

Hello, Hello, Is Anyone Out There?

(Getting the Most From Internet Message Boards & Mailing Lists)

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*Internet Message Boards and Mailing Lists help you connect with other people researching the same family lines. Some researchers will **only** be found through message boards and mailing lists, because they choose to never post their databases online. In addition, the archives can be a valuable source of information not found elsewhere on the internet.*

Both Message Boards and Mailing Lists:

- ▶ Primarily focus on surname or locality
- ▶ Have a variety of special interest areas such as religions, ethnic groups, and wars
- ▶ Archive their postings online and are searchable
- ▶ Take a similar search strategy, but each site has its own quirks you'll get familiar with as you experiment and work with the site.

The Difference?

Message Board: A message is posted right to an internet site

Mailing List: A message is emailed to everyone who subscribes to a list

Consider privacy: Do you want your email address posted right to the internet or do you feel more comfortable if it is encrypted? Not having it encrypted = spam. So, consider having an alternate email address you can use for this.

Message Boards

(also queries or discussion groups)

- genforum.com (part of the Genealogy.com website, located in "Community")
- ancestry.com (located in "Community")
- groups.yahoo.com (Type "genealogy" in search box for a list of 2,921 genealogy groups)
- cousinconnect.com (less popular, but another site to search)
- queries on USGenWeb county sites (usgenweb.com > state of choice > county of choice)
- cyndislist.com/queries.htm (if you can't find it elsewhere, maybe you'll find a link here)

Posting a Message:

Subject Line – Who? Where? When?

- ▶ Limited by space to get your point across
- ▶ Most boards need the time period
- ▶ Locality boards usually don't need a where, but surname boards do.



Examples: James & Mary Blair/Morgan County, IN 1830 [surname board]
Col. John Blair/Hawins County, TN 1788 [surname board]
BLAIR, Col. John 1788 [locality board]
NELSONS IN STOCKBRIDGE TOWNSHIP: 1700s [locality board]

Body of the Message – More details (but not too many)

- ▶ Give enough info to let people know you have good info.
- ▶ Don't give so much info that people don't need to contact you for more.
- ▶ If they don't contact you, you don't get to collaborate and get more info from them.
- ▶ Look through other postings. What do you think is effective? Did they get answers?

The following websites have excellent tips on posting to the message boards and query sites. Read them and then go post!

- "Effective Postings On Message Boards", by George Morgan
www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=32
- "Writing Better Queries", by Gary Lee Phillips
rootsweb.com/~mnmower/samplequeries.htm
- "6 Steps to Writing a Successful Genealogy Query", by Birmingham (AL) Gen. Soc.
www.birminghamgenealogy.org/research/tutoials/6stepqry.htm

Mailing Lists

- rootsweb.com 29,889 lists!
- Genealogy Resources on the Internet http://www.rootsweb.com/~jfuller/gen_mail.html

Search Tips

- ▶ Go for the Unique!
- ▶ Use variant spellings of both surnames and given names.
- ▶ Search both surname and locality lists and boards and then try specialized areas.