

Information Overload: Organizing Your Genealogy Records

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The Problem

Do you have an ever-increasing variety of things that need to be organized and/or maintained? Consider your growing collection of emails, PDF files, images, source documents, birth announcements, photocopies from a research trip, notes about research already conducted, contact information, logins and passwords, scanned documents or digital images found online, travel plans, lecture handouts or notes, Gedcom files, online family trees, newspaper articles, photographs, audio or video files, surname boards or mailing list conversation printouts, blog articles for reading later, gravestone rubbings, maps, GPS coordinates, family Bibles, results of library catalog searches, photocopies, DNA test results, correspondence, leads, research plans, calendars and contacts, resources, podcasts, tweets, interlibrary loan requests, ideas, journal articles, recipes, reunion plans, and translations, just for a start.

Your research is interrupted, you stack up work in progress, you inherit envelopes, boxes or chests of family information that you should carefully study and analyze, but you have other demands on your time. You find that your priorities are different than other family members' priorities. When you're ready, they're busy, which makes collaboration difficult. You need to have your genealogical act together so that you can be prepared when you need to be.

The Solution(s)

What is the best solution? Will you be able to make one solution work for all of your organizational needs? What do you most want to be able to do?

- To share the information with others
- To preserve source documents
- To pass along what you have learned from your research
- To find specific documents from among all of your various notes and files
- To access information from more than one location, or even on the road
- To use your limited time wisely
- To accomplish the most on a limited budget
- To maintain back-up copies in case of disaster, computer crash, or other loss

To exchange data files with relatives, or on a particular type of computer
To save space
To present a quality report, book, or album

Organizing

How do genealogists organize their families? What systems have become the standards?

How can you successfully organize your paper-based files?

How can you keep track of what you have already uncovered and make plans for your next steps?

How can you organize emails, passwords, projects, communications, etc.?

What about the digital versions?

What online tools can help you organize?

How do you organize for a successful research trip?

Resources

Allen, David. *Getting Things Done: the Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. New York: Viking, c2001.

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_____, *Quicksheet: Citing Online Historical Sources : Evidence! Style*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, c2007.

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Smith, Drew. *Social Networking For Genealogists*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, c2009.

Sturdevant, Karen Scott. *Organizing & Preserving Your Heirloom Documents*. Cincinnati, Ohio: 2002.

Related Web Sites

Dropbox

<http://www.dropbox.com>

Evernote

<http://evernote.com>

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com>

Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com>

History Pin

<http://www.historypin.com>

Library Thing

www.librarything.com

Pinterest

<http://pinterest.com>

RootsWeb Blank Charts and Forms

http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/get_started/charts_forms.html

Twitter

<http://twitter.com>

Google

<http://www.Google.com>

Blogger

Books

Calendar

Cloud Services

Documents - Docs & Spreadsheets

Gmail

Google+

GoogleEarth

Maps

Photos - Picasa

Reader

Online newsletters and learning centers

Ancestry Learning Center

<http://www.ancestry.com/learn/>

Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter

<http://blog.eogn.com>

FamilyTreeMagazine

<http://www.familytreemagazine.com/>

FamilySearch Research Wiki

<http://wiki.familysearch.org>

Genealogy Class Blog

<http://www.genealogyclassblog.com>