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VERDICT Migration to New Worlds is a wonderful historical resource that takes advantage of current technology and search accessibility while retaining the best aspects of a large, informative archive. However, given the cost, the resource will likely only be within the means of large public and university libraries and library consortia serving scholars and students of world history. This reviewer is hopeful that future modules will be released at a more affordable price.

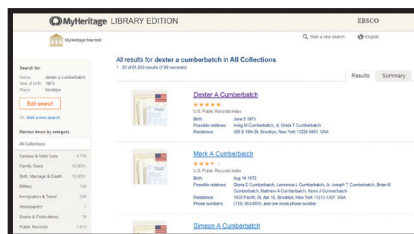
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MyHeritage Library Edition
EBSCO; www.ebscohost.com/public/myheritage-library-edition. To request a free trial, please visit the previous link

■ *By Bonnie J.M. Swoger*

CONTENT As a science librarian at an academic library, few things fill me with more professional anxiety than a patron starting a sentence with, “I’m doing some research on my family history...” As I’m less familiar with genealogical research, I typically refer local history questions to our special collections librarian. As a result, I approached EBSCO’s MyHeritage Library Edition (MHLE) as a novice user. This resource is the institutional version of MyHeritage.com (MH); the library edition was first released in October 2014.

Unlike the public-facing MH, MHLE doesn’t include family tree or social networking tools to connect users with one another. The library edition provides access to census records and other documents useful to genealogists and anyone interested in family history. Users of MH pay additional fees for access to these resources. Researchers would need to use a separate family tree software package to help keep track of the information discovered in MHLE.



EBSCO indicates that the library version makes available more than six billion records. The database provides access to the U.S. federal census from 1790 to 1940, including printable and downloadable images of the individual census pages associated with a search result. Additional government documents include immigration records, citizenship and naturalization records, U.S. military records, and information gleaned from other public documents. International records include the Census of England and Wales (1841–1901) and millions of items from Nordic countries. Paperwork from sporadic censuses from other countries are also available, including Canada, Argentina, Lithuania, Germany, and many more.

MHLE provides access to many of the family-tree profiles submitted by MH members. Personal information of living people is generally kept private. For example, my search for my mother by name and birth year showed that she had siblings and children, but the first names of these individuals (including myself) were not included.

At the bottom of many pages, the “Record Detective” feature (complete with a detective icon with a deerstalker cap and magnifying glass) provides links to additional items. My search for my mother’s name led to a link to additional U.S. public records in which I could determine previous residences and phone numbers, all of which were accurate in her case.

USABILITY The MHLE user interface is fairly straightforward to use, even if the records searched are quite complex. The basic query page allows patrons to enter a first and middle name, a last name, a year of birth (with a handy “calculate it” feature allowing one to submit an age and calculate an approximate birth year), a place (of birth or residence), and potential keywords. The examples given for keyword searches include occupations or military postings. There is also an option to perform an “exact” search, or allow the database to locate records that include spelling or date variations.

Initial “exact” searches in the library edition were problematic. I included my father’s year of birth in my search but was unable to find him in the 1940 census.

After some sleuthing, I discovered that because he was one year old when the census was taken in 1940, his calculated date of birth was 1939. Unchecking the “exact” search box led me to the appropriate record. Experienced genealogists may likely be familiar with this element of calculation.

An easy-to-use map accompanying the basic and advanced search forms permits searching by a particular location. For most regions, the search can be limited to a specific country. For the United States and Canada, users can select a state or province. Place names can also be entered as a text-based search.

The advanced search screen has some additional useful features. An “Events” field permits users to enter the date of marriage, birth, death, military service, residence, and/or immigration. There are also options to add known relatives, identify unknown names, or to include the identity of a sibling, child, spouse, or parent. When available, this information can be incredibly useful for narrowing down potential matches, especially in cases of common names. Users can also restrict searches to record type. Initially, I limited my queries to U.S. Census records but quickly discovered (via the “Research Detective” feature) the usefulness of a wide range of sources.

Search results are sorted by relevance, but the large number of records can make general queries using only names rather frustrating. Thus, applying filters or additional terms is vital. Searches can be easily edited or refined by document type, name, birth year or birthplace, or parents’ names.

Unlike its competitor, ProQuest’s Ancestry Library Edition, MHLE provides off-site access to library card holders, which highly increases the tool’s usability among patrons.

PRICING Please contact EBSCO for detailed pricing information.

VERDICT MHLE is a straightforward database for searching a wide variety of genealogical sources. It could be improved with the option for users to save records to a personalized account or family-tree generating tools. The resource would be an excellent tool for public libraries or for academic institutions that serve an audience of family historians.

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