog.archives.gov/	Washington, DC; College Park, MD; St. Louis; regional facilities. Researcher cards, appointments, and copy fees vary.
Federal catalog NARA Catalog	United States	Digitized federal records plus descriptions of record groups, series, boxes, and files not yet online.	🆓 Free https://catalog.archives.gov/	Use catalog citations to request onsite pulls or reproduction from the correct NARA facility.
National archive Library and Archives Canada (LAC)	Canada	Census, immigration, naturalization, military, land, Indigenous/Metis research aids, newspapers, photos, maps, and government records.	🆓 Free search/guides https://www.canada.ca/en/library-archives/collection/research-help/genealogy-family-history.html https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/home/search	Ottawa, Ontario. Register for an account/user card and request archival material before visiting.
Provincial archive BAnQ Genealogy + Advitam	Quebec, Canada	Parish/civil records, notarial records, court, land, maps, newspapers, and Quebec archival fonds.	🆓 Free / French interface https://www2.banq.qc.ca/archives/genealogie_histoire_familiale/ressources/bd/ https://advitam.banq.qc.ca/	BAnQ Vieux-Montreal and regional archives. Some notarial/court originals require onsite consultation.
National archive Archivo General de la Nacion (AGN)	Mexico	Colonial and national government records, maps, land, immigration, notarial context, and federal archival references.	🆓 Free / Spanish https://www.gob.mx/agn https://repositorio.agn.gob.mx/	Mexico City. Register/check reading-room rules; many local civil and church originals remain in states/parishes.









Digital heritage portal Memorica Mexico	Mexico	Open digital heritage: documents, photographs, prints, maps, books, and cultural collections useful for context.	 Open access https://memoricamexico.gov.mx/es/memorica/home	Online-first. Item pages point to contributing institutions for originals, permissions, or higher-resolution copies.
Archive directory Directorio Nacional de Archivos	Mexico	Directory for locating state, municipal, university, and private archives across Mexico.	 Free directory https://archivos.gob.mx/DirectorioArchivos/DirectorioArchivos.html	Use addresses/contact details to confirm hours, languages, ID requirements, and pull procedures before travel.

 United Kingdom & Ireland  Access mix: catalogs and many images are free, but official certificates, ScotlandsPeople credits, downloads, and copy orders may add fees.				
Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	Online Access	In-Person Access
National archive The National Archives (TNA)	England, Wales, UK	Government, military, court, tax, naturalization, migration, wills, colonial, and record-office guides.	 Free catalog/guides; downloads/copies may cost https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/	Kew, London. Reader ticket, lockers, pencils, and advance document ordering; check closures.
Official records site ScotlandsPeople	Scotland	Statutory BMD, census, kirk sessions, valuation rolls, wills/testaments, and church records.	 Credit-based images; some free indexes https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/	ScotlandsPeople Centre and local family history centres. Paid official service; onsite options vary.
National archive National Records of Scotland	Scotland	Court, government, legal, maps, kirk/session records, registers, wills, and archival catalog context.	 Free guides/catalog; copies may cost https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/	Edinburgh. Book seats/materials and verify reader registration/photo policy.
National archive National Archives of Ireland - Genealogy	Ireland	1901/1911/1926 census, wills calendars, tithe applotment, census fragments, soldiers' wills, and prison/transportation clues.	 Free https://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy/ https://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/	Bishop Street, Dublin. Reader ticket and advance planning for non-digitized records.
Church records NLI Catholic Parish Registers	Ireland	Digitized Roman Catholic parish register images, strongest before civil registration and for pre-1880 families.	 Free images https://registers.nli.ie/	National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin. Use parish map and diocesan context.
National archive PRONI	Northern Ireland	Wills calendars/images, valuation revision books, church records, estate papers, government and private records.	 Free/Mixed https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni	Belfast. Reader registration, lockers, camera rules, and advance pull planning.

National library/archive National Library of Wales	Wales	Pre-1858 wills, newspapers, maps, manuscripts, estate/church material, photos, and local history.	 Free catalog/digitized; copies may cost https://www.library.wales/	Aberystwyth. Reader card and request rules; many items are closed-stack.
Archive portal Archives Wales	Wales	Portal to Welsh county, university, and local archive finding aids; good for manuscripts and local records.	 Free discovery https://archives.wales/	Contact the holding archive listed in the finding aid for access, copies, or visits.









 Western Europe				
 Free-first note: civil registration often sits in state/department/provincial archives; church books may be in diocesan archives or partner portals.				
Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	📄 Online Access	👤 In-Person Access
National portal FranceArchives	France	Portal across national, departmental, municipal, and private archives; civil registration, notarial, military, census, maps.	 Free portal https://francearchives.gouv.fr/	Use links to departmental archives; in-person rules differ by department and municipality.
Federal archive Bundesarchiv	Germany	Federal, military, migration, Nazi-era, displaced persons, personal files, photos, maps, and agency records.	 Free catalog/guides; copies may cost https://www.bundesarchiv.de/	Berlin-Lichterfelde, Koblenz, Freiburg, Bayreuth, and other locations. Register and request files ahead.
Church records Archion	Germany	Digitized Protestant church books from participating regional church archives.	\$ Subscription https://www.archion.de/	Online subscription. Originals remain with church archives; coverage varies by region.
National archive Nationaal Archief	Netherlands	Civil and colonial records, VOC, military, maps, emigration, photos, and national government records.	 Free catalog/digital images; copies may cost https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en	The Hague. Some notarial/civil records are in regional/municipal archives.
State archives State Archives of Belgium	Belgium	Civil status, parish registers, population registers, notarial, court, military, maps, and local fonds.	 Free/Mixed https://www.arch.be/	Brussels and provincial state archives. Create account/check reading-room rules and language.
National portal PARES	Spain	National and colonial archives, including Archivo General de Indias, military, nobility, chancery, and state records.	 Free https://pares.cultura.gob.es/	Use PARES references; originals are held in repositories across Spain, including Seville, Madrid, and Valladolid.

National archive portal Torre do Tombo / Digitarq	Portugal	Parish/civil, notarial, Inquisition, passport, colonial, administrative, and district archive descriptions.	 Free/Mixed https://digitarq.arquivos.pt/	Lisbon and district archives. Some images online; originals/copies require local archive contact.
Civil registration Antenati	Italy	Italian civil registration images and indexes by province, drawn from State Archives holdings.	 Free https://antenati.cultura.gov.it/	Archivio di Stato by province. Parish records usually require parish/diocesan contact.


 Northern Europe & Scandinavia				
 Strong free portals: Scandinavian archives are often excellent for census, church, probate, military, and court images, but scripts/languages matter.				
Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	🖨️ Online Access	♀ In-Person Access
National archive Riksarkivet Digital Research Room	Sweden	Church books, censuses, estate inventories, military, court, tax, maps, and Swedish archival catalogs.	 Free https://sok.riksarkivet.se/	Reading rooms across Sweden. Check original-call rules and Swedish terms for record types.
National portal Digitalarkivet	Norway	Censuses, parish registers, probate, land, emigration, court, tax, and scanned source images.	 Free https://www.digitalarkivet.no/	National/regional archives. Most core genealogy sources are online; originals by archive.
National archive Danish National Archives / Arkivalieronline	Denmark	Parish registers, censuses, probate, military rolls, land, court, and estate records.	 Free https://www.sa.dk/da/brug-arkivet/arkivalieronline/ https://www.sa.dk/en/	Copenhagen, Viborg, Aabenraa, and Odense. Check ordering, lockers, and Danish record terms.
National archive Kansallisarkisto / Astia	Finland	Church, military, court, maps, tax, family and administrative records; Finnish/Swedish/Russian context.	 Free search; copies/restricted material may vary https://astia.narc.fi/uusiasti/ https://kansallisarkisto.fi/en/	Helsinki and regional branches. Some records require user account or onsite access.
National archive National Archives of Iceland	Iceland	Census, church, probate, court, land, government, photographs, and manuscript collections.	 Free/Mixed https://skjalasafn.is/	Reykjavik. Confirm reading room hours, language, and request procedures.
Census portal Manntal	Iceland	Searchable Icelandic censuses and household enumerations for placing families in time and farm/community.	 Free https://manntal.is/	Online-first; original records and related archival material at National Archives of Iceland.









 **Eastern Europe**

 **Key caution:** borders, scripts, religions, and record custodians changed often. Search by historical jurisdiction, language, and religious community.

Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	Online Access	In-Person Access
National portal Szukaj w Archiwach	Poland	Civil and church registers, notarial, maps, court, military, photos, and descriptions from Polish state archives.	 Free https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/	State archives by region. Use archive/unit signatures for onsite requests.
Volunteer index Geneteka	Poland	User-indexed parish/civil vital records with links to scans when available; strong surname/location search.	 Free / donations https://geneteka.genealodzy.pl/	Use linked archive/parish details to consult originals or request copies.
Regional portal Porta fontium	Czech Republic / Bavaria	Parish, census, school, land, and regional archival images for western Bohemia and Bavarian borderlands.	 Free https://www.portafontium.eu/	Regional archives in Plzen and partner repositories; use call numbers from item pages.
Digital library Hungaricana	Hungary	Maps, civil registration, directories, newspapers, archival documents, and local history sources.	 Free https://hungaricana.hu/en/	Hungarian National Archives and county archives; many originals/copies by request.
National portal State Archival Service of Ukraine	Ukraine	Links to central/oblast archives, guides, digitized holdings, exhibitions, and archival news.	 Free/Mixed; access may be disrupted https://archives.gov.ua/en/ https://archives.gov.ua/	Confirm safety, hours, staffing, digitization, and copy options directly with the relevant oblast archive.
Baltic portals Saaga / Raduraksti / ePaveldas	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	Church books, revision lists, censuses, estate, maps, photos, and cultural heritage digitization.	 Free/free account often https://www.ra.ee/dqs/ https://raduraksti.arhivi.lv/ https://www.epaveldas.lt/en/home	Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, and regional archives. Search German/Russian/Latin/local-language variants.
Federal archive GARF - State Archive of the Russian Federation	Russia	Federal government, Soviet-era, personal fonds, social organizations, and institutional records; limited online discovery.	 Mixed; availability may vary https://statearchive.ru/	Moscow. Access, visas, language, copy services, and geopolitical conditions require current confirmation.
Historical archive Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA)	Russia	Imperial Russian institutions, service, nobility, religious, land, court, and government records.	 Mixed/fees; Russian interface https://fgurgia.ru/	St. Petersburg. Confirm registration, request procedures, copy fees, and current access before travel.

 **Latin America & Caribbean**

 Free-first note: civil registration, notarial, parish, immigration, and judicial records are often local; national portals help you find the right branch.

Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	📄 Online Access	👤 In-Person Access
National archive Archivo General de la Nacion	Argentina	Immigration, government, maps, photographs, private fonds, and digitized historical collections.	 Free/Mixed https://www.argentina.gob.ar/interior/archivo-general-de-la-nacion	Buenos Aires. Check collection locations, requesting rules, and digital-copy services.
National archive Arquivo Nacional / SIAN	Brazil	Immigration, passports, military, courts, colonial/imperial/republic records, maps, photographs, and personal fonds.	 Free account/search https://sian.an.gov.br/	Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia. Use SIAN references; copy/research services may cost.
National archive Archivo Nacional / SINAR	Chile	Notarial, judicial, government, colonial, regional archives, photos, maps, and archival descriptions.	 Free/Mixed https://www.archivonacional.gob.cl/ https://sinarchile.archivonacional.gob.cl/	Santiago and regional repositories. Confirm branch, hours, and request procedures.
National archive Archivo General de la Nacion	Colombia	Colonial and republic government records, notarial context, maps, photos, and private fonds.	 Free/Mixed https://www.archivogeneral.gov.co/	Boqota. Search catalog first; some materials/copies require onsite or formal request.
National archive Archivo General de la Nacion	Peru	Colonial, notarial, judicial, administrative, maps, and national archival services.	 Free/Mixed https://www.gob.pe/agn	Lima and regional archives. Confirm notarial/civil custody and copy rules.
National archive Archivo General de la Nacion	Dominican Republic	Colonial/republic documents, newspapers, photographs, civil/admin context, and archival publications.	 Free/Mixed https://agn.gob.do/	Santo Domingo. Check reading room, ID, and digitization/copy options.
National archive Jamaica Archives and Records Department	Jamaica	Colonial, probate, land, manumission, court, government, and civil-record context.	 Mixed https://www.jard.gov.jm/	Spanish Town/Kingston services. Confirm holdings, appointment requirements, and copy fees.
Digital library Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC)	Caribbean	Caribbean newspapers, books, photographs, maps, manuscripts, and partner-institution digital collections.	 Free https://dloc.com/	Online-first. Item records identify partner institutions holding originals.

Africa
 Access reality: online catalogs are uneven. Colonial, missionary, court, estate, and land records may sit in national, provincial, university, or overseas archives.

Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	Online Access	In-Person Access
National archive NARSSA + NAAIRS	South Africa	Estate files, deceased estate indexes, colonial/state records, photos, maps, oral history, and government records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free catalog; copies/onsite vary https://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/ https://www.national.archs.ch.gov.za/sm300cv/smws/sm300d/ 	Pretoria and provincial archives. Use NAAIRS references; contact repository for file pulls/copies.
Provincial archive Western Cape Archives and Records Service	South Africa	Cape colonial, estate, probate, land, court, immigration, civil, maps, and local government records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/Mixed https://www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/western-cape-archives-and-records-service 	Cape Town. Request records, check camera/copy rules, and verify closures.
National archive Kenya National Archives	Kenya	Colonial/government records, maps, photos, microfilms, private papers, oral history, and public archives services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed https://www.archives.go.ke/ 	Nairobi. Confirm reading room hours, registration, fees, and record-request process.
National archive National Archives of Nigeria	Nigeria	Colonial and national government records, personal papers, maps/photos, and digitized archive initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed https://nationalarchives.gov.ng/ 	National Archives Department, Abuja, plus branches. Verify holding branch and access rules.
National archive PRAAD	Ghana	Colonial/government, court, land, newspapers, administrative, and regional archival records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed; site availability can vary https://praad.gov.gh/ 	Accra, Cape Coast, Kumasi, Tamale, Ho, and regional offices. Contact before visiting.
National archive Archives du Maroc	Morocco	State records, protectorate/admin material, photos, maps, private fonds, and digital exhibits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/Mixed https://www.archivesdumaroc.ma/fr/ 	Rabat. Arabic/French; confirm reader rules and reproduction permissions.
National archive National Archives of Namibia	Namibia	Colonial and national government memory, photographs, maps, manuscripts, and public archives services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed https://nan.gov.na/ 	Windhoek. Contact the archives for hours, registration, and copy procedures.
National library/archive Egyptian National Library and Archives	Egypt	Manuscripts, government/press material, maps, books, and historical records; Arabic research environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed https://www.darelkotob.gov.eg/en-us/Pages/Home.aspx 	Cairo. Verify collection, language, appointment, permissions, and reproduction rules.








🌐 **Asia**

📌 Strategy note: privacy laws, scripts, colonial jurisdictions, and language interfaces vary widely. Build a translation and jurisdiction plan before contacting archives.


Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	📄 Online Access	👤 In-Person Access
Historical archive First Historical Archives of China	China	Ming/Qing central government archives, catalogs, imperial records, and historical documents.	📄 Free catalog/Chinese interface https://fhac.com.cn/index.html	Beijing. Access, language, and permission requirements require current confirmation.
National archive National Archives of Japan + JACAR	Japan	Government/cabinet records, donated records, digital images, and modern Asia-related diplomatic/military records.	📄 Free digital access https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/ https://www.jacar.go.jp/	Tokyo. Many records online; onsite use at National Archives of Japan may require procedures.
National archive National Archives of India / Abhilekh Patal	India	Digitized reference media, private papers, colonial and administrative records, maps, microfilms, and official files.	📄 Free registration/Mixed https://www.abhilekh-patal.in/	New Delhi, Janpath. Register, request records, and verify copy/photography rules.
National archive National Archives of Singapore Online	Singapore	Government files, photographs, maps, speeches, oral histories, newspapers, and Straits Settlements context.	📄 Free/Mixed https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/	1 Canning Rise, Singapore. Some audiovisual/copy services may require request/fees.
National archive National Archives Administration	Taiwan	National government archives, online catalog/access services, digital exhibitions, and application-based access.	📄 Free search/Mixed https://www.archives.gov.tw/en/	Linkou, New Taipei City. Apply/request records; Chinese-language preparation helps.
Public records office Government Records Service	Hong Kong	Government records, photographs, maps, online catalogue, and public records reading room.	📄 Free catalog/holdings https://www.grs.gov.hk/en/index.html	Public Records Building, Kwan Tong. Check ordering, hours, and copying rules.
National archive National Archives of the Philippines	Philippines	Spanish-era, notarial, civil, government, land, and administrative records; online reference request portal.	📄 Free/Mixed https://nationalarchives.gov.ph/ https://reference.nationalarchives.gov.ph/	Manila. Confirm branch, record type, language, and copy request requirements.
National archive Israel State Archives	Israel	Ottoman, British Mandate, and Israel state records, photos, maps, audio/video, and digital collections.	📄 Free/Mixed https://www.archives.gov.il/	Jerusalem/online service. Hebrew interface; access restrictions apply to some modern records.









 **Oceania**

 Free-first note: Australian and New Zealand portals are strong for immigration, military, probate, newspapers, government, and convict-era research.

Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	Online Access	In-Person Access
National archive National Archives of Australia	Australia	Immigration, naturalization, war service, defense, passenger records, Indigenous records, and government files.	 Free search/digital copies; copies may cost https://www.naa.gov.au/ https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/	Canberra and state offices. Request digitization or onsite access; check handling restrictions.
National archive Archives New Zealand	New Zealand	Probates, immigration, military, land, court, government, maps, photos, and regional holdings.	 Free/Mixed https://www.archives.govt.nz/ https://collections.archives.govt.nz/	Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin. Order items before visiting.
Vital records index NZ BDM Historical Records	New Zealand	Historical births, deaths, and marriages indexes; certificates/printouts can confirm parents, spouses, and places.	 Free search; fee orders https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/	Online ordering via Department of Internal Affairs; certificates/printouts are paid.
National discovery portal Trove	Australia	Newspapers, gazettes, books, photos, maps, archives, and partner collection discovery.	 Free https://trove.nla.gov.au/	Online-first; item records identify holding libraries/archives when originals are needed.
State archive Public Record Office Victoria	Victoria, Australia	Wills/probate, passenger lists, inquests, prison, land, education, court, and state government records.	 Free/Mixed https://prov.vic.gov.au/	North Melbourne and Ballarat. Order records and check reading-room/camera rules.
State archive Museums of History NSW - State Archives Collection	New South Wales, Australia	Convict, probate, immigration, land, police, school, government, and digitized index collections.	 Free/Mixed https://mhsw.au/collections/state-archives-collection/	Western Sydney Records Centre, Kingswood. Note the State Archives Collection now sits under Museums of History NSW.
Regional manuscripts Pacific Manuscripts Bureau	Pacific Islands	Pacific Islands manuscript, archive, oral history, church, mission, government, and microfilm collection descriptions.	 Mixed; partner/library access https://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/catalogue/index.php/	ANU and partner libraries. Use catalog to locate microfilm/digital access through member institutions.

🌐 Major Aggregators & Cross-Border Resources

 Use these before deciding a record is unavailable. They point to catalogs, digitized images, finding aids, and records that cross national borders.

Category + Name	Country / Region	What's There	📄 Online Access	👤 In-Person Access
Global catalog FamilySearch Catalog + Records	Worldwide	Place-based catalog, indexed records, browse-only films, digitized books, and image access notes.	 Free account; image restrictions may apply https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog https://www.familysearch.org/search/	FamilySearch Library, centers, and affiliate libraries can unlock some restricted images.
How-to wiki FamilySearch Research Wiki	Worldwide	Country, province, county, parish, language, handwriting, and record-type guides.	 Free https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page	Use wiki pages to identify repositories, record start dates, privacy rules, and archive vocabulary.
Finding-aid discovery ArchiveGrid	Worldwide	Millions of archival collection descriptions from libraries and archives; ideal for family papers and manuscript clues.	 Free discovery https://researcharchivegrid.oclc.org/	Contact the repository named in the ArchiveGrid result for access, duplication, or permissions.
Library catalog WorldCat	Worldwide	Books, local histories, manuscript catalogs, microfilms, maps, newspapers, and archive catalogs near you.	 Free search https://www.worldcat.org/	Use holdings/ILL to locate nearest copy or plan a repository visit.
Church registers Matricula Online	Europe	Digitized Catholic and other church registers from multiple European diocesan archives.	 Free https://data.matricula-online.eu/en/	Online-first. Originals remain with diocesan/parish archives; coverage is diocese-by-diocese.
Holocaust/DP records Arolsen Archives Online Archive	Europe / Worldwide	Nazi persecution, concentration camps, displaced persons, forced labor, and tracing documentation.	 Free https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/search/ https://arolsen-archives.org/en/archive/online-search/	Online archive plus Arolsen services. Respect sensitive records and living-family privacy.
Jewish genealogy JewishGen	Worldwide	Jewish community, vital, cemetery, Holocaust, town, and country databases plus research groups.	 Free registration/donations https://www.jewishgen.org/ https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/	Use database citations to locate source archives and community records.
Digital heritage Europeana	Europe	Books, photos, newspapers, maps, films, art, and heritage objects from thousands of European institutions.	 Free discovery https://www.europeana.eu/en	Item pages link to contributing institutions for originals, rights, and higher-resolution access.

🗨️ 3. RESEARCH STRATEGY: ARCHIVES FAST PATH

Use these steps when you need the right repository, the right access path, and a clean citation fast.

🗨️ 3A. FINDING ARCHIVES

Search place, jurisdiction, record creator, and record type - not just the ancestor name.

Step	Action	How to do it
1	Anchor the event	Record the event date, historical place, religion/community, civil jurisdiction, and language/script at that time.
2	Name the record creator	Civil registrar, parish, synagogue, court, notary, military unit, school, hospital, employer, estate office, or colonial administration.
3	Use archive discovery portals	Search ArchiveGrid, WorldCat, FamilySearch Catalog, national archive portals, and local archive directories for the repository and finding aid.
4	Try local-language words	archive/archives, archivo, arquivo, archiv, archivio, arkiv, arkisto, arhiiv, levoltar, archiwum, matrikel, notarial, civil registry.
5	Use Google operators	Try site:archive-domain place surname; "record type" "town"; "Archivo Historico" "municipio"; "Archivio di Stato" "provincia"; "finding aid" surname.
6	Track the access path	For every promising result, capture repository, collection/fonds, series, call number, URL, date range, restrictions, and next action.

🔗 **Copy-ready search hubs:** ArchiveGrid: <https://researcharchivegrid.oclc.org/> | WorldCat: <https://www.worldcat.org/> | FamilySearch Catalog: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog> | Wikipedia archive lists: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_archives

📋 3B. PREPARING FOR AN IN-PERSON VISIT

A great archive day starts before you leave home.

Checklist item	Do this before / during visit
Contact archivists	Send one precise question with names, places, dates, record type, and what you already checked.
Confirm logistics	Hours, holidays, appointment rules, reader card, ID, lockers, pencils, laptop use, food/drink, and accessibility.
Pre-order material	Capture collection/fonds, series, call numbers, item numbers, box/folder, date range, and request limits.
Read rules	Photography, scanning, copyright, handling, gloves, permission forms, copy fees, and publication terms.
Prepare language tools	Vocabulary list, dates/months, record templates, surname variants, and polite local-language phrases.
Pack smart	ID, charger, laptop/tablet, pencil, sweater, USB or cloud backup, camera if allowed, notes, and call-slip list.
Build a capture plan	Photograph covers/spines/call slips first, then pages; log every skipped page and every negative search.
Budget time	Retrieval cycles, lunch closures, security, copying delays, transportation, and backup records for downtime.



3C. ACCESSING & DOWNLOADING ONLINE ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

Treat every image like an archival item, not just a screenshot.

No.	Move	Archival habit
1	Read scope first	Know date range, geography, record creator, missing volumes, privacy closures, and whether the index is complete.
2	Search + browse	Search names, places, witnesses, sponsors, record creators, and browse neighboring pages/films when indexes fail.
3	Use viewer tools	Thumbnails, image numbers, zoom, rotations, IIF/manifests, citation panels, page navigation, and metadata tabs.
4	Download lawfully	Use the best permitted format. Respect terms; avoid prohibited scraping or bulk downloads.
5	Capture citation	Repository, collection/fonds, series, item/call number, page/image, URL, access date, and viewer path.
6	Name files consistently	Example: 1874-03-12 Italy Antenati Napoli Birth Rossi Maria_image42.jpg
7	Beat paywalls first	Look for official archive portals, library editions, FamilySearch Centers/affiliates, ILL, or local society copies.
8	Plan restricted access	When images are locked, save the exact catalog path and decide: visit, affiliate library, request copy, or hire a local researcher.

4. AI PROMPTS FOR ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Use AI as a research assistant, translator, and planning partner - never as a source. Verify repositories, links, fees, and facts.

Use Case	Sample Prompt (copy-ready)
 Find the right archive	Act as an expert international genealogy archivist. My ancestor was [NAME], living in [PLACE] during [YEARS]. I need [RECORD TYPE]. Identify the likely record creator, current jurisdiction, archive/repository, online portals, in-person options, privacy restrictions, and local-language search terms. Do not invent URLs; mark anything that needs verification.
 Translate foreign-language records	Translate this [LANGUAGE] genealogical record into English. Preserve names, dates, places, occupations, witnesses, marginal notes, and original line order. Flag uncertain words with [?]. Then list every genealogical clue and three follow-up searches. Text/image: [PASTE OR UPLOAD].
 Decode old handwriting	Transcribe this old handwritten archival record line by line. Keep original spelling and punctuation. Use [illegible] for unreadable text and [?] for uncertain letters. After the transcription, create a modern abstract and citation template. Do not fill gaps from context unless labeled as a hypothesis.
 Summarize a finding aid	Summarize this archive finding aid for genealogy use. Identify collections/series that may contain vital, church, military, immigration, notarial, land, probate, court, tax, school, and institutional records. Output call numbers, date ranges, access restrictions, and exact items to request. Finding aid text: [PASTE].
 Draft an archivist inquiry	Draft a polite email to an archivist in [LANGUAGE] asking about [RECORD TYPE] for [PERSON/FAMILY] in [PLACE], [DATES]. Include known facts, exact research question, requested series or call numbers if available, copy/fee/permission questions, and a concise subject line.
 Extract structured data	Extract structured genealogical data from this record/transcription into a table with columns: person, role, relationship, date, place, occupation/status, original wording, confidence, and source note. Separate facts from interpretations. Record: [PASTE].
 Build a free-first plan	Build a free-first archival research plan for [ANCESTOR], born/married/died around [DATES] in [COUNTRY/REGION]. Include online portals, national/regional/local archives, record types, languages/scripts, jurisdiction changes, likely gaps, and next 10 searches in priority order.
 Handle boundary changes	Analyze jurisdiction changes for [PLACE] between [START YEAR] and [END YEAR]. Tell me which civil, church, court, land, and military authorities likely created records at each period and which archives may hold them now.
 Generate search variants	Generate copy-ready search queries for [PERSON] in [PLACE] using spelling variants, patronymics/matronymics, married names, local-language terms, wildcards, and Google operators for archive catalogs. Include searches with and without surname.
 Review evidence	Review these sourced findings and create a proof-oriented summary. Correlate names, dates, places, associates, and negative searches. Identify conflicts, missing records, and the strongest next archival action. Rate the conclusion as proved, probable, possible, or not proved. Sources: [PASTE].

⚠️ 5. QUICK TIPS & PITFALLS

The best archival wins usually come from jurisdiction, context, and record-creator logic.

Pitfall / Pro Tip	Action to take
Jurisdiction first	Use the borders, counties, parishes, districts, empires, and courts that existed on the event date.
Civil registration varies	When civil records start late or are incomplete, pivot to church, notarial, probate, court, tax, and military records.
Notarial records are gold	In civil-law countries, notaries may hold marriage contracts, estate divisions, land sales, guardianships, and dowries.
Catalogs are not name indexes	Search places, record creators, series titles, churches, estates, occupations, and organizations - not only surnames.
Free before fee	Try official archive portals, FamilySearch, national digital libraries, WorldCat, and local societies before subscriptions.
Image restrictions are normal	Privacy, contracts, copyright, and conservation may limit images. Note the exact path so you can visit/request later.
Names mutate	Build variants for spelling, translation, Latinization, patronymics, married names, initials, and scripts such as Cyrillic, Hebrew, Arabic, or Greek.
Record survival is uneven	War, fire, floods, local custody, privacy closures, and digitization priorities create gaps. Negative searches still matter.
Ask precise questions	Archivists can help fastest when you provide one question, a place/date, known sources, and a clear desired record type.
Respect communities	Handle Indigenous, enslaved, adoptee, institutional, and recent records with privacy, cultural protocols, and sensitivity.

🔑 **Final word:** Archives are not just websites. They are systems of custody, jurisdiction, provenance, and access. Start free, record exact citations, and use in-person or request-only records when the online trail stops.