

Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade

Search Patterns

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Based on input from Steven Niven, David Eltis, Keith McClelland, and Paul LaChance. Scholars of other *Enslaved.org* partner projects felt that their colleagues conveyed important search suggestions.

Types of Users (and what motivates them)

Feedback identified 5 types of users (as well what motivates them to engaged with *Enslaved.org*)

Academics (Historians) - academic historians with very specific research driven questions. It is important to note that academic historians will come from both the Anglophone world (US, UK, anglo Caribbean) and the non-Anglophone world (France, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal, etc.). It is likely that the general patterns of search for academic historians will be regional/spatial, individual (looking for a particular named person), or ethnic (asking questions about a particular ethnic or cultural group (this certainly overlaps with regionality and space). It's also likely that academic historians will need less guidance in their interaction with search given that they are coming to the project with very specific research questions.

Academics (Other) - While historians of the slave trade are the obvious academic users, it is likely that academics from a wide variety of other disciplines will use *Enslaved.org*. Disciplines including historical anthropology, archaeology, environmental sciences, genetics, and historical geography. Historical anthropologists and archaeologists will be motivated by interest in place, ethnicity/cultural affiliation, and social interaction (kinship, social networks, etc). Historical geographers and environmental scientists will be motivated primarily by questions rooted in place and space.

Family Historians/Genealogists - Family historians and genealogists will be motivated primarily with questions about specific individuals (with possible secondary interests in regions associated with their family history). As such, they will likely search by specific names. While many family historians/genealogists will be interested in looking for records of the individually enslaved.org, it is also possible that some might be interested in finding personal connections to enslavers. Most of these will be white, but there were certainly slave compensation beneficiaries who were free people of color. For this user group (who are looking for specific individuals by name), we should manage their expectations. This could possibly be accomplished alerting the user to the potential limits of the search, or the need to try a range of different strategies/search terms. For example, someone looking for, say, the fairly popular Jamaican surname "Ruddock" could be prompted to also try "Riddock" or "Riddoch."

Local (Avocational) Scholars - Local (avocational) scholars are guided by questions that are primarily rooted in place (city, town, county, province, state, region). Within place, their search

could focus on specific individuals (similar to family historians/genealogists). This type of user will likely seek more quantitative information from *Enslaved.org* with questions such as: “How many female enslaved people aged between xxx and xxx were taken from place X, forcibly shipped to place Y and ended up in place Z in the period between xxx and xxx?”

K-12 Teachers/Students - search by k-12 students and teachers will vary by country (and region within country) and will primarily be driven by local curriculum. Search might focus on specific named individuals (broadly speaking) or be bounded by geography (asking questions about slavery within the student or teacher’s city, county, province, etc.). It is likely that these users will also be interested in searching for more quantitative information (though not as sophisticated as local avocational scholars or academics).

Categories of Information that Drive Search

What are categories of information people are searching for, and what are the specific issues with those categories of information:

Names: Users should be able to search on both first/middle and last names or on only a single name (which is typical for so many of the enslaved). An issue that will need to be clarified here is which field is used to store the single name. It would be best to have null values where there is no data. There should be clear guidance for the user on being able to use wild cards (% or * depending on the software rules). Fuzzy searches would be of great help to those looking for specific named individuals.

Sex: Female / Male

Age: Search on age ranges &/or year of birth (+/- x years) and year of death (+/- x years)

Person -- Freedom Status: was the person enslaved, a runaway, a slave owner, a plantation ‘attorney’/agent/manager, etc.? This could be an important way of delimiting searches. Would probably need a dropdown list with a controlled vocabulary to prevent entering vague search terms.

Place: At the least, country or defined territory. Because of the complexity of administrative areas – e.g. British West Indies have parishes and counties, the US has states etc. etc. – there are clearly difficulties about what constitutes a significant place over the various projects. And would we want users to be able to search on where people started from or ended up or both? (Presumably, at the least, both.) Should each project be required to define 2 or 3 significant places (in existing or new fields) for search purposes?

Time Period: date range (1710-1720), century (17th century), or historical period (ie. reformation)

Event: In the draft metadata documentation, there are 12 possible event types. Would we want to include these (or a modified version) as searchable items? This raises the issue of the extent to which the central *Enslaved.org* database should be reproducing data already held in the

individual projects. That is, how far do we want *Enslaved.org* to be a portal in which there are a minimum number of fields necessary in order to achieve effective initial searches for people (and where users could do some searching on aggregates – how many? etc.)? Assuming that the primary focus of *Enslaved.org* is on individuals, we will want people to (a) find them if possible and (b) be directed to where in any project(s) they can find more information.

Relationships: ‘Relationship to others (who could be named)’ should be one of the searchable variables. There are possible difficulties here. The key relationships might be to other people; but it may be to an ‘object’ or institution such as the ship on which someone was transported or, in the Legacies of British Slave-ownership case, the estate or plantation. The user may well find it most helpful to be able to start looking for someone by combining the person’s name with, e.g., the name of a plantation to see if there is an association. However, it may be that this would be covered by place and/or event. It’s possible that RELATIONSHIPS for variables defining family relations and relationships with other individuals named in a document, enslaved and free.