Research Logs

What is a research log?
• A record of what you are looking for, where you looked, and what you found.

Why use a research log?
• Track positive and negative searches.
• Note the date a database was searched.
• Create source citations to be used other places.
• Show at a glance what has been found.
• Evaluate information and evidence.
• Be more productive and efficient in research.
• Avoid duplication of effort.
• Break through brick walls with better record keeping.

What are different types of research logs?
• The handwritten research log form
• The electronic research log

The Handwritten Research Log Form
• Download a template from FamilySearch or design your own template.
• Print several copies to fill out by hand.
• Use in archives where only paper is allowed.
• Keep copies in binders or file folders.
• Sample research log: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Use_Appropriate_Forms

The Electronic Research Log
• Can be created in a table format in Word or Google Docs.
• Using a spreadsheet format in Excel or Google Sheets allows you to have multiple pages in a single spreadsheet for different generations or family members.
• With a spreadsheet, each column can be sorted to view specific searches.
• Keep your research log in your computer files with each ancestor or family.
• The ability to cut and paste information from websites makes it simple to fill out.
• Add links to online records to quickly access them again.
Set an Objective for the Research Log

- Determine what the research question - identify an ancestor, prove a family relationship or discover ancestor actions.
- Create an objective by using key identifiers of name, birth, residence, marriage, death.

What Categories to use for a Research Log

- **Date**
  - List the date the search was performed.
  - Some databases are updated periodically and need to be rechecked later.

- **Repository**
  - Record the website, library, archive, or other physical location that holds the source.
  - The repository could be your own files if it is an inherited letter or document.

- **URL/Call#/Microfilm#**
  - In this column copy and paste the URL from the website.
  - Because some URL’s can be long, use Bitly.com to create much shorter links for your research logs. [http://bit.ly/2mNTL6b](http://bit.ly/2mNTL6b)
  - If researching at a library or archive, record the unique call number or microfilm number.

- **Searching for**
  - List the specific search – record type, name, date if applicable.
  - Sort the data by this column to organize the research log by record type.

- **Locality**
  - List the specific location: city, county, state, or country.
  - Sort the data by this column to organize the research log by locality.

- **Source Citation**
  - Create a source citation the first time the source is viewed using the components of a citation.
    - Author of the source
    - Title or description of the source
    - Publication information for the source
    - Location within the source and location where the source can be viewed
  - If the search is negative, there won’t be any specifics of an event to list, so just name the database, where it is located and the date it was checked.

- **Results/Comments**
  - If nothing was found use NIL which is short for “not in location.”
  - Add comments about why it might not have been there.
  - If a record was located detail all the information.
  - Copy names exactly as they appear in the record.
  - Use the copy and paste function to add information from a website abstract.
• For lengthy documents such as a will or deed, abstract the information or add a link to a full transcription on a Google doc.

• **Document Numbers**
  o Add document numbers as the last task in writing the report
  o Match document numbers between the research log, report, family group records, and documents
  o Attach the source citation and document number to each document submitted with the report

• **Tips for Accreditation Candidates**
  o Fill out each part of the research log as you search a source
  o Include all negative searches on the research log
  o Create the complete source citation the first time you view the source
## Sample Research Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>REPOSITORY URL, Call # Film #</th>
<th>SEARCHING FOR</th>
<th>LOCALITY</th>
<th>SOURCE CITATION</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 Jun 2017</td>
<td>Family History Library Salt Lake City, UT 978.8473/C1 B3k v.1</td>
<td>Newspaper mention of George W. Dillard</td>
<td>Georgia, Muscogee County</td>
<td>Elizabeth Evans Kilbourne, Columbus, Georgia, Newspaper Clippings (Columbus Enquirer Volume I, 1832-1834), (Savannah, Georgia: E. Evans Kilbourne, 1997-2009), 4.</td>
<td>Saturday, March 26, 1831: &quot;Candidates for Office: We are authorized to announce George W. Dillard as a candidate for Clerk of the superior Court of the county of Muscogee...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>