The Internet: A Genealogist's Printing Press

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You Are Already An Author & Publisher

Did you know you have become an author and a publisher? For a genealogist, writing and publishing online takes many forms:

- e-mails
- message boards
- mailing lists
- social networking sites
- blogs
- wikis
- web sites
- and any forum/form in which you write something for the public to see

As an author and a publisher you have certain responsibilities to yourself and to other researchers to write clearly and with care. A well-written query, or reply to a query, can make all the difference in growing your family tree. We will discuss the ins and outs of various forums, along with how to make the most of your writing and publishing opportunities online.

General Tips & Guidelines

- Your writings may be online forever, so publish with care.
  - Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Movies, Music & Wayback Machine
    http://archive.org
  - RootsWeb Mailing List Archives
    http://lists.rootsweb.ancestry.com
  - Ancestry/RootsWeb Message Boards
    http://boards.rootsweb.com/
- Use proper punctuation, grammar & spelling.
- Learn how to use the "copy & paste" function on your computer. Correctly write something once, and then copy & paste it from that point on so that you never have to worry about mistakes or inconsistencies.
- The Internet is a global library, a worldwide village, and a meeting place. Once online you will be communicating with the world. You will meet experts and newbies to genealogy and to the online world. You will meet people from all walks of life, from all age groups and from all manner of lifestyles. Keep this

in mind whenever you read something online or write something to be placed online.

- o Don't use abbreviations that may not be widely known.
- o Don't use slang terms, particularly those that are regional.
- o Don't assume that others know what you know about the same topic.
- o Don't assume that others are able to get to the same information that you are.
- o Don't have any pre-determined expectations of what you will learn or find.
- o Don't automatically expect that everyone you meet online has the same goals that you do.
- o Remember that not everyone will be willing to share or able to reply within your timeframe.
- o Always remember to say "please" and "thank you."

E-mail, Mailing List, Message Board & Social Networking Tips

- As in all good communications, explain your motivations for writing your post. Make all of your details clear and ask specific questions. Make certain that you state exactly what it is that you hope to learn or gain from the person to which you are writing or from the forum.
- Use a clear, concise subject line with specific names, dates and places.
- Suggested format for a general subject line:
  SURNAME, Earliest date > Latest date, Place Name(s)
  Use this format as a guideline, but place the most important pieces of information at the beginning of the subject line, with the least important details placed at the end.
- Describe what it is that you already know about your subject.
- Describe what it is that you have already done in your research on the subject.
- Describe exactly what it is that you hope to learn by writing the message.
- Make all of your details clear.
- Ask specific questions.
- Don't make assumptions.
- Show all surnames in UPPERCASE letters.
- Quote the full details for sources that you reference. Indicate titles of books, web site titles and addresses, library names, or any other reference you have used.
- For accuracy be sure to copy and paste complete URLs (web addresses) that you reference.
- Always include your full, real name.
- Always include your e-mail address(es) or other contact information you want to share in public.

Tips & Tricks for Success

- Create a set of pre-written messages that you can use to post queries or ask questions about your research.
- Create a set of pre-written messages that you can use to answer queries and questions you will receive about your research.
- Create one set of short replies and one set of longer replies.

- Have one message ready for each surname, each locality, or each project you are working on. Save the messages in a research workbook/notebook or in e-mail folders. The messages can then be used over and over again.
- Copy and paste data from your genealogy database file or from digitized sources and use it in your outgoing replies or queries. Don't re-type anything when your computer can do the work for you.
- Organize your electronic files (e-mails, research notes, bookmarks, etc.) just as you would your paper files so that it is easy to find materials when you need them.
- Keep a log of where and when you post queries.
- Keep a calendar or task list to remind you to revisit places online on which you have posted queries.

Organizing Your Files

E-mail folders, electronic files, bookmarks, favorites, and virtual notebooks are easier to cope with when they are all arranged in the same manner, with the same filing system. Use your pedigree chart as your guide. Each of your family surnames should be like a drawer or a hanging file in a filing cabinet or like a chapter in a book. Each family unit within that surname group gets their own sub-folder. You can keep it simple or you can make as many sub-folders within folders as you like.

Productivity Tools

- Copy and paste
- Opening multiple tabs to toggle back and forth between web sites/tools
- Windows 7 & 8 Sticky Notes
- Windows 7 & 8 Snipping Tool
- Evernote, https://www.evernote.com
- Sticky Notes syncs with Evernote, http://hosting.edo-soft.com/stickynotes/
- Dropbox, https://www.dropbox.com
- Google Drive, https://drive.google.com
- Google Docs, https://docs.google.com
- Google Calendar, http://calendar.google.com

Publishing Your Own Genealogy Web Site

What Every Good Genealogy Site Should Contain

- One web site title in the <Title> bar at the top of the browser and the same title in the body of the web page, near the top of the page.
- A consistent footer at the bottom of each individual web page. The footer will offer helpful information for the visitor to the web site. It should include the following:
    o Title of the web site and/or title of the web page.
    o Name of the webmaster or author.
    o Contact information for the author (i.e. e-mail address).
    o Date of the last revision on the web site.
    o A copyright statement, if important to the author.
- Navigational links on each page that lead the visitor back to the home page and to other important pages on the site.

A Little: The Least You Can Do

- Create just one web page with basic details about your research.
- Indicate that the visitor should contact you for more information.
- Include your name and contact information, with an e-mail address and a regular, postal mailing address.
- List approximately a dozen of the surnames you are working on, along with dates and place names for each of those surnames. A brief description of your research efforts on each person or surname would also be helpful.
- Submit your site to search engines, Cyndi's List, and other genealogy-related link lists.

A Lot: Going All Out

- Convert your genealogy database file (GEDCOM) into HTML web pages and place the entire database online. Respect the privacy of your family. Be sure to remove data about living people before you place your database online.
- Scan old family photographs and documents, and then add them to your web site, labeling each item carefully.
- Transcribe or extract data from genealogical records in your own collection. For example: your family Bible, the will of your great-grandfather, or the deeds belonging to your ancestors.
- Supply details about the genealogical groups to which you belong. Give the names and addresses of those organizations and set up a link to their web site online, if available.
- Offer advice or help to others who might visit your web site. Share your own expertise with online friends and you'll find that it will come back to you at least two-fold.
- Host web pages on your site for others–friends, genealogical or historical societies, your local Family History Center, your family surname association, a fraternal group or lineage society, etc.

Copyright

All the rules that apply in everyday life–those of polite manners, common sense, and general human decency–also apply on the Internet. Regardless of whether or not you plan to the use the data for non-profit purposes, be sure to follow these guidelines:

- Do not copy research from someone online without obtaining their permission.
- Do not assume that someone else has obtained the necessary permission from the original source(s) of their research material.
- Do not take data, text or graphics without first obtaining permission.
- Familiarize yourself with copyright laws and abide by them.
  - 10 Big Myths about copyright explained
    http://www.templetons.com/brad/copymyths.html
  - U.S. Copyright Office
    http://www.copyright.gov/
  - Cyndi's List » Intellectual Property » Copyright
    http://www.cyndislist.com/ip/copyright-general/
- Above all, respect the work and research efforts of others. Remember that it takes years to research and gather your own family's historical information.
- Remember that the research efforts you see online are not necessarily 100% accurate.