Sharing Your Family History

Getting Started

Share your family history research with family, friends, and fellow researchers so the fruits of your labor can be enjoyed for years to come.

Tips for getting started:

- Adjust your mindset from researcher to creator.

- Determine your goal - what do you want to achieve, who is your audience, when do you want to complete the project, etc.?

- Consider the best format/project to reach your goal and audience.

- Assess your tools - what do you have and what do you need?

- Create a plan and, if applicable, an outline.

- Establish a timeline.

- Set small goals and break large projects into manageable tasks.

Sharing Research

Can others easily access, and understand, your research? Work toward making sure your research is **organized, preserved, digitized, accessible, and communicated** (i.e., people know it exists).

Organizing your materials

Print - Preserve, digitize, and organize print records

Digital - Organize digital files consistently and backup regularly

Access

Whether your research materials are printed or kept digitally via software, online family trees, or in cloud storage, consider these options to increase accessibility:

- Digitize paper items and photos.

- Make online trees "public" so others can view them.

- Share data files, software, and/or account information.

- Create profiles on open/accessible websites (e.g., Wikitree, Geni.com, FamilySearch).

- Print reports, charts, trees, etc. for sharing.

- Export data to GEDCOM files, websites, or sync to online family trees.

Engagement

Are you looking for a simpler approach to engaging your family? Small efforts have a big impact:

Use newsletters, email, mail, and holiday cards to share small tidbits about your family history. You can also solicit new data through surveys and calls for information. Use a simple word processing program or a web-based service like Canva for printing, or send an electronic newsletter with a service like Mailchimp.

Organize a reunion or gathering. Share digestible amounts of information in engaging formats like photo albums, printed trees or charts, or a few select documents. Ask for help identifying gaps and take notes when family members begin sharing stories!

Share documents and photos digitally on cloud storage (e.g., Google Drive/Photos, OneDrive, iCloud, DropBox) or through services like Facebook, YouTube, or Google Earth.

Crafts and décor are creative ways to share your love of family history. Pinterest, Etsy, Shutterfly, and Family Tree Magazine are great for craft and project inspiration.

Activities can help engage younger family members (telling stories, conducting family interviews, and learning a traditional recipe or craft/ skill). Learn more about countries of origin with CultureGrams (free with PPD library card).

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Writing and Publication

Whether you are crafting an article, photo book, or family history book, putting your research in a digestible format is a great way to share with various audiences.

Writing considerations

Planning: decide project scope, audience, size, type, and format

Content: craft an outline and decide what to include

Writing: consider tone, software, and citations

Printing and Publishing

The most appropriate printing or publishing options depend on the nature of your project, as well as your goals, timeline, and budget.

- Home printing or copy shop
- Photo book service (e.g., Shutterfly, Snapfish, Blurb, SmugMug)
- Print-on-demand, self-publishing websites (e.g., Lulu, Blurb, CreateSpace, iUniverse)
- Publisher/book printer
- eBooks (many self-publishing websites also support eBooks)

Copyright

Any written work is copyrighted, but you might consider:

- Adding a copyright statement on back of your title page
- Registering your book with the US Copyright Office.
- If you intend to sell your book, obtaining an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and potentially a Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN).

Tips

- Wait for sales or promotions for better service prices.
- Be very transparent if you decide to fictionalize a story.
- Ask for feedback (family, friends, other genealogists).
- Write your own story.
- Consider purchasing extra copies to donate to libraries, etc.
- Find more resources on American Ancestors and Cyndi's List.

Websites & Blogs

Create a website or blog to make your research accessible online.

Creating a website

1. Choose a domain name (URL) and register it online (e.g., Namecheap, Domain.com).
2. Select a webhost to "host" your website domain (e.g., Bluehost, Dreamhost).
3. Design your website using a web-based platform (e.g., WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, Google Sites) or software (e.g., Dreamweaver).

All-in-one Services

Many services (e.g., WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, Google Sites) will do all these steps for you. There are free and paid options, with varying degrees of control and guidance.

Learn more about website creation on LinkedIn Learning (free with PPD library card) or search for tutorials on YouTube or a specific service's website.

If you don't want to create your own website:

- Some websites allow you to build family websites within their service. (e.g., MyHeritage).
- Some software can generate websites from your data (e.g., RootsMagic, Reunion, Legacy Family Tree, Ancestral Quest).
- Export your family tree as a **G**enealogical **D**ata **COM**munication (GEDCOM) file. Some services can use GEDCOM files to build a website.

Cyndi's List provides details on available services, software, and other options.

Consider the privacy of living individuals on your tree and do not publish their information without consent.

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