**Online Genealogical Resources in the Digital Library of Georgia**

*By Edward A. Johnson and Donnie Summerlin*

The increasing online availability of resources related to local and family history has opened up many new research opportunities for genealogists. Karen Minton’s article “Virtual Genealogy Research – Finding Authoritative Resources Online in Georgia” (*Georgia Genealogical Society Quarterly*, Volume 46, Number 2, Summer 2010, pages 109-117) described the many resources available in GALILEO (Georgia Library Learning Online), including a brief description of resources offered through the Digital Library of Georgia. Building on that earlier piece, the current article focuses on genealogy-related resources available at the Digital Library of Georgia in more detail.

**What is the Digital Library of Georgia?**

The Digital Library of Georgia provides free online access to over one million digital objects relating to Georgia’s history and culture. The Digital Library of Georgia offers more than 200 collections, drawn from 60 institutions and 100 government agencies. Based at the University of Georgia Libraries, the Digital Library of Georgia is an initiative of GALILEO, which is Georgia’s Virtual Library. Drawing on a useful library metaphor, the Digital Library of Georgia may be considered as the virtual “special collections” department of GALILEO. Visit the Digital Library of Georgia at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/>.

*[Image 1 – Digital Library of Georgia home page -* [*http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/*](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/)*]*

The Digital Library of Georgia’s home page offers several intuitive features that enable site users to easily access the extensive online content and drill down to the specific information they seek. The search feature enables powerful advanced search capability as well as simple basic searches. Users can also browse by topic, time period (using an interactive timeline), county (using interactive maps), institution, media type, or collection title.

Although the Digital Library of Georgia does provide a portal service for accessing external online collections, it also undertakes many collaborative digitization projects, generating internal online collections that dramatically improve access to rare/fragile physical collections, using its own digitization capability and technical expertise. Many of these collaborative digitization projects are supported by Georgia HomePLACE (Providing Library and Archives Collections Electronically); HomePLACE is supported with Federal LSTA funds administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Georgia Public Library Service, a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

In this article, we take a brief look at several Digital Library of Georgia collections that can be especially helpful for genealogical research.

**Georgia Historic Newspapers Archives**

Searching through reels of newspaper microfilm is one of the most common and time consuming activities a genealogist takes on. It could take a researcher days and even weeks to locate a birth announcement or obituary of a particular relative. Genealogists and historians have long searched for a more convenient way of tracing family histories through Georgia’s newspapers. In response to this demand, the Digital Library of Georgia began work on a project in 2007 to create online archives for the state’s historic newspapers and over the course of the project has digitized over 400,000 newspaper pages from around the state.

These online newspaper archives are freely accessible to the public from the comfort of their own home with an easy to use interface that provides users with the option of either manually browsing through newspaper issues as they would if they were using a microfilm reader at the local library or by performing keyword searches for specific words or phrases. These searches can be organized by date, title, and relevance. The archive also includes a function that highlights search results on the newspaper page images, making it easy for users to locate the information they seek.

Because newspapers involve large scale formats that are difficult to accommodate with ordinary web presentation methods, accessing the digitized newspapers requires downloading and installing the DjVu browser plug-in. DjVu enables seamless, instant zooming and panning of page images; legible large-dimension grayscale images at efficient file size; and searching, printing, and other features not available with ordinary browser-based approaches. Although DjVu offers quick start-up and low cost, and was selected for its technical feasibility given limited available programming resources, the Digital Library of Georgia continues to evaluate other potential approaches.

*[Image 2 - Atlanta Historic Newspapers Archive home page -* [*http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers*](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers)*]*

*[Image 3 – Atlanta Georgian front page, 2/22/1911 -* [*http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers/view?docId=news/aga1911/aga1911-0923.xml*](http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers/view?docId=news/aga1911/aga1911-0923.xml)*]*

The online newspaper archives available through the Digital Library of Georgia are comprised of over thirty five newspaper titles in eight Georgia cities ranging in date from 1808 to 2006 (the bulk of the papers are pre-1923) and include:

* The Atlanta Historic Newspapers Archive (1847-1922)
* The Macon Telegraph Archive (1826-1908)
* The Athens Historic Newspapers Archive (1827-1922)
* The Columbus Enquirer Archive (1828-1890)
* The Southern Israelite Archive (1929-1986)
* The Milledgeville Historic Newspapers Archive (1808-1922)
* The Red and Black Archive, the University of Georgia student newspaper (1893-2006)

These newspaper archives and others can be found at [http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/MediaTypes/Newspapers.html](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/MediaTypes/Newspapers.html?Welcome). The Digital Library of Georgia’s newspaper digitization efforts are ongoing and new cities and titles will be added in the months and years to come. The digitization initiative draws upon the extensive microfilm holdings of the Georgia Newspaper Project, in operation at the University of Georgia Libraries since the early 1950s. The digitization project is made possible as part of an initiative with Georgia HomePLACE and GALILEO and utilizes LSTA funds administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

**Sanborn**® **Fire Insurance Maps**

Sanborn® maps provide highly detailed information about neighborhoods, blocks, even individual buildings, in many Georgia towns. These maps were originally developed for fire insurance assessment purposes, but now have many uses for history and genealogy research. The Digital Library of Georgia’s online collection provides 4,445 maps depicting commercial, industrial, and residential areas in 133 municipalities in Georgia, during the period from 1884 through 1922. Due to the enormous size of the collection, this massive digitization project (supported by Georgia HomePLACE) was phased over three years from 2005 through 2007. The digitization initiative drew upon the extensive microfilm holdings of the University of Georgia Libraries Map Collection.

*[Image 4 - Sanborn® Fire Insurance maps home page -* [*http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/*](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/)*]*

Visit the Sanborn® maps home page at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/>. The intuitive interface provides, in addition to the usual basic and advanced search features, the special capability of searching by street address. Users can also browse by city, county, or year. These powerful access tools allow genealogists to track down amazingly detailed information about, for example, the houses occupied by ancestors, often including such details as floorplan, number of stories, type of construction, lighting and heating systems, lot size and shape, and even outbuildings on the property.

Moreover, because there are often multiple maps covering a specific location over several decades, it’s often possible to track how lots and buildings evolved over time. For example, a series of maps may depict the addition of wings or stories to a building, or the construction of new outbuildings on the lot. The maps might also show demolition of buildings or loss through natural disasters.

**Vanishing Georgia**

The Vanishing Georgia collection arose from a Georgia Archives project (conducted 1975-1996) aimed at preserving Georgia’s many historical photographs. Georgia Archives staff traveled around the state in a converted school bus, photographing historical images and collecting information from donors about what the images depicted. Digitized by the Digital Library of Georgia in 2003 (with support from Georgia HomePLACE), the online collection consists of nearly 18,000 images from all over Georgia, and documents over 100 years of the state’s history.

*[Image 5 - Vanishing Georgia home page -* [*http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/vanga/*](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/vanga/)*]*

Visit the Vanishing Georgia online collection at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/vanga/>. The powerful search and browse features allow users access to the historic photographs, which cover an extremely broad range of subject matter. The images of people and places, along with donor-provided information accompanying the images, often have much value for local history and family history research. The online collection is also available through “Georgia’s Virtual Vault” on the Georgia Archives website at <http://cdm.sos.state.ga.us/cdm4/vanishing.php>.

**African American Funeral Programs from the East Central Georgia Regional Library**

For filling in gaps in African American genealogy, resources such as this collection of funeral programs from churches in Augusta, Georgia, and the surrounding area (and a few outliers from other states) can be especially valuable.

*[Image 6 – African American Funeral Programs home page -* [*http://funeral.galileo.usg.edu/funeral/*](http://funeral.galileo.usg.edu/funeral/)*]*

Visit the African American Funeral Programs from the East Central Georgia Regional Library online collection at <http://funeral.galileo.usg.edu/funeral/>. The collection includes over 1000 funeral programs from 1933 to 2008 (most date from the 1960s and later). The programs usually contain extensive genealogical information, including name, birth/death dates, and photographs of the deceased, along with information about relatives and past residences, and of course burial location. Many people described in the programs were prominent in their communities and involved in the civil rights movement. The East Central Georgia Regional Library collaborated with the Digital Library of Georgia to bring this project into production (with support by Georgia HomePLACE) in 2009.

**Gordon County, Georgia, Obituaries**

Obituaries have long been important genealogical resources, so well before computers were widely available, libraries and other institutions worked to improve access to obituary information through creation of physical index card systems and other paper-based approaches. In 2010, the Calhoun-Gordon County Library collaborated with the Digital Library of Georgia to establish (with Georgia HomePLACE support) an online version of its massive obituary clippings files, drawn from the Calhoun Times and previous Gordon County newspapers no longer in print.

Visit the Gordon County online obituaries at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/CollectionsA-Z/gco_information.html>. The website offers powerful searching and browsing for its large online collection of 46,586 obituaries, ranging from the 19th through the 21 centuries.

**Georgia Death Certificates, 1919-1927**

The Georgia Archives collection of the state’s death certificates is also available via a link from the Digital Library of Georgia to the Georgia Archives’ Virtual Vault. The collection contains thousands of digital scans of death certificates ranging in date from 1914 to 1927. Each certificate contains an individual’s name, birth date, city of birth, date and city of death, parents and spouse’s names, sex, race, and ethnicity, all of which can be invaluable to genealogical research. Researchers can search through the collection by name, keyword, date, county, and certificate number. The death certificate images are also accompanied by a typed transcript for user convenience. You can visit the collection at <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/CollectionsA-Z/gadeathcert_information.html>.

**Centennial Alumni Catalog and the Catalog of the Trustees, Officers, Alumni and Matriculates of the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, 1785-1906**

In 1901, as part of the University of Georgia’s centennial celebration of classes on the Athens campus, a four page questionnaire was sent out to anyone on record who matriculated at the University of Georgia or to their family if the person was deceased. The university received 1,749 responses from former students and their families and these responses were bound together to form a nine volume history of the University of Georgia’s alumni. The catalog, which is held by the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, has been made electronically available through the Digital Library of Georgia, where users can browse through the questionnaires alphabetically by the students’ last names. The catalog is an invaluable genealogical resource because the questionnaire sent out requested information on each student’s birth, address, marriage, education, awards, memberships, occupations, military service, and death.

*[Image 7 – Centennial Alumni Catalog home page -* [*http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/centennialcatalog/*](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/centennialcatalog/)*]*

The Digital Library of Georgia has also digitized the University of Georgia’s 1906 alumni catalog which contains a list of the university’s alumni from the first graduates in the early 1800s up to the printing of the catalog, along with information on the school’s faculty and trustees. The matriculates’ names are organized by graduation class and the catalog includes an index that lists the students’ names alphabetically. While the catalog is not as detailed as the 1901 centennial catalog, it contains a far more comprehensive list of the university’s graduates. When used in combination, the two catalogs are a valuable resource for anyone researching an individual who attended the University of Georgia. The two catalogs can be found at <http://dlg.galib.uga.edu/centennialcatalog/> and <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/1906catalogue/>, respectively.

**Georgia Historic Books**

Georgia Historic Books provides full-text, fully searchable, 19th and early 20th century books covering Georgia history, biography, and literature – and includes much information about places and people useful for genealogical research. This content was added to the Digital Library of Georgia in 2002, and currently includes 80 volumes. Visit the online collection at <http://www.galileo.usg.edu/express?link=zlgb>.

**Georgia Legislative Documents**

Georgia Legislative Documents provides searchable full-text online versions of the Georgia General Assembly’s Acts and Resolutions from 1799-1999, often including helpful information about people and places relevant to genealogy. Visit this online collection at <http://www.galileo.usg.edu/express?link=zlgl>.

**Other Digital Library of Georgia Collections**

The collections described above represent just a sampling of the vast information available in the Digital Library of Georgia with relevance to genealogical research. In addition, many other collections, intended to address the local histories of particular areas, often include useful bits of historical information about ancestors or relatives. The Digital Library of Georgia collaborated with public libraries across the state to digitize (with Georgia HomePLACE support) the following local history collections:

* If your relative attended the Georgia gold rush of the early 19th century, explore **“Thar’s Gold in Them Thar Hills”: Gold and Gold Mining in Georgia, 1830s-1940s** (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/dahlonega>). This collaborative project with the Lumpkin County Library of the Chestatee Regional Library System was completed in 2004.
* If your relative built ships on the Georgia coast during World War II, check **Ships for Victory: J.A. Jones Construction Company & Liberty Ships in Brunswick, Georgia** (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/liberty_ships>). The collaborative project with the Three Rivers Regional Library System was completed in 2005.
* If your relative participated in the black vaudeville circuit, visit **The Blues, Black Vaudeville and the Silver Screen, 1912-1930s: Selections from the Records of Macon’s Douglas Theater** (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/douglass>). The collaborative project with the Middle Georgia Archives was completed in 2005.
* If she participated in the women’s movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, look at **For Our Mutual Benefit: The Athens Woman’s Club and Social Reform, 1899-1920** (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/athenswomansclub>). This collaborative project with the Athens Regional Library was phased over 2006 and 2007.
* If your relative mined marble in the Georgia mountains, check **Beauty in Stone: The Industrial Films of the Georgia Marble Company** (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/georgiamarble>). The collaborative project with Pickens County Library of the Sequoya Regional Library System, the Marble Valley Historical Society, the Georgia Archives, and the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection went into production in 2006.
* If your ancestor experienced the north Georgia multiple tornado event of 1936, visit **The 1936 Gainesville Tornado: Disaster and Recovery** (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/tornado>). The collaborative project with the Hall County Library System and the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection was phased over two years to develop streaming video and an interactive map (in 2007) and an online exhibit (in 2008).

**Useful Links**

**The Digital Library of Georgia Website**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/>

**The Digital Library of Georgia Facebook Page**

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Digital-Library-of-Georgia/108959499146418>

**The Digital Library of Georgia Blog**

<http://blog.dlg.galileo.usg.edu/>

**Georgia Historic Newspapers Archive**

[http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/MediaTypes/Newspapers.html](http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/MediaTypes/Newspapers.html?Welcome)

**Sanborn® Fire Insurance Maps**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/>

**Vanishing Georgia**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/vanga/>

**African American Funeral Programs from the East Central Georgia Regional Library**

<http://funeral.galileo.usg.edu/funeral/>

**Gordon County, Georgia, Obituaries**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/CollectionsA-Z/gco_information.html>

**Georgia Death Certificates, 1919-1927**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/CollectionsA-Z/gadeathcert_information.html>

**University of Georgia Centennial Alumni Catalog**

<http://dlg.galib.uga.edu/centennialcatalog/>

**Catalog of the Trustees, Officers, Alumni and Matriculates of the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, 1785-1906**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/1906catalogue/>

**Georgia Historic Books**

<http://www.galileo.usg.edu/express?link=zlgb>

**Georgia Legislative Documents**

<http://www.galileo.usg.edu/express?link=zlgl>