

Biography and Genealogy Master Index

How to connect to BGMI

Biography and Genealogy Master Index can be found on the ULS homepage under:
Electronic Resources A-Z
Reference Resources--Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, Almanacs & Handbooks

About Biography and Genealogy Master Index

Biography and Genealogy Master Index (BGMI) has been available as a starting place to search for information about people for twenty-five years. It indexes current, readily available reference sources, as well as the retrospective works that cover individuals, both living and deceased, from every field of activity and from all areas of the world.

Searching Biography and Genealogy Master Index will enable you to quickly determine which publication to consult for biographical information.

The total number of biographical sketches indexed by BGMI is now more than 13.3 million.
BGMI entries are citations only.

Sources indexed in BGMI are of several types:

Biographical dictionaries and who's whos, which supply information on a number of individuals.

Subject encyclopedias, which include some biographical entries.

Volumes of literary criticism, which may contain only a limited amount of biographical information but give critical surveys of a writer's works.

Indexes, which refer the user to a body of information found elsewhere.

BGMI indexes only reference works containing multiple biographies; it does not index periodical articles or books of biography about a single individual.

Understanding BGMI Data

The following elements may appear in a BGMI record:

1. NAME. Given name(s), surname, prefix, and suffix as applicable and provided in the source. Prefixes refer to personal titles such as: Dr., Mrs., Prince, etc. Suffixes include elements generally appended to a name such as: Jr., Sr., or a Roman numeral.

Names and dates appear in BGMI exactly as they are listed in the source books. Those names that are identical in spelling and years of birth and/or death have been consolidated into a single record, with the sources listed alphabetically by title. **No attempt has been made to determine whether names with similar spellings or years of birth and/or death refer to the same individual.** Therefore, several listings for the same individual, with slight name and date variations, may sometimes be found:

Bellman, Richard 1920-

Bellman, Richard 1920-1984

Bellman, Richard E. 1920-

Bellman, Richard Ernest 1920-

Bellman, Richard Ernest

In order to obtain the maximum number of records, users are encouraged to check all possible forms under which a name may be listed. This is especially true in the cases of:

Pseudonyms, stage names, or nicknames:

Initials or middle names used in place of first names:

Clemens, Samuel Langhorne
Twain, Mark

Eliot, T.S.
Eliot, Thomas Stearns

Crosby, Bing
Crosby, Harry Lillis

Welles, Orson
Welles, George Orson

2. **YEARS OF BIRTH AND DEATH.** The years of birth and/or death, as applicable and provided in the source. If exact year is not known or is uncertain, approximate dates or correct century may be provided.

3. **SOURCE CITATION(S)** The citation to where the biography appears.

General Search Tips

Punctuation: Some non-alphanumeric characters have special meaning to the BRS/Search query engine, and can cause errors or unpredictable results when included in a query.

Period

If using a period put term in double quotes and also do the search without the period.

Do not use a period after suffixes such as “Jr., Dr.”

Hyphen

A hyphen (-) used between two words is considered part of the term.

Apostrophe

An apostrophe (') is not recognized by the search engine and should be deleted from the search term.

Ampersand

An ampersand (&) is not recognized by the search engine and should be deleted from the search term.

When the ampersand is integral to a search term, it is best to drop the ampersand and, as needed to narrow the search results, enclose the term in double quotes.

Double Quotes

The use of double quotes (" ") around a phrase may be used to make the search results more precise. Use of double quotes yield listings in which the words appear in the specified order adjacent to one another within the designated field.

Example:

“Abraham Lincoln”

“Contemporary Authors”

Pluralization

When retrieving entries that contain both the singular and plural form of a word, it is best to spell out both terms using the OR operator as the connector.

rose OR roses

Truncation

The \$(dollar sign) and ?(question mark) are used to truncate search terms to broaden the search results by enabling the searcher to indicate that all forms of a search term should be retrieved. Usually the \$ is specified at the end of term, signifying a root form of the term.

The ? (question mark) is used to replace individual characters within a word or number to retrieve various forms of a word or number. The number of characters replaced by the ? is not limited.

Use of the \$ and ? in a single word is possible as well.

Search Operators

Boolean search operators may be used within any given field within any search option.

The Search operators are listed on the help screens.

Searching by Name

Within the Name field, enter a complete name or a word or combination of words known to be part of the individual's name.

Use the 1st box for a keyword search,

Jefferson Thomas

In the first box use double quotes for a more precise search

“Jefferson Thomas”

Use the “Last Name and First, Middle, Initial” box for another way to search. This search may yield more or less entries because the First Middle Initial box entry can be any of the three.

Name: Jefferson

FirstMiddleInitial name: Thomas

BGMI editorial policy states that an individual's name is entered into the BGMI database exactly as it appears in the source publication. As such, **several versions of an individual's name may appear**. For those situations, enter the various forms of the individual's name to retrieve all possible records.

Lawerence, D H

Lawerence, David Herbert

Clinton, Bill

Clinton, William

Clinton, William Jefferson

Extended Search Mode

Through the Extended Search Mode, you can construct searches that enable you to search many fields simultaneously. You may enter terms in a single field, in several fields, or in all of the fields. If you enter terms in more than one field in this search option, the search engine automatically uses the AND search operator, looking for entries that contain each of the terms in the specified fields.

In Extended Search Mode there are limiters such as birth and death years, portrait available, source title.

In Extended Search Mode you can view the list of Sources.

If you do put limits on the search remember the entries are not consistent for names and dates. You could be eliminating possible entries.

Example: Sean Connery has as birth years 1929 and 1930 or none. By adding a birth year you will miss entries.

Expert Search Mode

Through the Expert Search Mode, you can construct search queries in GaleNet databases to identify records that meet very specific criteria which may not be searchable using the available predefined search options. Generally, searches conducted using the Expert Search Mode are more complex than those conducted using the predefined query options. An example of a complex search is:

Artists and others involved in art that were born during the 1930s

Constructing A Search

In the Expert Search Mode, search queries are constructed using the BRS/Search query language. To build a search query, you need to identify the following three concepts:

- the term(s);
- the field(s) in which the term(s) should appear;
- the Boolean search operator(s) to define the relationship between the search terms.

For a list of the field codes and Boolean operators, select the Help button (at the top of each Help page and at the top of introductory pages

Search queries are formed as follows:

value.field.

where value is the term and field is the two- or three-letter code designating the field name. Note the period separating the value and its field, and the trailing period at the end of the query.

Sample Searches

Using the sample search criteria mentioned above, here is an example of a complex query using the Expert Search Mode:

(@YB >= 1930 and @YB <= 1939)and art\$.ti.

This search takes approximately 3-5 minutes to perform.

To identify individuals that have reigned as King or Queen during the Middle Ages, construct your search like this:

(king or queen).na. and (@YB >= 0500 and @YB <= 1500)

This search takes approximately 3-5 minutes to perform.