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The *IGI*: A New Tool for Locating Ancestors

Stig Ostgaard*

Over the past six years *Swedish American Genealogist* has published more than 400 genealogical queries, a large number of which are from Swedish Americans trying to find information about their immigrant ancestors. My purpose with these few lines is to suggest to searchers the *International Genealogical Index (IGI)* as a possible source for such information. Although many readers may be aware of this source, for those who are not, the following explanation might be useful.

The *IGI*, as it is popularly called, is maintained in microfiche form at the many branch libraries of the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, and is, quite simply, a world-wide extraction and aggregation of county, town and parish registers of births, christenings and marriages. In contrast to the chronological ordering of the original records, the *IGI* is arranged into two separate alphabetically ordered files—the GIVNAME file, ordered by first names of individuals and the SURNAME file, ordered by the last names or patronymics. Each entry in the *IGI* is followed by information concerning the type of "event," i.e. birth, christening or marriage, the date of the event, and the county, town or parish in which it took place. In the cases of births and christenings the names of the parent or parents are given; and with marriages the name of the spouse is given. Other data include the source of the *IGI* information and other dates of interest to the LDS Church.

Although it must be emphasized that the *IGI* is far from complete, it is being added to regularly, and is certainly of sufficient size to be of value to genealogists. To use it, one simply selects the geographical area in which one is interested (for Sweden this would be the *län* or county), places the proper microfiche into the microfiche reader, and looks down the alphabetical list until (hopefully) the person in question is found. Of course, particularly in the case of common given names or patronymics, many entries may be found for a single name. A Swedish *län*, for example, will probably have hundreds of listings for a single name, such as Per Larsson or Johan Andersson. For this reason additional identifying factors are useful—an approximate date of birth, a specific parish, names of brothers and sisters, etc.

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It is not suggested, of course, that a reference to the *IGI* should replace the use of primary genealogical records. Instead, the *IGI* should be considered simply as an index, with all “matches” requiring further investigation into the cited sources. The *IGI*'s virtues lie not in the definitiveness or finality, but rather in ease of access and perusal, legibility, wide geographic coverage and alphabetical ordering. Its main use should be for producing good, solid, sometimes imaginative leads—something rare and desirable enough in any genealogical search, but especially so for those who are seeking an elusive immigrant ancestor.

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