PATRONS OF THE Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City have a unique opportunity to identify and learn about their forefathers. Perhaps nowhere can they find greater evidence of family ties between this generation and preceding ones than in the library’s 1.25 million reels of microfilmed records from throughout the world—records that identify over a billion people, dating back several centuries from more than a hundred different countries. Providing resources and services that help strengthen these family ties is fundamental to the library’s purpose.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly called the Mormons, and hereafter referred to as the LDS Church) trace their ancestry as a solemn duty. The LDS Church funds, administers and operates the Genealogical Library to assist its members in accomplishing their genealogical research, to further the writing of personal and family histories, and to support a worldwide record-gathering and preservation program.

The tremendous upsurge of interest in genealogical and family history research during the past decade is evidenced by the library’s 1982 statistical report. Over a twelve month period approximately 565,000 patrons visited the main library. The staff responded to more than 44,000 letters, answered 70,000 telephone inquiries and filled 33,000 written requests for searches of the library’s genealogical indexes. Moreover, the main library circulated 229,000 reels of microfilm to its branch libraries, which in turn accommodated an additional 700,000
patron visits. The library has made significant strides in expanding its collections, upgrading its staff and developing major new computer systems to meet the growing needs of the LDS Church and the genealogical community as a whole.

This paper provides a description of the collections, research tools, services, special uses, and future plans of the Genealogical Library and its branches. For the interested reader, a brief explanation of why Mormons do genealogical research is also given.

**Historical Background**

The Genealogical Library was established in November 1894 as part of the Genealogical Society of Utah. It began with just over 300 books, obtained mostly from the personal collection of the society's first president, Franklin D. Richards. The purchase of additional books depended upon membership fees and donations, which initially were slow in coming. Nevertheless, by the end of 1919 the library had acquired over 5000 volumes, including a large shipment of books that agents of the society had been accumulating in England during World War I. Since most LDS Church members of that time traced their ancestry into the British Isles and Europe, a concerted effort was made to obtain published materials from those areas. By the end of 1937, the library contained over 19,000 books, including several thousand volumes from Scandinavia, Germany and Great Britain.

Despite this impressive growth, the expanding book collections were not adequate to enable the society to meet its objectives. A means was needed to provide members with convenient access to genealogical source documents from throughout the world. A solution emerged with the improvements made in microphotography in the 1930s. The new technology made it possible for the society to obtain copies of records while leaving the originals in the possession of their owners. Prospects for facilitating genealogical research were enormous. When the society began microfilming early LDS Church records in 1938, it entered a new era. World War II temporarily slowed filming, but it also increased the demand for microfilm technology, thus spurring the improvement and availability of microfilm equipment and supplies. In 1946 society representatives began negotiating for filming projects in historical societies, archives and libraries throughout the eastern states. A year later the negotiations were extended into the British Isles and Europe. By the end of the decade, the library had acquired more than 50,000 reels of microfilm. Thirty years later that number grew to over a million.
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Collection Development Guidelines

The Genealogical Library microfilms and preserves records that uniquely identify individuals and their family relationships. In general, an attempt is made to acquire at least one source for each country and time period identifying the greatest proportion of the historical population. Additional sources are acquired to fill in major gaps. Rights of privacy generally limit microfilming to records of deceased persons. The cutoff date for most projects is about 1900.

The criteria used in selecting records include the suitability of the records source for ancestral research (constructing pedigrees); the extent to which the records source covers the historical population; the accuracy and authenticity of the records source; the rate of duplication of information within the records source; and confidentiality or other legal restrictions placed upon the records.

Several steps are involved in selecting the specific records to microfilm. Field operations personnel first conduct preliminary surveys in a country to determine the existence, location and availability of records meeting the above criteria. Next they negotiate with the record holders for permission to microfilm or purchase copies of the selected materials. After obtaining approval, they prepare annotated lists of the documents and collections which are compared against the library’s catalog to avoid duplication. Finally, camera operators are assigned to the approved area based on available budget and current priorities.

In return for permission to microfilm records, participating archives may obtain at cost a positive copy of all materials microfilmed. These copies are often used by them so that the original documents can be protected from damage or loss. The Genealogical Library stores a master copy of the microfilm and provides subsequent copies at cost when the donor’s copy is lost or destroyed.

Breadth of the Microfilm Collections

British Isles and Europe

Large-scale microfilming of British and European records began in the mid-1940s. To date over 573,000 reels, or nearly half the library’s total microfilm collection, have been obtained from this area.

The library’s major sources from the British Isles and Europe for the nineteenth century include civil registration of vital events, censuses, emigration-immigration records, and passenger lists. For the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the primary source is the ecclesiastical registers, containing entries of baptisms, marriages and burials. Other sources dating back to as early as the thirteenth century include citizen registers, tax lists, wills, guild registers, contract books, legal records, notarial and court registers, various forms of land records, academic matriculation lists, and military records. In isolated cases the library has acquired edited collections of sources dating as early as the tenth century. Camera operators presently assigned to the British Isles and Europe produce nearly 17,000 reels of additional records each year.

**United States and Canada**

The North American collection comprises 390,000 reels or about 33 percent of the library's total microfilm collection. Filming has been most extensive in the states east of the Mississippi River, with particular emphasis on those which attained statehood before 1815.

Due to the separation of church and state, there is no single genealogical source for the United States prior to 1850 that covers a large percentage of the total population. Hence the library's holdings are composed of a variety of record types, including federal and state censuses, land records—deeds, mortgages, and tax records; church records from many different denominations; probate records, especially for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; municipal and county records; cemetery records; and naturalization papers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The library has also acquired some atypical records, such as its present collection of personal diaries from Kentucky archives and Department of Defense records (invaluable for studying the Revolutionary War) from the New Jersey State Library. Camera operators presently assigned to the United States and Canada produce nearly 5500 reels of additional records each year.

**Latin America**

Microfilming of Latin American records began in Mexico in 1958. Presently, the collection includes 172,000 reels, two-thirds of which are from Mexico. The documents most represented are the parish registers, which list baptisms, marriages, burials, and, in some instances, confirmations. Most also indicate where the individuals lived. Second in volume to parish registers are civil records, most of which, however, did not begin until the 1860s. Other materials of interest include land- and water-rights records dating back to the sixteenth century; wills and estate records; and for Mexico, a collection of inquisition records. Camera operators presently assigned to Latin America produce about 2500 reels of additional records each year.
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Asia and the Pacific Area

Microfilming in the Far East and Pacific areas began quite recently. The library's 30,100 reels from that area comprise only 3 percent of the total holdings, but they represent one of the most significant collections of its type in the Western world.

Filming in Japan began in 1967. It includes selected household registers (from 1872-1901), death registers dating back as far as the thirteenth century, census-surveillance records from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, and compiled family sources.

In 1971 the library began acquiring microfilm copies of Chinese records from several of the world's leading East Asian collections—e.g., the Harvard-Yenching Library in Boston, the National Diet Library in Tokyo, Fung Ping Shan Library in Hong Kong, and the Central National Library in Seoul, Korea. Most of the microfilmed genealogies are printed books, averaging ten volumes per title. A genealogy listing the descendants of Confucius is the largest in the collection, containing some 150 volumes. It includes families of nearly every province of China.

Among the library's other notable records from the Far East are the Korean and Chinese civil service examination registers, covering a period of over 400 years; Indonesian records, dating back to as early as the sixteenth century; and oral genealogies that trace families into the twelfth or thirteenth centuries from selected South Pacific islands. Camera operators presently assigned to the Asian and Pacific areas produce approximately 1500 reels of additional records each year.

Other Major Source Materials

Secondary Sources

While not as prominent as microfilmed source documents, the library's more than 155,000 books and other published items are significant support materials. Of particular interest are the vast holdings of family and local histories, collected biographies, genealogical periodicals, handbooks and manuals, inventories, census indexes, cemetery inscriptions, oral history tapes, language dictionaries, and a variety of other reference sources including a large selection of maps, atlases and gazetteers. The library's published materials include many rare and hard-to-find books, particularly notable in their international scope. These materials are not only helpful as research aids but also as tools for interpreting the microfilm collections.
Family Group Records Collection

The Family Group Records Collection contains more than 8 million family reconstitution sheets, compiled over the past fifty years by members of the LDS Church and other library patrons from throughout the world. Each family group record form contains information on three generations. The forms are filed alphabetically by the husband's name.

The collection is helpful as a starting point for genealogical research, because it frequently enables the beginning researcher to tie into work already done on his ancestral line. Inasmuch as most family group record forms include the name and address of the compiler, it is sometimes possible to contact other individuals doing research on the same pedigree problem. However, the Family Group Records Collection does have limitations. The records have not been verified by the Genealogical Library staff and many are known to be inaccurate and incomplete.

Records Storage and Preservation

By the late 1950s when the Genealogical Library's microfilm collection approached 200,000 reels, there was a pressing need to construct a permanent storage facility for master negative copies of the microfilm. The Granite Mountain Records Vault, near Salt Lake City, was built to meet that need. The protection this facility affords against both natural and man-made disasters cannot easily be surpassed. Seven hundred feet of solid granite cover six huge vault storage rooms. The total vault capacity of approximately 5.3 million 100-foot rolls of 35 mm microfilm can be expanded if necessary through further excavation.

The natural temperature in the storage areas is fifty-seven to fifty-eight degrees Fahrenheit year round, regardless of conditions outside the mountain. The natural humidity is maintained between 40 and 50 percent. These conditions are ideal for microfilm storage. Protection of master negative copies of the microfilm is not only of importance to the Genealogical Library; archivists from around the world who have made their records available for microfilming are assured their records are safe and readily available when needed.

International Genealogical Index

One of the most valuable sources of genealogical data is the computerized International Genealogical Index (IGI). The 1981 edition of the
IGI includes more than 68 million names extracted from selected records of births/christenings, marriages and other vital sources from over ninety countries. Through methodical use of the IGI, it may be possible to compile a pedigree for several generations. The index contains names of deceased persons only, dating back as far as the early 1500s.

The IGI is arranged by geographic locality of the event extracted (e.g., birth, christening or marriage) and then alphabetically by surname. The information given on each entry varies, depending on the type of record indexed, but generally includes: (1) the surname and up to two given names, (2) names of either the parents or spouse, (3) type of the event, (4) date of the event, (5) a reference number that can be traced to the original source used for input, and (6) LDS Church ordinance data. For filing purposes and to facilitate genealogical research, some surnames can be accessed both by actual and standardized spellings.

The IGI is published on microfiche at a reduction of 48X. Each IGI microfiche contains 357 pages of up to sixty-two names each, or a total of over 22,000 names. The IGI is updated and reprinted periodically. Currently it is growing at a rate of about 7 million names per year, but plans are also being made to convert to the IGI an existing manual index of 30 million names, and to extract an additional 50 million names from the 1880 U.S. census records.

Users of the IGI should also be aware of its limitations. The information has been extracted or provided by lay members and volunteers of varying research backgrounds and skills. Some data has been inadvertently omitted or incorrectly transcribed. In other cases, the transcriptions were correct but the sources contained inaccurate data. When using the IGI it is always wise to verify the information by checking the original sources and other available records. The IGI is available for searching at the main library in Salt Lake City and at most of its branches.

**Genealogical Library Catalog**

The Genealogical Library began converting its card catalog to an automated system in January 1979. The new system is designed to encompass and eventually integrate all major library functions (acquisitions, serials control, cataloging, circulation, and public access). The automated system was developed in-house to meet the unique needs of genealogical researchers.

Because most of the records acquired by the Genealogical Library...
are manuscript in nature and list vital events over various time periods, much of the catalog descriptions require detailed content notes. The average record length of a given catalog entry is nearly 2500 characters. The detailed descriptions will reduce disappointment and expense of researchers who request microfilm circulation in branch libraries, by enabling them more precisely to select the records they need.

The Genealogical Library Catalog (GLC) is printed on microfiche for efficient and inexpensive distribution to branch libraries and other repositories requesting copies. The microfiche appear in four sections: (1) author/title, (2) locality, (3) surname, and (4) subject. This arrangement has eliminated much of the former complexity of using the dictionary card catalog. Genealogists generally look for source material first by the locality of a vital event in their ancestors' lives. Hence the locality section of the microfiche is the most heavily used. It is arranged by indirect locality headings—i.e., first by country or state, then by county, then by city or town—and finally by type of record or subject. Each entry provides a detailed description of the record, designates the format—e.g., microfilm, book, map—and specifies the location of each item.

The process of converting the manual card catalog is not simply a matter of entering the previous descriptions into machine-readable form. In order to bring the entire catalog up to current national standards, nearly 50 percent of the previous entries must be completely recataloged. That involves actually reexamining the microfilm or hard copy of the source material. Moreover, the remaining 50 percent is being reformatted or otherwise modified to accommodate AACR2 provisions. The result is more detailed, better quality and more accurate catalog entries. This not only improves the researchers' chances of finding what they need, it also saves them a considerable amount of time. Editing capabilities are also built into the system to minimize introducing human inaccuracies into the new catalog.

The computer-generated Genealogical Library Catalog has many unique features. For example, it is designed to eventually become a union listing, not only of the library's holdings, but also of significant genealogical sources in other institutions. This will aid users in proximity to these institutions and others who may wish to write for assistance. The system provides online, interactive authority control for authors, uniform titles, series titles, localities, surnames, and other subject headings, including selected subheadings in sixteen different languages. The system also carries descriptions and subject headings of non-English records (Roman alphabets only) in the language of the
country of origin. This enables branch library users in foreign countries readily to identify and use their own records. Concurrently, as an aid to all English-language patrons, the system automatically generates English subject headings, and adds English content notes to the entries for foreign language records.

Research Papers and Other Finding Aids

In addition to the catalog and the IGI, the library prepares various written aids to help its users understand genealogical research methods and sources. Nearly 500 different items are now available. This material includes:

Reference Aids

These are typescript items designed to help patrons use the main library more effectively. They include indexes and registers of call numbers, and vary in length from one to approximately one hundred pages. Examples of reference aids are the "1801 Census Index of Norway" and the "Listing of Irish Non-Catholic Parish Registers."

Research Outlines

These are not more than six pages and are used to help patrons in the library and to answer a broad range of inquiries through correspondence. Examples of research outlines are "Outline for Genealogical Research in New Jersey" and "Outline for Jewish Genealogical Research."

Genealogical Research Papers

These are larger published items of between twelve and fifty pages. Most of the papers are designed to help patrons do genealogical research in a particular geographic area. Examples are Records of Genealogical Value for Poland and Major Genealogical Record Sources in Mexico. Other research papers describe the records of a particular province or county within a country, explain a particular type of record, present maps of a particular area, or treat genealogically-related subjects, such as paleography, migration, history, naming customs, and boundary changes. Examples of these papers are The Church Records of Germany, County Formations and Minor Civil Divisions of the State of New York, and Basic Portuguese Paleography.

These written aids enable patrons to use the resources of the library more effectively, reduce the demand for direct reference service, relieve the need for detailed instructions in answering correspondence, and
provide a medium for sharing the knowledge of the Genealogical Library staff with a wide audience. The library's research publications coordinating committee determines needs and priorities for new research papers, submits recommendations to appropriate management, and monitors production of the papers to ensure they are as brief as practical, are written in clear, crisp language, and are readily understandable to the general public.

Ancestral File

The Genealogical Library is developing a computerized system known as the Ancestral File. Its purposes are to record the known genealogies of mankind, reduce duplicate genealogical research, provide new users with a starting point for their research by showing them what has already been done on their ancestral lines, and establish a registry of family organizations to help users coordinate their research with one another.

The file will be lineage-linked; that is, it will include a pointer system that refers an individual's record to the records of his parents, siblings, spouse, former spouses, and children. The user will be able to locate an ancestor's record in the file by name and other identifiers. Once found, all the genealogical data will be listed as one entry. The user will be able to trace the ascent or descent of that ancestor insofar as either is registered in the file and privacy regulations permit. Some of the expected computer outputs of the system will be pedigree charts, family group record forms, indexes to the main file, and ad hoc searches on varying parameters. Presently, the Ancestral File computer system is only in the design phase. It will be developed over several years.

Reference and Correspondence Services

The main library occupies the west wing of the LDS Church Office Building in Salt Lake City. It is open seventy-one hours each week, Mondays through Saturdays. The present facility seats approximately 900 people, provides 550 microform readers and offers reference assistance on three floors. The library's collections and reference services are arranged by areas of geographic specialty: United States and Canada, British Isles, Europe, Scandinavia, Latin America, and Asia/Africa/Oceania. Specialists are available to assist patrons with languages, history, paleography, and unique genealogical research problems of each area.
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The library's correspondence sections are also organized geographically. One unit answers correspondence from the eastern hemisphere and another from the western hemisphere. A third unit answers letters pertaining to LDS Church records and the Ancestral File. Because of the thousands of letters received each month, the staff is not in a position to provide a research service. Nevertheless, they assist patrons by providing pertinent research aids and suggesting sources that should be searched for genealogical information in a specific area.

The library also offers at no charge a large selection of classes covering various aspects of genealogical research and use of the library. During a given month for example, the library may hold classes on "Tracing French Huguenot Ancestors," "Ohio Genealogical Sources," "U.S. Immigration Records," "Beginning Polish Research," "Old English Handwriting," "Using the Genealogical Library Catalog," and a dozen other topics. An average of twenty patrons attends each class. This enables the staff to be more efficient and thorough in meeting reference needs of individual library users.

Expertise of the Staff

The breadth and quality of the library's services are largely a reflection of the specialized training and commitment of the staff. There are 210 employees, 40 full-time volunteers, and nearly 300 part-time volunteers. The staff includes a cross section of professionals in library science, genealogical research, languages, family and local history, and archives administration. Over half are college graduates and nearly one-fourth hold advanced degrees. Forty-eight are accredited genealogists, representing twenty broad areas of geographic specialization. In order to catalog and provide consultation on records from more than a hundred foreign countries, the staff also has proficiency in thirty-two languages, ranging from Afrikaans and Arabic to Tongan and Tagalog.

Because new librarians do not generally bring with them the specialized skills and genealogical experience required for professional-level service, the library administers a certification program for its reference consultants, correspondence specialists, and catalogers. In-depth training for certification is offered on the job and usually takes between six months and a year beyond the M.A. or M.L.S. The library is also willing to provide limited training to selected staff members from other institutions who wish to enhance their genealogical reference skills.
Accreditation Program

As a public service, the Genealogical Library also administers an accreditation program for professional genealogists. Candidates for accreditation must have at least 1000 hours of genealogical research experience with the records of a given geographical area, demonstrate a working knowledge of the paleography and language of those records, sign an agreement that they are willing to adhere to specified ethical standards of research, and pass both written and oral examinations pertaining to their areas of specialization.

Accreditation examinations are offered for specific regions of the United States, Canada and Latin America, and individual countries in Africa, the British Isles, continental Europe, the Pacific area, and Scandinavia. Accreditation is not limited to members of the LDS Church, nor is any fee assessed to those who wish to become accredited. Candidates who successfully meet the requirements are permitted to use the initials A.G. (Accredited Genealogist) after their names.

The accreditation program assists patrons who wish to hire a qualified genealogist to do their research. A list of the accredited genealogists, arranged by geographical area of specialization and updated quarterly, is furnished to all persons requesting genealogical assistance. The library staff, however, does not make specific recommendations or endorsement regarding the qualifications of any given accredited genealogist. Moreover, the library is not responsible for the accredited genealogist’s performance or for transactions between these genealogists and their clients.

Branch Genealogical Libraries

The Branch Genealogical Library System (BGL) was established to make available the research holdings of the main library in Salt Lake City to LDS Church members throughout the world. More than 400 branch libraries are distributed widely throughout the United States and a dozen foreign countries. Generally they are located in LDS Church meetinghouses, although some are in separate buildings. Each branch library receives a copy of the computer-produced Genealogical Library Catalog, the International Genealogical Index, a basic reference collection on microfilm, and other selected sources on microfiche.

A branch genealogical library may be established in any LDS stake (a large ecclesiastical jurisdiction composed of about seven local congregations) at the request of its priesthood leaders. The request involves a fairly strong commitment from local church members because they
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must administer and operate the facility. Branch library staff members are asked to serve without pay. Generally two staff members are expected to be on duty during library hours. A total of about ten staff members is normally needed. The library should be open a sufficient number of hours and at appropriate times to allow patrons to view microfilm from the main library during the prescribed loan period. A new facility is encouraged to have four microfilm readers, two microfiche readers, a microfilm storage cabinet that will hold about 1000 rolls, and other minor equipment.

While branch libraries are administered and operated locally, the main library in Salt Lake City provides considerable support, including recommended standards and procedures, operating manuals, training to staff members through development and distribution of instructional materials and technical information, and efficient access to the main library’s major bibliographic tools, reference aids, and microfilm collections. Steps are being taken to strengthen branch libraries by making available for circulation more of the main library’s research materials. For example, in 1982 the 1880 and 1900 U.S. censuses and soundexes were added to the circulation collection. Moreover, plans are underway to make available to the branch libraries on microfiche thousands of the main library’s most heavily used books—e.g., census indexes, registers, research papers, and gazetteers.

By consulting the Genealogical Library Catalog, patrons are able to select records from the main library’s circulation collection that may be helpful for their research. The patron completes a Microfilm Request Form and pays a moderate loan fee to cover part of the circulation costs. Both two-week and six-month loans are available. When the film arrives, the patron is notified either by telephone or postcard. After the loan period, the film is returned to Salt Lake City (or a microfilm ordering center in foreign countries) for circulation to other branch libraries. The main library’s circulation collection consists of over 285,000 rolls of film, about 40 percent of which are duplicates. During 1983 it is projected the main library will circulate to the branches 267,000 rolls of film.

The use of branch libraries is not limited to LDS Church members. Nonmembers are welcome insofar as space is available. Of the more than 700,000 patron visits to branch libraries last year, about half were from nonmembers.
Center for Historical Population Studies

In 1977 the University of Utah established The Center for Historical Population Studies to facilitate scholarly use of the Genealogical Library's collections. The center concentrates its efforts on preparing and publishing finding aids, promoting specific research projects, and sponsoring seminars, colloquia and conferences.

The center's finding aids series is designed to provide scholars with more detailed information than they would normally find in the library's catalog on issues such as demography, migration, mortality, aging, changing family structure, and other historical, social and medical concerns. Registers have been prepared outlining the library's holdings from England, France, Guatemala, Germany, Mexico, New Hampshire, and New York state. Plans are also being made to prepare registers for other national and regional areas. In addition, the center publishes a newsletter, alerting scholars to new acquisitions as they become available and listing projects underway that use the Genealogical Library's collections.

The center's activities have contributed to research on such diverse topics as the influence of English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish courts upon the extensive judicial reforms of the early nineteenth century, the causes and consequences of changing mortality rates in North America between 1650 and 1910, and the role of women in Mexican society from approximately 1650 to 1810.

Utah Resource for Genetic and Epidemiologic Research

Investigators at the University of Utah's College of Medicine have established a computer resource to study inherited diseases among Utah descendants of early Mormon pioneers. In 1975 they obtained funding from the National Institutes of Health to computerize more than 170,000 family group records. Each record listed at least one person who was born or died in Utah along the pioneer trail. The medical researchers have combined basic genealogical data with significant sources of medical information, including death certificates and records from the Utah Cancer Registry. With the combined information, the computer can identify families in which certain diseases seem to cluster.6

In 1982 the governor of Utah created the Utah Resource for Genetic and Epidemiologic Research (RGE) to formalize the resource, merge it with the Department of Health, and bring it under the protection of
state laws on data privacy and confidentiality. The resource is contributing to a greater understanding of coronary heart disease, various forms of cancer, hemochromatosis, strokes, and other medical problems.

**World Conference on Records**

In 1969 and again in 1980 the Genealogical Library helped sponsor the World Conference on Records in Salt Lake City. The theme of the 1969 conference was "Records Preservation in an Uncertain World." International specialists in the areas of genealogy and records preservation delivered papers on various aspects of this theme as they pertained to individual countries. The 1980 conference theme was "Preserving Our Heritage." This conference attracted more than 11,500 participants, including 240 speakers, numerous international guests, and students of family history, genealogy, demography, and related disciplines with a broad continuum of expertise. Genealogical Library staff members assisted in all phases of planning and conducting these conferences, as well as in lecturing, hosting and providing resource materials. The published proceedings of both conferences are available in hard copy and on microfilm.

**Why Mormons do Genealogical Research**

Mormons believe that man is eternal; that is, life did not begin at birth nor does it end at death. They believe everyone existed prior to earth life as spirit beings, individuals who lived as children of God in a premortal society. As part of earth life they obtain a mortal body, join a family and lose recollection of their previous existence. This life is a test, a probationary state, to determine the extent to which they will obey God by faith. When their mortal bodies die, they enter the spirit world where they continue associations begun during earth life and await the resurrection and final judgment.

Mormons also believe that the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which affords man the opportunity for eternal progression and the greatest happiness, was restored to the earth through a modern-day prophet. Mormons share the restored gospel with others through a worldwide missionary program. Moreover, they believe that the fullness of the gospel is also presently being taught in the spirit world to everyone who has lived on earth. Hence all mankind will have the opportunity to accept or reject the gospel.

Mormons further believe that the family unit can continue into the
eternities, not to be dissolved at death, but to endure forever—provided that certain sacred ordinances are performed in temples of the Church. Couples married in Mormon temples are sealed eternally as husband and wife by authority of the priesthood of God. Their children also become part of this eternal family unit. Of course the efficacy of the sealing is predicated on individual righteousness. The sealing of families is to be extended back as far as they can be traced, generation upon generation. Mormons explain that since the gospel and sealing authority were not restored until the nineteenth century, most people have not had the opportunity in this life to take part in these temple ordinances. They believe they have a divine injunction to do this ordinance work by proxy in the temples in behalf of their kindred dead, thereby enabling them to obtain the same blessings as those who accept the gospel during this life.

It should be noted, Mormons believe that those deceased ancestors for whom vicarious temple ordinances are performed are in no way bound in the spirit world to accept the gospel or the family sealing ordinances. As in earth life, each has his or her free agency to accept or reject these opportunities.

In order to accurately and fully identify their ancestors so that this vicarious work can be accomplished, Mormons undertake genealogical research in the libraries established by the Church for that purpose. They also invite all people of good will, regardless of their religious persuasion, race or creed to use these facilities for their own ancestral research.

**Prospects for the Future**

There is tremendous excitement at the Genealogical Library regarding prospects for expanded and improved services. Construction is underway on a new 136,000 square foot library building on the block west of Temple Square in Salt Lake City. The estimated completion date is early 1985. The new building will have five floors initially and sufficient structural capacity to accommodate three more, when needed. Moreover, a 6000 square foot underground storage facility adjacent to the new building will house high density, mobile storage shelves for lesser-used microfilm and the growing book collections.

The new building will well meet a number of critical environmental needs. Humidity control and specially equipped lighting fixtures will prolong the life of the library's collections. Heat and smoke sensors, electronic detection equipment, and a twenty-four-hour-a-day central
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security system will provide excellent protection for both the facilities and patrons. Importantly, the building will also accommodate future developments in technology. An in-floor electrical distribution system, for example, will allow for easy placement and movement of telephones, computer terminals, printers, and other electronic equipment anywhere in the building.

The Genealogical Library has also embarked on a challenging long-range plan designed to stimulate interest in and accelerate the pace of effective genealogical research. The plan includes several computer development projects such as those previously mentioned, improved distribution access to the main library's services and holdings, and an aggressive collection development program. Steps are being taken to enhance instructional services for library patrons through video disk presentations and satellite transmission to selected LDS Church meetinghouse facilities.

Rapid technological change and a strong institutional commitment offer the Genealogical Library unparalleled opportunities to better meet the needs of its user community. The library's aim is to provide genealogists and family historians with the most complete and easily accessible research tools available anywhere.

References


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