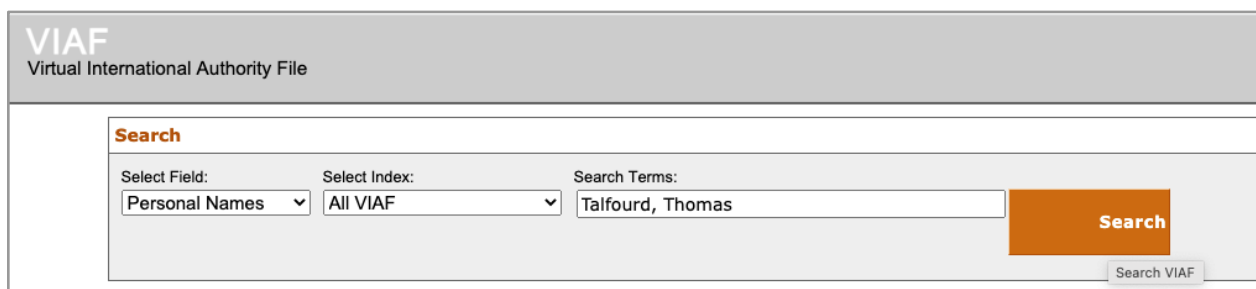# Searching Authorities to Populate Taxonomy Spreadsheet

By Meredith Hale

1. Adding Personal Names & Searching VIAF

1. Check the "People" tab of the [Taxonomy Spreadsheet](#) to see if the name you found already is recorded. If yes, no further action beyond checking the accuracy of the existing name is needed. If it isn't present, you should search to see if the name is established in an authority. Note that at this time we are not including names of businesses or other organizations, only individuals.
2. Assuming the name is not in the spreadsheet, go to VIAF - https://viaf.org/
   a. Because VIAF aggregates authority files from across the world, it is a good place to start searching for an authority as it eliminates the need to search a number of authorities individually. VIAF also clearly shows us what authorities a name has been established in, which allows us to see if we might want to invest time in the future establishing names in the Library of Congress or Wikidata if they don't already exist there.
3. Search for name
   a. Search for the name with the field "Personal Names" selected and "All VIAF" as the index. Input the name into the search box following authority standards (Lname, Fname Mname, Birth date - Death date). In many cases you will only have part of the name and that's okay.

4. Finding a match
   a. Examine the results to see if the authorities returned could be the individual from the letter you are working on. Look to see if the birth and death dates are possible given the date of the letter you found the name in etc.
   b. If you find a name that matches the contextual information you expect, click on the record. Check the full record to ensure that to the best of your knowledge this is the correct person. If you have doubt whether or not the record refers to the

name you are searching for, either continue examining other authority records for a possible match or end your search if no records are a definite match.

5. If no match is found
   a. Fill out the Taxonomy Spreadsheet leaving the URI column blank. Particularly focus on adding any context/dates/alternate names (maiden names) you were able to ascertain in the "Notes" column. Do be sure to add the identifier of the letter you found the name in so we can return to this later easily. Especially in cases where a person is not listed in VIAF and they appear in multiple letters, you are encouraged to add more than one letter identifier to the "Letter identifier(s)" column in TaxonomyTerms so that the editors can better check and confirm the name. Put your initials in the initial column, so you can be consulted about the name and its context. If multiple editors are transcribing/encoding letters associated with one name, feel free to include multiple initials.

6. If you find a match
   a. Copy the name from the VIAF record and paste it into the "Term" column. You can select the version of the name with the American flag next to it (if present). This form of the name is what is established by the Library of Congress. If this isn't present, copy the name with the most flags next to it. This is the most popular form of the established name.
   b. Copy and paste the "Permalink" into the "VIAF URI" column
   c. Leave other columns blank (since we won't need additional information in the future to establish an authority and sufficient contextual info is already present in the authority)

7. Fill in xml:id values following the [Conventions for Establishing xml:id Values Instructions](#)

Additional Sources for Biographical Research (Optional)

Assuming you cannot find the person in VIAF, there are a number of sources you can look to for additional information to help fill out the "Notes" column. This work is completely optional, though it could be helpful in limiting the number of duplicate entries we have for the same person (or falsely identifying a person as someone they are not).

1. [Edgeworth Family Tree - Butler](#)
2. [Colvin Calendar from Oxford](#)
3. [Biographical Index in *Letters from England: 1813-1844* - Christina Colvin](#)
4. [The Edgeworth Family](#) from the Maria Edgeworth Center
5. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
   a. [https://utk.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UTN_KNOXVILLE/bcmt7h/alma9917339520102311](#) (UTK login)
6. [Dictionary of Irish Biography](#) (open access)
7. Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles
   a. [https://utk.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01UTN_KNOXVILLE/bcmt7h/alma9924981370102311](#) (UTK login)
8. Ancestry
   a. [https://libguides.utk.edu/databases/938](#) (UTK login)
   b. [https://wake.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://zsr.wfu.edu/web/access/ancestry/](#) (WFU login)
9. FindaGrave
   a. [https://www.findagrave.com/](#)
10. LibGuides at Yale's YCBA and Walpole Library list a number of sources you might want to check to see if you have access to through your library
    a. History of British Art - [https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=295838&p=1972604](#)
    b. British Eighteenth-Century Studies - [https://guides.library.yale.edu/british18thc](#)
    c. Nineteenth Century British History - [https://guides.library.yale.edu/19thcenturybritish](#)
11. [Wikipedia](#) as a last resort

2. Adding Geographical Names & Searching Geonames

1. Go to Geonames - [https://www.geonames.org/](#)
2. Search for the place (use just the most specific term)

3. Select the correct term from the search results (if it exists).
    a. If it doesn't exist, simply enter the name found in the letter in the "Term" column and jump to step 8.
4. Enter the place name as it appears in Geonames into the "Term" column
5. Copy the URL in the address bar to the end of the numeric value (e.g. https://www.geonames.org/5166819)
6. Paste the URL into the "Geonames URI" of the Taxonomy spreadsheet. Alter the URL so that it is content negotiable (aka RDF can be retrieved but the web page also resolves)
    a. Change "www" to "sws"
    b. Remove the "s" from "https" (so just "http")
    c. Example: https://www.geonames.org/5166819 becomes http://sws.geonames.org/5166819
7. Copy the coordinates listed and paste them into the "coordinates" column on the taxonomy spreadsheet (e.g. 40.14477, -84.24244)
8. Record any relevant notes about the place name in the "Notes" column.
9. Document your initials in the "Editor (initials)" column.
10. Include the identifier for the letter the geographic name came from in the "Associated Letter(s)" column.

Note that it is possible to create new geonames entries with minimal effort. Instructions on this process as well as geonames generally can be found in the Drive here. As efforts should be focused on letter encoding, standard practice will be to avoid creating geonames entries unless the geographic place features prominently in the letters (5 or more mentions). One of the biggest benefits of creating a geonames entry is that it enables the ability to assign coordinates to geographic names.

3. Adding Work Titles & Searching Wikidata

1. Go to Wikidata - https://www.wikidata.org/
2. Search for the work mentioned in the letter
3. Select the correct Wikidata item based on the context/metadata provided.
    a. If it doesn't exist in wikidata, simply enter the name of the work found in the letter in the "Title" column in title case and move on to step 6.
4. Enter the name of the work as it is found on Wikidata in title case (aka, all significant words start with a capital letter)
    a. Exception: If the work is mentioned in a language other than English, enter the title into the "Foreign Title" column (also in sentence case). Both the "Title" column and "Foreign Title" column can be filled out if the work is known in multiple languages.
5. Enter the wikidata link in the "URI" column if available.
6. Enter the author(s) of the work following the form found in VIAF (if available). See the instructions at the top of this document for searching VIAF. Also enter the URI in the "Author VIAF URI." A second author can be added in the "Collaborator" column.

7. Record any relevant notes about the place name in the "Notes" column.
8. Document your initials in the "Editor (initials)" column.
9. Include the identifier for the letter the work came from in the "Associated Letter(s)" column.

Note that anyone can add an item to Wikidata. If we find works that are prominently featured in the letters (5 or more mentions), we can consider creating a new item. Keep in mind that our efforts should focus on encoding letters rather than working on authority creation.