

Trace Your Roots with DNA

Using Genetic Tests
to Explore Your Family Tree



The following is a chapter from:

[Trace Your Roots with DNA](#)

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Finding Prospects

When it comes to DNA studies, more is almost always better. The more participants, the better the chances are of linking previously unknown cousins, gaining insight into origins of a surname, confirming or refuting traditional research, and solving age-old mysteries. And sometimes, only certain people have the right DNA to answer your questions. So how do you maximize participation and find the best candidates?

TWO APPROACHES

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, you can recruit people in two ways—by finding them or by making it easier for them to find you. We refer to the detective work associated with seeking out appropriate candidates as “reverse genealogy” since it usually involves tracing lines from the past to the present. Traditionally, we’re trained to start with ourselves and work back through the generations, but conducting a DNA project often requires the reverse. You may, for instance, be trying to find possible descendants of a German immigrant who came to Pennsylvania in the 1700s.

And we like to call techniques used to make it easier for would-be participants to find you “broadcasting”—essentially the equivalent of leaving a trail of crumbs on the Internet. Most administrators use both reverse genealogy and broadcasting strategies, but the specifics of your project will influence how you split your time between the two.

REVERSE GENEALOGY VS. BROADCASTING

As Figure 8-1 shows, the objective you set for your projects will establish its scope, which in turn, drives who should participate—as well as whether it would be wiser for you to pour most of your energies into reverse genealogy or broadcasting efforts.

For example, your project may be narrow in scope (e.g. to determine if Jim Wolinsky and Bob Wolinsky, who found each other on the Internet, share common ancestors). In this case, it’s obvious that Jim and Bob are the ones who should participate, and there’s no need to use any recruiting strategies. Or your project may be the opposite extreme—a broad study open to anyone with a particular surname, for example, to seek out any and all connections among people with the name of Swanson.

Figure 8-1: How scope affects participation and recruiting approach

Scope	Example	Participation
Narrow	Do Jim and Bob share a common ancestor?	Obvious participation
Midrange	Do the MA and VA Austins share a common ancestor?	Selective participation (mostly reverse genealogy)
Broad	Swanson surname	Open participation (mostly broadcast)

Open projects such as this—especially ones focused on common names—will usually rely heavily on broadcasting tactics since it’s not realistic for you to track each person down on an individual basis. Even so, there may be cases where you’ll want to dabble in reverse genealogy to locate a particularly desirable participant, such as a descendant of a famous person who shares your surname.

But more and more projects fall in the middle range where participation is less clear (for example, to determine if various Massachusetts and Virginia Austin families share a common ancestor). In such cases, you’ll want to use mostly reverse genealogy techniques to follow the Y-DNA trail—either to find the participants yourself or to qualify them once they contact you. Doing this is usually not too difficult because you’re simply following the sons down through the generations—and with rare exceptions (for example, a known adoption), this means following a given surname. With mtDNA-based projects, the detective work becomes a little more challenging since you’re following a maternal line and dealing with name changes each generation, but it’s still very doable.

Since the majority of projects at present are broad—that is open to anyone with a given surname—it’s not surprising that the broadcasting technique current enjoys the greatest popularity. But as more people launch midrange projects designed to answer specific questions, reverse genealogy is becoming a more important component of a coordinator’s repertoire. Or maybe you’re one of those who needs to find a proxy to test in your place—you’re a woman interested in a surname project, or perhaps a man who wants to research one of his maternal lines. Whatever your situation and preference, the remainder of this chapter will provide plenty of ideas and guidance for locating as many appropriate participants as possible.

REVERSE GENEALOGY: FOLLOWING THE DNA TRAIL

Locating DNA testing candidates gives you a chance to play sleuth and frequently rewards you with the discovery of previously unknown cousins as an added benefit. While it can be challenging at times, persistence and creativity in the hunt usually pay off. Walking through the process with a couple of fellow researchers will give you the feel for how to approach your DNA quest and what you might expect along the way, so we’re going to take you step-by-step through a pair of actual searches here. We’ll

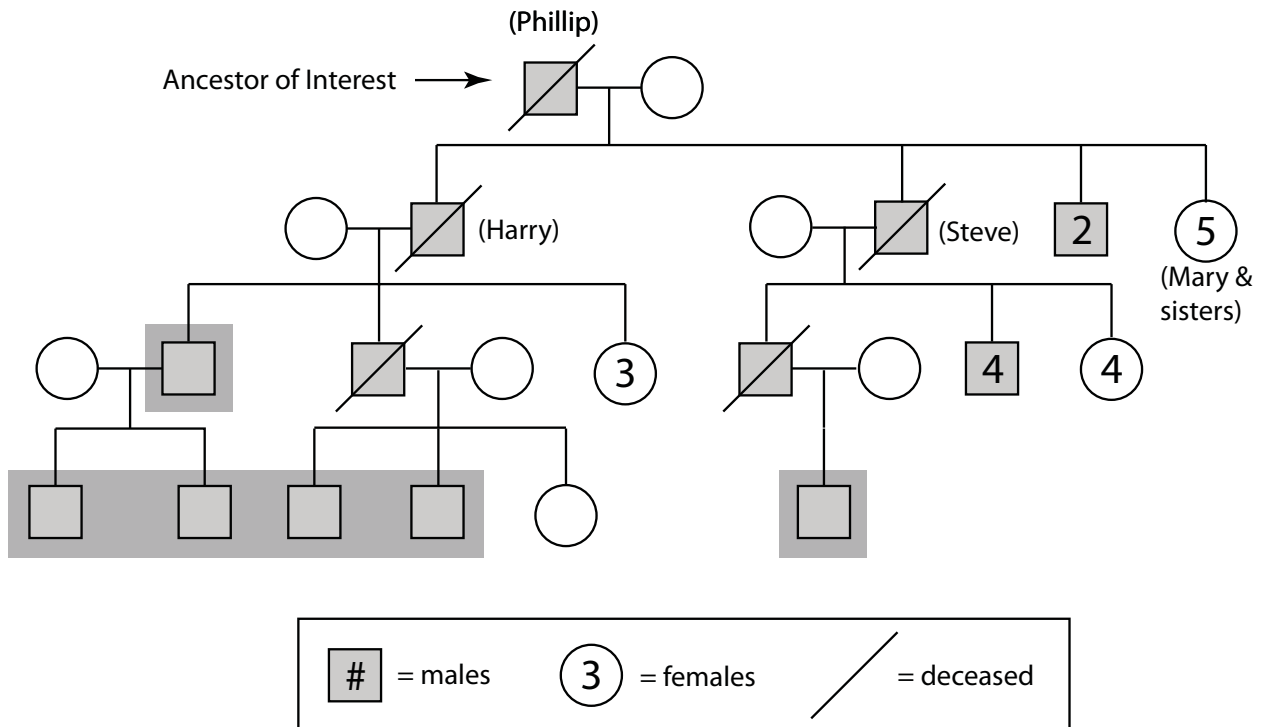
start first with a typical Y-DNA case and follow with an mtDNA situation, so you can view the process from both perspectives.

Y-DNA: LOOKING FOR LUCASES

Stacy Gately was intrigued with the notion of genetic genealogy and had her father's y-chromosome tested almost 2 years ago. The surprising results (a rare haplotype not matching anyone of the same surname) from the first test whetted her appetite for more, so she decided to develop a *genetic pedigree*—that is, a Y- and mtDNA profile—for each branch of her family tree. She figured that by doing so, she would be well positioned to learn more as others got tested and DNA databases grew. She also thought that it would be smart to obtain samples while she still could—you know when the death of a distant, last-in-line cousin might effectively end your chances to obtain DNA from that branch of the family. So Stacy set about trying to locate testing candidates for each name in her pedigree as far back as her great-grandparents' generation.

One of her great-grandmothers, Mary Lucas, was born in 1891 and immigrated to America in 1911. Mary had died long before Stacy was ever born, but even if she had still been living, it would have been necessary to find an appropriate male relative to provide a Y-DNA sample. Since Mary was a woman, it was *her father's* Y-DNA that Stacy needed to trace. This meant that her true target—her *ancestor of interest* (see the top row in Figure 8-2)—was her great-great-grandfather, Phillip Lucas, and she needed to locate one or more of his direct-line male descendants.

Figure 8-2: Following the Y-DNA trail - All those surrounded by a dark, shaded area are testing candidates.



Through traditional research, Stacy learned that Mary had been one of nine children, four boys and five girls. With so many potential lines to follow, she decided to sketch a descendancy chart to help focus her search. To prevent the chart from becoming extremely busy, she detailed only the lines she intended to follow and collapsed the others by indicating how many other children of that gender there had been in the family (with numbers in the squares and circles). Phillip's five daughters would not have had the right DNA. After interviewing older relatives and learning that two of his sons had also come to the United States and settled in the Scranton, Pennsylvania, area, she opted to focus on them.

Armed with the names of immigrant brothers, Stacy launched her reverse genealogy search with the 1930 census, the most recent one available to the public. This gave her approximate birth years as well as names of their wives and children—a good start! She now knew that Steve had been born around 1879 and Harry around 1897. While she could have followed either line, Stacy decided to trace both. If she found male descendants in both, she reasoned, she could get one from each tested and rule out the possibility of any non-paternity events.

Going straight to the Social Security Death Index, she quickly found a death date for Harry, the youngest brother, but was not surprised that the one born in 1879 was not listed, the bulk of SSDI records begin in 1962. To learn when Steve had died, she wrote to the county courthouse where he had lived and requested a copy of his will and other estate records. Now equipped with death dates for both, she obtained copies of their death certificates. Wanting to be absolutely sure she was following the correct DNA trail, she also requested their Social Security applications and naturalization records. All the documents confirmed that the brothers definitely shared the same parents as Stacy's great-grandmother Mary, and some records provided extra details, such as names and birth dates for some of their children.

With all the data she had gathered from the paper trail, Stacy hit the Internet. By searching the names of both of the brothers as well as their wives and children, she stumbled across the obituary of Harry's wife, which conveniently furnished the names of his now grown and married children as of 1992. Not having as much luck with Steve's family, she searched the newspapers in Scranton and found one with a Web site. A search of the newspaper's archives turned up a handful of articles with additional family details from the past decade or so, including a mention or two of the brothers' grandchildren.

Combining information from all these sources—census records, death certificates, naturalization records, Social Security applications, probate packets, and obituaries and other articles—Stacy was able to construct the third (and part of the fourth) generation of her descendancy chart (see the lower rows of Figure 8-2). Steve apparently had five sons and four daughters, while Harry had two sons and three daughters—meaning that there were plenty of Y-DNA lines to follow!

Stacy now turned to an online phone directory and began searching for the names of the most recent two generations of her chart. As expected, some of the people were not publicly listed, but several others were. She selected a daughter of Harry's and picked up the phone: "Hi, my name is Stacy. You don't know me, but I think we're cousins. My great-grandmother was your aunt Mary..."

An enjoyable half an hour on the phone later (those first calls can sometimes open the floodgates!)

CANDIDATE TIE-BREAKERS

In the Lucas case (see Figure 8-2), there are at least six candidates for testing. Should all six get tested? No. While it would be smart to get someone from both Harry's and Steve's lines tested to rule out non-paternity events, testing beyond that would be redundant, not to mention expensive! Barring any non-paternity events or recent mutations, the DNA test results of all of these men would be identical. In such situations, when you have more than one candidate, here are some tie-breakers for selecting the best one:

A descendant who bears the surname of interest (e.g., not his stepfather's), because it will be easier to explain results

The person who has the most close relatives, because that will provide a better cost-sharing opportunity

The person who's most interested and enthusiastic

Stacy could flesh out her chart with more names as well as slashes to indicate those who had passed away. From Harry's line, she had five DNA candidates, and from Steve's, she had at least one for comparison's sake, with the prospect of four other lines that could be pursued if necessary. She also had the pleasure of making the acquaintances of a delightful first cousin twice removed and an invitation to visit and see photos of her ancestor of interest, her great-great-grandfather Phillip Lucas—a nice bonus for her sleuthing efforts!

mtDNA: A SOLDIER'S TAIL

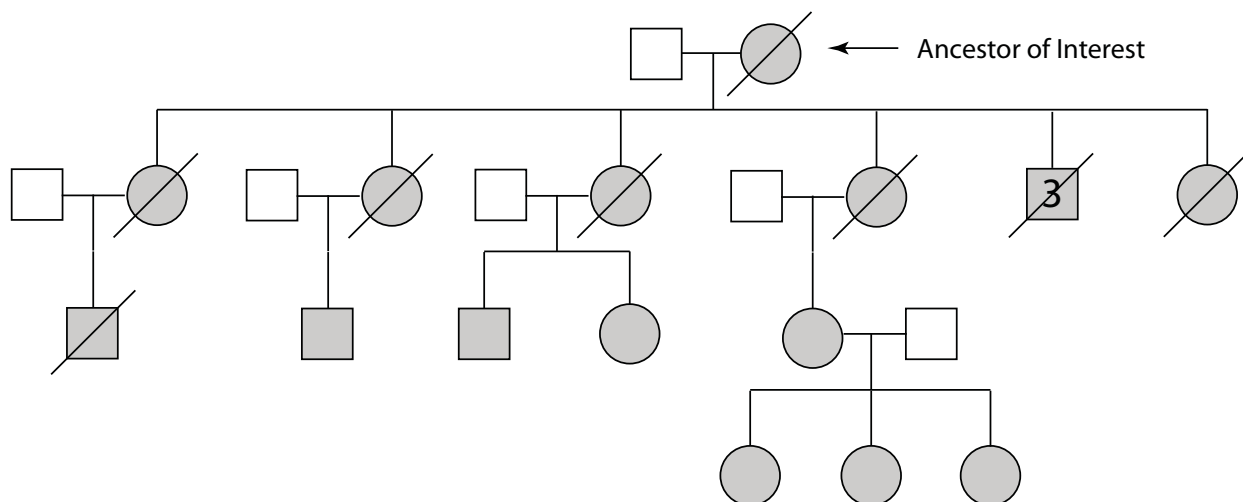
Now let's shift gears slightly and look at an mtDNA case that one of us researched for the U.S. Army. African-American soldier Cleveland Payne was born in 1912 in Illinois and lists his life in Korea in 1950. The Army wanted to find his family today, including relatives who could potentially provide mtDNA sample to compare against any remains that might be located. Due to a fire in 1973, Cleveland's personnel record had been destroyed, so details were skimpy.

The hunt began with the 1920 and 1930 census in order to learn the names of Cleveland's parents and siblings. Since he had obviously received his mtDNA from his mother, she was the ancestor of interest. Fortunately, Cleveland had come from a large family and had four brothers and five sisters, so there were many leads to follow.

Because the name Payne is relatively common, however, a search of the SSDI turned up only one individual who could be clearly identified as a brother. With no other obvious options, the brother's death certificate was ordered. But the document led to another roadblock because the brother had

apparently died unmarried and without children, and the information was a hospital employee, rather than a relative. Luckily, the certificate yielded another clue—the name of the funeral home that had handled the burial. A call to the funeral parlor resulted in the married names of three sisters who survived their brother as of 1977—a significant leap forward!

Figure 8-3: Following the mtDNA trail - All those shaded, without slashes, are testing candidates.



Returning to the SSDI with the sisters’ names revealed that at least two of the three had since died. A check of online newspaper archives quickly produced the full text of both their obituaries, but one proved to be another dead end because the sister had only one child, who had predeceased her, leaving not mtDNA lines to follow. The obituary for the other sister was only slightly more helpful. She apparently had a daughter, but the daughter had married into the name of Smith, meaning that she could be very difficult to pinpoint.

Once again, a funeral home (mentioned in the obituary) moved the case forward by providing contact information for the Smith daughter as of 1996, but the phone number had been disconnected. A reverse lookup of the address at an online phone directory produced dozens of hits, suggesting an apartment complex. Scanning them, a number for the management company was located. The person who answered the phone indicated that Ms. Smith had moved 2 years ago but still lived in the area. She agreed to take the Army’s contact information and ask around for this niece of the soldier.

The niece mustn’t have moved far because she called the next day and provided the names of seven mtDNA-eligible people in the family. Typical of mtDNA cases and our society today, the seven candidates now sported six different surnames through marriage (none of which was Payne), and the family one situated in Illinois was now scattered in Oregon, California, and Arizona. And while Cleveland Payne’s story is still incomplete, it’s hoped that he, like some of his compatriots who served in Korea more than 50 years ago, will finally be identified and properly interred with the honors and recognition due for their sacrifice.

As you've probably realized, mtDNA searches tend to proceed much like Y-DNA ones, except for the additional challenge of dealing with names changes each generation. For this reason they usually involve heavier reliance on the documents that might divulge a woman's married names, such as obituaries, wills, marriage records (with brides' indexes) and death certificates. But the same reverse genealogy approach can be used with both Y- and mtDNA situations.

REVERSE GENEALOGY GUIDELINES

If you have reason to use reverse genealogy to identify and locate potential participants for your study, a few straightforward guidelines can make your search much easier. Fortunately, we've had lots of experiences in this area, so we'd like to share some tactics we've found especially helpful. We have deliberately emphasized examples from the past 50 to 150 years (because many genealogists will find themselves focusing on this timeframe) and widely available resources (such as those found online), but depending on your specific circumstances, you may find yourself dealing with earlier centuries and more traditional, non-Internet-based research. In either case, the following general principles still apply.

REMEMBER TO SURROUND AND CONQUER

Back in Chapter 1, *If You're New to Genealogy*, we suggested a surround-and-conquer approach to research, and that definitely applies when it comes to finding DNA testing candidates. Rather than fixating on one individual and allowing him or her to become a bottleneck, your search will often be more productive if you expand your scope to include relatives, friends, and other associates. You can use the information found this way to work your way back to the targeted person and then move forward in time to his or her descendants, your potential testing partners. Doing so, for instance, may reveal a previously unknown married name for a woman whose mtDNA trail you wish to follow—perhaps in her father's Civil War pension file, her brother's will, or her mother's obituary. This, in turn, would allow you to find records pertaining directly to her that would likely mention her children. It may seem like a detour initially, but you'd be surprised how much time these seemingly indirect routes can save you! And incidentally, the closer you get to the present, the more useful you're apt to find this approach. The living are well protected by privacy laws, unlisted numbers, and other mechanisms, so reaching them through associates—perhaps military or school buddies, neighbors, or fellow members of their sailing or antique car club—may be your most efficient means of contact.

REMEMBER THE WOMEN!

Since the majority of genetic genealogy that's being conducted today is focused on the surname projects, this seemingly cuts women out because they don't have a Y-chromosome. But bearing the surround-and-conquer tactic in mind, it's important to remember that women can participate by proxy. If they're interested in learning about their maiden name, for example, they can talk a brother, cousin, father or uncle into testing in their place.

Since genealogists are apt to be more interested in DNA projects than people contacted at random, it's useful to know that somewhere between 63 and 72 percent (depending on which survey you choose to believe) of genealogists are female. This means that anyone considering launching a DNA project would

be smart to make an effort to enlist the help of women in recruiting related men to participate. In fact, it was interesting to learn from a survey we conducted of DNA projects that approximately a third of study administrators are women and that women are far more likely to run multiple surname projects than men. They may not have the Y, but the sure now how to find it!

CHOOSE YOUR INITIAL TARGET WISELY

If you're fortunate enough to have several names you could pursue—say a cluster of siblings born to a couple named Brown between 1850 and 1870—begin your search by focusing on these:

1. The most recently born
2. The one with the most unusual name
3. A male

The youngest person is your closest bridge of living descendants. If you start with the child born in 1870, you're essentially already a generation closer to today than if you opted to start with the one born in 1850. And if the children are named Thomas, John, James, Elijah, Mary and Anne, you're apt to have more success looking for Elijah Brown than the others, whose names are painfully common. Finally, although we don't wish to be sexist, it is true that males are often easier to follow through the generations because they retain their surnames, so all other factors being equal, you'll probably save time by starting with a man (unless you're tracing an mtDNA line that makes a woman your primary focus). If your efforts to find the first person fail to produce results, apply the surround-and-conquer axiom above, and move on to the others.

WHEN NECESSARY, GO BACKWARD TO COME FORWARD

Most of us today are trained to think in a linear fashion. When we're researching our family trees, we start with ourselves and methodically work our way back through the generations, so when we're doing reverse genealogy, we expect to start at a given point in the past and steadily march our way forward in time. In principle, this makes a lot of sense, but based on our experience with hundreds of reverse genealogy scenarios, we've found that a zigzag pattern—going back and forth through time—is often more efficient. Partly, this is because taking a step back in time often allows you to gather the names of relatives and associates—yes, surround and conquer yet again!

For instance, we had one case where we found a particular family in the 1930 census, but couldn't find traces in more recent documents. So we backed up to the 1900 census to find the father of the 1930 family as a child with his parents and siblings. Fortunately, one of his brothers had an unusual name, and we were able to leap forward to 1969, the year this brother died and was listed in the Social Security Death Index. We went into reverse once again, locating this brother in the 1930 census with his wife and children. Finally we combined information from the SSDI (where he died) with the data from the 1930 census (the names of his children) and searched current phone directories for his now-grown offspring in that town. Bingo! It was a simple matter of asking the gentleman we located about his first cousins to find the family we initially sought. We were blocked when we tried to go straight from 1930 to today, but a zigzag 1930-1900-1969-1930-2003 pattern did the job.

In the course of research done to locate DNA candidates, you may also occasionally find it necessary to shift into reverse because the lines you're pursuing have died out in terms of the type of DNA you're seeking. (This is sometimes referred to as *daughtering out* if you're seeking a Y-DNA line and a few have suggested *petering out* as the mtDNA equivalent.) Perhaps you're trying to follow a Y-chromosome line, for instance, and the last known individual in the family had died childless. In this case, you would need to back up a generation to look for other lines to potentially follow into the present. Perhaps his father had brothers whose descendants could be traced, but if not, maybe his grandfather did. You may well discover that sometimes the only way to move your research forward is to go back in time first!

FOLLOW THE TRAIL OF THE DECEASED TO FIND THE LIVING

Those who have already tried their hand at locating DNA testing candidates often discover that the last step is the hardest. Many a researcher has found someone listed as a youngster in the 1930 census, but not been able to find that person today. One reason is our geographic mobility, and we don't mean just recent decades. When trying to locate families of soldiers who served in WWII and Korea, for example, we find a disproportionate number of relatives in California and Northwestern states due at least partly to the lingering effects of Depression-era migration.

Again, thanks to privacy laws and the proliferation of unlisted and cellular phone numbers, it can be very challenging to make the leap from 1930 to the present. Over the past few years, many states have enacted stricter laws pertaining to records of the deceased, but even so, it's usually easier to obtain data about those who have passed away than the living. For that reason, we suggest making heavy use of resources such as the Social Security Death Index, online state death indexes, and obituaries. The SSDI is one of the most helpful resources for discovering where a family you're seeking may have resided within the past few decades, and if a state index exists, you may be able to secure a few extra details. Obituaries are even better because they frequently list survivors and where they reside. So if you can't find a particular person, it's smart strategy to look for the paper trail generated by the deaths of their parents, spouses, and siblings.

BEST RESOURCES FOR REVERSE GENEALOGY

Now that you're equipped with some reverse genealogy tactics, the questions that naturally springs to mind is where to start. If you've been doing genealogical research for any period of time, you're familiar with the standards, such as www.ancestry.com, and www.cyndislist.com. These are almost certainly among your bookmarks. But if your goal is to try to locate a DNA testing participant, which resources will help you find him the quickest?

Through our extensive tracing experience, we have learned that no two situations are alike, so the resources used may vary widely. Still, we realize there were certain "old reliable" we turned to over and over in these quests, but we were hard pressed to rank the top performers—the ones that were the most essential to success. So we decided to conduct an experiment.

We randomly selected 10 cases we had worked on and retraced the research trail, logging the resources that had been used in each one. All cases involved the use of several resources, and given a tool may

have been used consulted multiple times. To simply matters, we counted a resource only once for each case in which it contributed to the solution. A convenient ranking quickly emerged, as can be seen in Figure 8-4.

EVERY-NAME CENSUS

The clear-cut superstar is the digitized, 1930 every-name census index (available for a fee at ancestry.com), with the 1880 (available at www.familysearch.org and www.ancestry.com) playing a supporting role. This tool was a key ingredient in 80 percent of the cases we analyzed.

With the ability to use multiple variables (state, age, place of birth etc.) as well as wildcard spellings to zero in on your target—one among its 124 million entries—the 1930 census is an indispensable resource. And since everyone in the family is listed, it’s a potential surround-and-conquer weapon for finding additional names to pursue. Of course, its true value, as alluded to earlier, stems from its recency. When you find a name here—particularly a child—you’re already dealing with someone who may well be alive. And if they are deceased, odds are that they lived long enough to leave a trace in the SSDI.

Figure 8-4: Best reverse genealogy resources

Rank	Resource	Frequency of Use (%)
1	Every-name census (1930, 1880, 1870, 1860)	80
2	Online lineage collections	70
3	Online phone directories	60
4	Social Security Death Index	50
5	Online State Vital Records	40
6	Other census indexes (e.g. 1900, 1910, 1920, etc)	30
7	Search engine (e.g. Google, etc.)	20
8	Other sources (e.g., newspapers, real estate, etc.)	20

The 1880 census is also very powerful due to the fact that all 51 million entries have been indexed, rather than just the heads-of-household as is the case with most census records. In fact, the 1880 and 1930 censuses often work well in tandem. If you can find someone as a child in the 1880 census, you can often find him as a 50-something in the 1930 census, enabling you to almost instantly leap half a century forward in time. Recently the 1870 and 1860 censuses were also completely indexed and may prove almost as useful.

ONLINE LINEAGE COLLECTIONS

The second most useful resource, which contributed to 70 percent of the cases, is the ever-expanding collection of online family trees uploaded to the Internet by your fellow researchers. By these we mean the ones that can be found in such places as Ancestry World Tree (www.ancestry.com), World Family Tree (www.genealogy.com), and Ancestral and Pedigree Resource files (www.familysearch.org). We were actually surprised to find this resource so highly ranked, especially given the fact that it's no secret that there's plenty of misinformation in online lineages. Taking a closer look, we discovered that there's usually enough correct information about recent generations—the ones that are often the toughest to trace—to lead you to someone in the family today. The number and mushrooming content of online trees means that many of us will find some potential leads embedded in them, and making contact is easy since you can simply e-mail the individual who submitted the tree that interests you.

ONLINE PHONE DIRECTORIES

Online phone directories often provide the last bit of information necessary to make contact, so it's not surprising that they placed third in importance. Since approximately one-third of Americans have unlisted numbers, it makes sense that 60 percent of cases were facilitated with this resource. Our favorites change over time due to the shifting functionality, but our current default is www.whitepages.com, which incorporates handy features such as reverse lookups on phone numbers and addresses. If we chose to search several directories at once, www.theultimates.com gets our vote, and for international searches, www.infobel.com/teldir provides a valuable launching pad with its links to directories for countries around the globe.

SOCIAL SECURITY DEATH INDEX

We've already mentioned how useful the SSDI is, so if anything, we might have expected it to place higher than fourth. Many people found in the 1930 census can be traced forward in time by locating their SSDI entry, and the locations mentioned for last residence and benefit can point you to an area where you will find family members today. This information, in turn, can steer you to other resources, such as local newspapers that may have obituaries.

The SSDI is available for free at several sites on the Internet, and like phone directories, there functionality may be tweaked from time to time. These days, we tend to do most of our sleuthing at www.rootsweb.com and www.familysearch.org, two sites that offer complementary search flexibility (e.g., wildcards at Rootsweb and name variations at FamilySearch). We've also found Rootsweb to usually be the most up-to-date.

ONLINE STATE VITAL RECORDS

The past few years have been tough ones for genealogists in terms of access to online vital records and indexes. For both legislative and fiscal reasons, many states have taken measures to restrict access to such databases (and documents they cover), making our research more challenging, but there's still more out there than many realize. As of this writing, for instance, a subscription to Ancestry.com

provides at least some 20th-century indexes for 24 states. A few states, perhaps recognizing the income-generating potential of genealogical orders, have uploaded their own indexes.

Illinois, for instance, allows you to search for deaths that occurred from 1916 to 1950. Since the availability of these resources varies widely by state and is in such a constant state of flux, you may wish to bookmark Joe Beine's *Online Searchable Death Indexes* (www.deathindexes.com) to keep up to date. And if you can't find anything on the internet, it's always worth searching the Family History Library Catalog (www.familysearch.org) by state and county (look under the "vital records" category) to see if perhaps the library has any relevant microfilms.

The value of these fifth-place records is somewhat similar to the SSDI (e.g., narrowing the date of death to make it easier to find an obituary), but you may be able to obtain extra details of you qualify to obtain a copy of the relevant certificate from the state in question. For instance, a death certificate may give you the name of the informant, often a surviving spouse or child, or perhaps lead you to the cemetery where you can other family members buried in the same plot.

OTHER CENSUS INDEXES

Coming in a sixth place are other online census indexes—that is, the ones that have been indexed primarily by head-of-household, rather than by every name. At present, we tend to search the 1920 at www.ancestry.com, the 1910 at www.nygbs.org or www.godfrey.org, and the 1900 at www.godfrey.org or www.genealogy.com. All of these are fee-based but reward you with digitized images when you find a hit. Searching each of these, rather than jumping from 1880 to 1930, can help you flesh out the family tree and obtain additional names (e.g., a daughter born in 1891 who married before 1910 will appear with her birth family only in 1900). Earlier census years are also available at all three of these sites.

SEARCH ENGINES

When confronted with a situation where we have the name and place of residence of someone living today but cannot find an address or phone number, we often turn to search engines. Of course, you can try your favorite engine at any point in a candidate-hunt (especially if you're fortunate enough to be dealing with an unusual name), but we find them especially helpful for this particular roadblock.

In one recent effort, for instance, we had a name and town, but came up empty in the phone directories. A quick visit to www.google.com to enter these details produced an article about a policewoman in a local newspaper. She was the one we were looking for, and the article furnished enough information to make the final contact possible. The effectiveness of the name-location combination in circumventing the unlisted number phenomenon earned search engines the seventh position in our experiment.

OTHER SOURCES

Holding up the rear is a collection of resources that may be used for specific circumstances. This catch-all category includes newspapers, obituary and cemetery resources, county-based Web sites, public

records (e.g., real estate, incorporations, licenses, etc.), and specialized sites, such as those geared towards military personnel and school buddies. Unfortunately, discussing all of these would easily fill another chapter, but we would like to mention that newspapers—loaded as they are with obituaries, marriage and birth announcements, business dealings, and sometimes amazingly trivial tidbits about your ancestors—are coming on especially strong with various vendors offering a growing number of digitized and fully searchable collections. In fact, we suspect that if we were to repeat our experiment in a year, they would emerge as their own category. Among our bookmarks for newspapers are www.newslibrary.com, www.newslink.org, www.ancestry.com (the Historical Newspapers collection), www.godfrey.org (for *The New York Times* and other major newspapers), and www.obitsarchive.com.

BROADCASTING

The preceding were our recommended guidelines and resources for reverse genealogy, but what if you've decided to launch a broad project, open to anyone with a given surname? In that case, you're probably going to adopt a broadcasting strategy, so let's start by peeking over the shoulders of a few people who made the same decision.

BROADCASTING: ROSE

David W. Brown, who manages the Rose DNA Study, one of the largest DNA surname projects in the world with more than 140 participants, believes that it is “almost essential to have a surname publication that is widespread—at least to grow to the size of our project.” He explains that having a dedicated genealogist on board is a significant advantage and that many of their participants are now recruiting through the efforts of Christine Rose, a well-known and highly respected professional who also serves the primary researchers for The Rose Family Association. In addition to getting the word out through the *Rose Family Bulletin*, the project maintains a Web site (www.ourworld.cs.com/Christine4Rose) and taps into other resources, such as postings on various genealogy boards, their testing company's surname list, and word of mouth.

BROADCASTING: HULL

James Reynolds Hull, Ph.D., confesses to “organizational jitters” when initiating the Hull Surname DNA Study. He started by sending 500 letters of introduction, an effort which was not very successful. Fortunately, as a long-time member of the Hull family Association (HFA), he realized that he had a built-in database of potential Hull donors. Working together with the HFA and its genealogist, he has been able to seek and find those Hull men who are known to be related by way of tradition or historical documentation to Hull progenitors.

BROADCASTING: MCCARTHY

Perhaps one of the most ambitious outreach efforts can be credited to The McCarthy Surname Study, run by Cliff McCarthy and Barbara McCarthy. Open to all males with variations of the McCarthy name (e.g. McCarty, MacCarthy, etc.) the project administrators began seeking participants by placing announcements on genealogical message and mailing boards and having the study added to master Y-

chromosome project listings. Capitalizing on established reputation of The Clan MacCarthy Society, they then sent letters to all members and had information posted on the Society's Web site. Going a step further, they also did a direct mailing to all 43 McCarthy males in Dunmanway area of County Cork, Ireland (a region of particular interest), and sent flyers to the Dunmanway librarian requesting that they be posted on local bulletin boards. Yet another tactic used was contacting relevant organizations and periodicals in both the United States and Ireland, asking that a write-up about the study be printed in their publications. Last but not least, Cliff and Barbara relied on the power of word of mouth to attract more candidates.

BROADCASTING GUIDELINES

You may not be planning as large a project as the Rose, Hull and McCarthy studies, but we hope in reading about their experiences, you've found a few ideas worth mimicking. And while the broadcasting approach is more straightforward than the reverse genealogy, keeping a few guidelines in mind can help those crumbs you sprinkle lead more testing candidates your way.

LEAVE LOTS OF TRACES

We'll discuss the best resources for getting the word out shortly, but the primary objective with the broadcasting strategy is making yourself findable, so you'll want to toss out as many crumbs as possible. And just as with advertising, there's power in repetition. A single announcement on a surname message board may net you several inquiries, but popping up from time to time will help your project gather more momentum.

FOLLOW THE RULES

Having just recommended that you post periodically, we now need to offer a qualifier to this advice: Follow the rules to the nth degree. Some board and mailing list administrators are less than receptive to DNA testing. They may not care for it personally, or they may regard messages about projects as nothing more than crudely disguised sales pitches. In a few extreme, cases, administrators have even been known to routinely delete any postings referencing DNA. Rather than do battle with such people, experienced DNA project managers have found it more effective to do all they can to accommodate them.

Make it a habit to read the rules before making your first posting to any board or list, and never include dollar amounts. For that matter, don't make any mention of money or payment, even though you may wish to do so in the interest of full disclosure. The appearance of commercialism is the most frequent reason given for posting refusals. And while repetition is important, don't wear out your welcome by simply announcing your project over and over. After the first message or two, add value to your announcements by sharing results or insights that will be of interest to the other readers. Stick to the relevant topic, and then direct people to your Web site or e-mail address for additional details. Finally, if you want to maximize the chances of all your messages appearing, you may even wish to engage in private e-mail exchange with the administrator before making your first posting. Such consideration can go a long way to minimizing potential conflicts down the road.

DO A LITTLE HARVESTING

Just as you're leaving a trail on the Internet, others have done so before you - and frequently with their e-mail address included.

This means that if you look in likely places, such as relevant surname and locality boards, you'll be able to find contact information for people who might be interested in your project. Mind you, we're not advocating any sort of automated approach where you collect all email addresses of anyone with your surname, but we feel that sending a message or two to individuals who have posted messages on pertinent genealogical resources is reasonable.

And while most who use this tactic look for candidate specifically on boards and mailing lists, we suggest that you expand your reach by searching online lineage collections as well. Researchers have different preferences; some who like to upload pedigrees may not participate in surname boards, so you may find extra candidates this way. Also, if you're seeking particular testees - say, Irish-born Reynolds - these online trees often provide enough detail to enable you to hone in on such people. A search in Ancestry's World Tree collection, for instance, turns up more than a quarter of a million Reynolds entries, but restricting it to those born in Ireland brings the number down to less than a thousand - many of which were submitted by a small cluster of individuals whose e-mail addresses appear along with their data. Of course, there will be considerable overlap in the entries, but these online lineage collections provide an often overlooked means of learning about fellow researchers who are interested in a given name.

CREATE A WEB SITE

This is not an absolute requirement, but one feature all the largest DNA projects have in common is a Web site. And while creating site may require an investment of time, it can ultimately save you much more by allowing you to share everything once rather than a constant series of one-on-one communications. Having a strong Web site gives you an obvious place to direct board and list readers for more information. It allows you cover the basics of DNA testing, so you won't have to coach every would-be testee individually. It permits you to easily share results so participants don't have to rely solely on you for their information. It can extricate you from the middleman role by providing contact information for others involved (with their permission, naturally). And of course, it will help you attract more participants by building credibility and always being there when someone has a question. We'll consider the ingredients of an effective Web site and share some of our favorites in Chapter 10.

WHAT'S THE WIIFM?

If you're trying to recruit participants, it always helps to put yourself in their shoes to try to understand what they hope to derive from testing. Addressing the “WIIFM - the “What's in it for me?” question - might lead to some creative ideas. For instance, many people have a family tale of being related to a famous person with their surname and would like to know if it's really true. If you can locate an appropriate relative of the famous individual (maybe you can't reach close relatives, but second, third, and more distant cousins may be accessible) and persuade them to join your study, others would then have a means to see if they truly do share a common ancestor with the famous person. An example of this can be seen in David Roper's project focusing on Ben Franklin's DNA (www.roperld.com/FranklinBenDNA.htm), although we want to be quick to point out that David has long researched many Franklin lines.

As another example, many Irish genealogists are stymied in trying to ascertain where in Ireland their ancestors came from, so you could conceivably contact people with a given name still living in Ireland today and request that they participate. Once several agree, those of Irish descent from other countries might be more interested in getting tested in the hope of matching a present-day resident, thereby providing a hint of where they should focus their future research in Irish records. Even the prospect of a match would encourage some to participate.

To get the creative juices flowing, just ask yourself what you would hope to learn under ideal circumstances from participants in your own project. Figure out what your dream scenario is, and see if there are any steps you could take to improve the likelihood of it actually happening for you or anyone else in your study.

BROADCASTING RESOURCES

The DNA project manager has many broadcasting options, but as administrators ourselves, we were curious to know which ones were the most popular and the most effective. So we included a few questions on this topic in our survey of experienced coordinators. We've distilled the results in Figure 8-5. The popularity of a given technique is measured as a percentage of projects using it (and rounded to the nearest percent), while effectiveness is admittedly somewhat more subjective. Based on our interpretation of managers' comments, we rated each technique as highly, moderately, or slightly effective. The results are shown in descending order of popularity.

Figure 8-5: Popularity and effectiveness of broadcasting techniques

Technique	Popularity (%)	Effectiveness
Surname and locality-based message boards and mailing lists	68	high
Via family/surname association (and its newsletter and/or membership list)	33	high
Web site	30	moderate
Email (mass or list mailings)	30	moderate
Testing company lists	13	moderate
Traditional mail	18	slight
Word of mouth	15	high
Phone calls	13	high
Other DNA project lists (e.g., www.dnalist.net)	5	moderate
Reunions	5	high
Announcements in genealogical publications	3	N/A
Other (e.g., newspaper articles)	3	N/A

Not surprisingly, most project managers use a combination of techniques to improve their results, with many claiming four or five approaches. And we had anticipated finding good old-fashioned message posting leading the way! Beyond that, we were mostly interested in the disparities between popularity and effectiveness. For instance, almost 20 percent had tried snail mail (more than we would have imagined) but found it to be disappointing.

But the reverse is that phone calls and reunions are tactics that apparently offer untapped opportunity to recruit new participants. Jim Hill, whom we encountered a short while ago, runs several DNA projects and is convinced that personal telephone calls recruit the most people: “Since it is ‘now’ communication, the questions get answered, and I can get some sense of why a person might be hesitant and respond to those concerns.”

And Mary Lou Hudson has had great success using family reunions to get people interested in DNA testing for several names: “My Cox reunion in Texas budgets money each year for DNA testing. This past

year, I made a motion at my Creekmore reunion to sponsor testing, and it was accepted. After I returned home, I received several messages from men who attended and wanted to become donors. Last year at my Anderson reunion, the group voted to sponsor DNA testing, and I asked them this year to sponsor more testing. So far, the reunions I am involved in have been more than happy to get involved. If a group holds family reunions, that would be the time to get people interested in DNA testing.”

We also noted that word of mouth is another underutilized technique, and since “happy customers” are the best proponents, now seems a good time to turn our attention to the people side of participant recruitment.