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## Tips for reading badly transcribed records

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## Some tips for searching badly transcribed records in databases

You can use wildcards for last name and first name. “?” can be used for just one letter you do not know. Sw?son will return both Swanson and Swenson.

“\*” can be used for up to five unknown characters. Johan\* will return Johannes as well as Johanna or Johanne. A “\*” can also be used as the first letter, for instance \*stina will return Stina, Christina, and Kristina.

Just play with this and see if you get good results.

You need to have at least three wildcard characters in a name when searching.

You can omit first name and search under last name and year of birth or location.

Or search just by last name, if you have a more unusual surname to look for.

Broaden your search by leaving out specific location (start with a city/town then broaden that to a township, then a county, then broaden

even further if necessary to the province)

Search for someone else in the family – a child or a spouse.

Think outside the box - for example an “S” might be mistaken for an “L.” So search for “Lally” instead of “Sally.” Maybe an “H” was mis-transcribed as an “M” or some other letter so try various combinations.

Don't get stuck on being absolutely positive that Grandpa Sven lived in a specific location. Maybe for that one year he was working and living elsewhere.

If you are searching on Ancestry.com add your correction when you find an incorrect entry! This helps other researchers and descendants.

Last year I was looking for a family named Gumaelius, where the first immigrant was named Otto, and he immigrated in the 1880s, married and had a family. So I started to check the censuses for the 1900s, but did not find them until the 1920 Census,

but they ought to be in the earlier ones too, but where were they?

With some “creative” searching they were found. In 1900 they were listed as “Gurnelius”, in 1910 they were the “Gumarlus” and had a daughter Mary, that I had not heard of. With the help of the birth age, she was identified as a son Emory! In 1920 they were called “Gumahn” and in 1940 the “Gumalins.” All these posts have now been corrected, so new researchers can easily find them.

Sometimes it can also help to reverse his/her first name and surname, just in case... For instance if you have a Peter Sward (in Sweden probably Per Svård), then try looking for somebody named Sward Peter, when everything else has failed.

Most of these tips come from Olive Tree Genealogy.

*See link on p. 30.*

*Elisabeth Thorsell*



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