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Putting your Family History on the Internet

The session looks at ways you can share your research findings on the Internet. Which format should you use to "publish" it? Do you want relatives to be able to easily copy the data? What are your options? How can you quickly and easily place your own family history on the Internet? Internet publishing is a cost effective alternative.

Basic Options

You must decide both who you want to share with and what you want to share. First, you must decide who you want to be able to see your information. Here, the choices are:
1. Anyone can see it
2. Only those who pay for it can see it
3. Only those who ask for it can see it
4. Only those you select can see it
5. No one except you (or a select small group) can see it

Assuming you want to share on the Internet, you have to decide how.
1. Publish your information to the Internet where you have control of appearance
2. Publish your information to the Internet in someone else's database (they control)
3. Put unspecific information on the Internet and ask others to contact you
4. Share only limited information, at your discretion in individual cases

Many related issues include cost (both to you and to the recipient), software, computer skills required (yours and the recipient's), control over appearance, preferred format, control over distribution, as well as other issues.

Consider such sites as myfamily.com for controlled access to online information.

No matter which method of sharing you choose, consider copyright and privacy issues. For more information, see http://www.geocities.com/UGAslig/PreparetoPublish.htm and http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/comstandsharing.htm. The Internet offers the advantages of ease and minimal expense. Let's look at how you can "publish" on the Internet.

Putting Your Family History on the Internet

Those two basic ways are to give your genealogy to another organization for them to place on the Internet for you, or to do it yourself.

Steps to putting your family history on the Internet

1. Research and document your pedigree. Until you have something to share, there isn't much point to publishing. Some research can be done online, but much of it requires using traditional resources such as microfilm, certificates, and correspondence.

2. Enter your data into a database (including sources!). Pick a program that meets your needs (Even if you use PAF, you may want to consider a different program to create your family history. I recommend FamilyTreeLegends, RootsMagic, Legacy or The Master Genealogist). Consider whether the program creates web pages and what those pages look like.

3. Decide whether you want to create a web page yourself (and have control over it) or send your data to someone else to put on their web site. Use your genealogy program to create a GEDCOM of everything you want to put on the Internet (**NOTE** where you save it and what you named it!).For a simple way to publish, let someone else do it for you. Just skip to step 7. If you choose to create a web page that you have control over, go to step four.

4. Start the program that creates your web pages and make a few choices about who and what to include and how the data will look. The options vary, depending on the program you select to create your web pages. Once created, the web pages will be on your hard drive, but not on the Internet (see step 6). The adventurous may choose to use a program to edit the pages and make changes (add more pictures, etc.). Use .jpg or .gif format for pictures. Word '97 or Corel 9 or later will do this, as well as many other programs.

5. Find a place that's permanent Internet site to store your data. Your ISP (Internet Service Provider) may include this in the basic monthly charge you're already paying. Many others do this free, including rootsweb, tripod, and geocities. The *price* of free web space is allowing advertising on your web page (which generates revenue for the host). See **Finding a Place of Storage**, below. Take time to consider your options.

6. Transfer the pages created from your hard drive to the storage site you chose. Some places that store web pages for you have a wizard that steps you through the process of transfer (50megs, Web1000, …). Some programs (FamilyTreeLegends) do this for you automatically. Others require you to use an FTP program (File Transfer Protocol) such as WS_FTP (a freeware program readily available). Other popular FTP programs include Cute FTP and CoffeeCup.

    Once these steps are completed, you should proofread the text and validate the HTML (see if the coding is valid and works in any web browser), make sure that the links are working, and that your data is properly presented. Tools to help you do these things are mentioned at Preparing to Publish (http://www.geocities.com/UGAslig/PreparetoPublish.htm) or How to Publish on the Internet (http://www.geocities.com/UGAslig/HowtoPublish.htm). Once you are satisfied, you need to promote your web pages. After all, the reason one puts them on the web is to make them available to people. You can do this by notifying key sites (CyndisList, Genealogy SiteFinder, FamilySearch Internet, etc.), announcing on appropriate newsgroups and mailing lists, and notifying the search engines (Google, Altavista, Lycos, etc.). Detailed instructions for these steps are included in the tutorials mentioned two preceding articles or in a variety of books and magazine articles.

Now that you have your own web page, decide if you ALSO want to send your data to one of the services that create web pages for you. If so, go to step 7. If not, skip step 7.

7. Look at the various sites that accept submissions of genealogies to be published on the web. These include Kindred Konnections (http://www.mytrees.com/), Pedigree Resource File (http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Share/Preserve/frameset_preserve.asp), AncestryWorldTree (http://www.ancestry.com/share/awt/main.htm), as well as others (less well known or harder to use). Follow the directions given on their web site to submit your GEDCOM to them. Which should you choose? It depends on your goals and feelings. Some submit to all, thinking that they don't want to miss finding any possible relatives, while others prefer to be more selective. NOTE: World Family Tree is not listed here since it charges a substantial fee to see trees placed online. RootsWeb is not shown since it is now part of Ancestry World Tree.

Comparing software that publishes

To learn about programs that create genealogy web sites, see A *Comparison of Genealogical Software Products* (http://www.geocities.com/UGAslig/Comparison.htm). There are basically three types of programs that put your family names online:

1. Genealogy programs that in addition to storing your family data can create a web page. You will usually find this feature on any current genealogy programs. In addition to organizing you family data, it will assist you in building your web page.
2. GEDCOM to HTML programs. These programs do not store family data, but instead use your family data stored in GEDCOM format to produce a web page. You still need a genealogy program to create the GEDCOM in the first place. If, however, you already have a genealogy program or prefer a genealogy program which does not create web pages, you can use that program to create a GEDCOM and then use a conversion program to create the web pages. Also, some people may prefer the style or format of the web pages created by a conversion program over the pages created by their genealogy program. I will demonstrate several of these programs and show you how to find samples of the web pages they create.
3. Programs that don't use your genealogy program. While some have templates or *fill-in-the-blank* functionality, they don't automatically pull information from your genealogy. General programs that will create web pages, but not automatically include your genealogy, include Front Page, Word, Word Perfect, CoffeeCup, HotDog, Netscape, and hundreds more.

Read more about these programs designed for genealogy at http://help.surnameweb.org/tutorial/gedcom.html#section3a.

Finding a Place of Storage

You have a lot of choices in where to store your web pages. Your Internet Service Provider (the company you use to connect to the Internet) may already be charging you for space to store your web pages--it's included in most monthly service fees. This is true of America Online, Earthlink, and most local ISPs. Some programs, such as FamilyTreeMaker, include

storage space with the program you purchase. The disadvantage of this sort of service is that you do not have access to the storage space and cannot fine tune your web pages. The advantage is that you don't have to worry about steps five and six since the program does them automatically.

Some people prefer to use a separate host for storing their web pages. The advantage is that if they change ISPs (for faster, better, or cheaper access), they don't have to move their web pages. Also, they can edit their web pages from other computers that don't use the same ISP. 50megs.com, geocities (now yahoo.com), freeservers.com, 0catch.com, topcities.com, www.freewebpage.org and many others do this by having you log in to their site on the web and then transfer the pages to their computers. This can be done from any computer with access to the Internet. The disadvantage is that they then place advertising on your web pages. An excellent services that lists, rates, categorizes, and helps you find a good we host is http://www.free-webhosts.com/.

Summary

Once you have created your web pages, there are a variety of tools to test, validate, refine, and improve them. For example, John December's guide to web development at http://www.december.com/web/develop. He gives good tips and links to tools and aids for improving your final product. To this, I would add:

- http://www.cooltext.com/ (creates graphics with your text)
- The Web Development Shop (http://www.library.miami.edu/graphics/browser.html)
- Hundreds of other sites with clipart, photos, and graphics that you can use (free or fee), such as clipart.com and arttoday.com.

For more information on how to create and improve ***family history*** web pages, the choices involved, and how to improve them once created, please refer to:

- Cyndi Howell's web page construction kit (http://www.cyndislist.com/construc.htm)
- Surnameweb's Genealogy Home Page tutorial (http://help.surnameweb.org/tutorial)
- Richard Wilson's book *Publishing Your Family History on the Internet* (See http://www.compuology.com/book2.htm for details). He's also done a video (see http://www.123genealogy.com/dbstore/shopping/product_details.php?id=11).