

January
2008

Connections

The E-Letter of GENCOM, The Computer Genealogy Group
Editor: Patricia Minton Bettis



January 27 Meeting

Sunday 2:00 Hamilton N Caddo Library

Charlene Jacinto Mast,

local attorney, and Director of the Shreveport Family History Center will review some of the LDS programs for Family History Research, (and at our request) explain how to volunteer for the Family Search Indexing and Extracting projects.

We have anxiously awaited this meeting with Charlene. She is Director of the Family History Center in Shreveport. A practicing attorney, former High School History teacher, avid genealogist and author.

We will have the opportunity to learn how to make the most of the fabulous programs offered the genealogist by the Family History Centers.

Charlene had planned to focus on the Internet programs they offer but I have asked her to also tell us about the Family Search Indexing System. GENCOM is a member of FGS and I monitor the websites and newsletters of other groups with great interest. Two of the largest Computer Genealogy groups are much involved with the project, are enthusiastic over their role in contributing to this world wide gift to genealogy, and feel they are learning so much from their effort.

I mentioned this project a few months ago and downloaded the software but decided to wait till an expert could be with us to properly introduce the subject.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE INDEXING PROJECT

Two years ago at the Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference in Salt Lake City the Family Search indexing Project was announced. The goal of this huge undertaking is to digitize the enormous collection of micro-filmed records in their vaults.

They have developed a new methodology for indexing records which allows anyone with a computer to participate. A team scans every entry in their records and transcribes the key data into a computer file that then becomes accessible by the search engines. The key information becomes an index that is searchable by computer programs and contains pointers to the exact image where the information was extracted. Though millions of dollars have been spent on Character Recognition programs—OCR works with only certain characters, and as we all know the handwriting in Census records, as an example, are too varied and individual to establish patterns for machine reading success.. The Census enumerators in the last century were not expected to fill out their forms so a computer could read them, nor were parish priests in 1600s and 1700s expected to have their registers Digitized and searched.

How is the new methodology different from the old methods of indexing? A new software program written in Java is downloaded to your computer. Second, the program allows the Indexing project server to give each volunteer one small segment of a document at a time, so they will not take more than about 30 minutes to index each batch. I have downloaded the program, and am including the list of current projects on another page. Most are 1850 census.. The Ill.1850 census which I began working on was well scanned and quite legible. It will take a bit of study to remember their system for treating blank entries etc, but I think it would not take any of us long to do a few sheets each month. We will all feel that we are repaying those who have digitized the documents we now find on line!

Richard Rands, Pres. of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy group says “We have a delightful opportunity for our members to fine tune our record searching skills and at the same time provide a great service to the genealogical world! The concept of indexing may be new to you. The easiest way to explain it is to imagine sitting at an old microfilm reader and cranking through image after image for hours searching for the record of the death of your third great-grandfather, Jeremiah. The process is slow, tedious, eye wrenching, and frustrating. The print is small, faint, and at times illegible.

You spend hours going through a single reel of film and don't find a single piece of useful information. Sound familiar?

Now imagine that you can enter Jeremiah's name and basic information into a search engine online, and within a second it points to a digital picture of the precise image of his death record, scanned from the microfilm where Jeremiah is listed. In a short time, you find what you are looking for. You may have already experienced that kind of discovery using the search engines at FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com, the NEHGS web site, or other websites with indexed records. This amazing feat is only available because those organizations have arranged for a team to scan every entry in their records and transcribe the key data into a computerfile that then becomes accessible to the search engines. The key information becomes an index that is searchable by computer programs and contain pointers to the exact image where the information was extracted.

Sometimes these teams are paid for their work, making it very expensive. Often such teams are located in countries where wages are low, but where the ability to read historical records from different cultures is limited. Sometimes teams have been recruited in prisons. It is not hard to surmise that people with some genealogy experience will produce higher quality indexes.

With thousands of interested genealogists all over the world anxious to use the results of this effort, it is only logical that we should join together to accomplish this remarkable goal!

He says, “Those of us who have been indexing for a few months have concluded that we have learned to use search engines more effectively for locating our family records. We become better at choosing criteria. When working with census records, we notice patterns of family relationships that are only apparent when working with several pages of an enumeration district. Also you will increase your ability to read difficult decipher handwriting...I can assure you that you will become a better genealogist if you spend some time on the indexing project...”

If you would like more information check out the web site at :www.familysearchindexing.org



FAMILYSEARCH™

INDEXING

Current Census projects

- * 1871 Canadian Census
 - * Arkansas - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Arkansas - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Arkansas - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave
 - * California - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Connecticut - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Connecticut - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Delaware - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Delaware - 1850 US Federal Census_General and Slave
 - * District of Columbia - 1850 US Federal Census_General and Slave
 - * District of Columbia - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Florida - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Florida - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave
 - * Georgia - 1900 U.S. Federal Census
 - * Illinois - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Illinois - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Iowa - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Iowa - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Irish Birth Indexes 1864-1883
 - * Irish Birth Indexes 1884-1903
 - * Irish Death Indexes 1864-1884
 - * Irish Marriage Indexes 1868-1892
 - * Irish Marriage Indexes 1893-1921
 - * Kentucky - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Kentucky - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Kentucky - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave
 - * Maryland - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Maryland - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Maryland - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave
 - * Massachusetts - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Massachusetts - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Mecklenburg-1819 Volkszählung (Mecklenburg-1819 Census)
 - * Minnesota - 1850 US Federal Census General
 - * Minnesota - 1900 U.S. Federal Census
 - * Montana - 1900 U.S. Federal Census
 - * Nebraska - 1900 U.S. Federal Census
- * New Mexico - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * New Mexico - 1900 U.S. Federal Census
 - * New York - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * New York - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Ohio - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Ohio - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Oregon - 1850 US Federal Census General
 - * Pennsylvania - 1850 US Federal Cesus_General
 - * Rhode Island - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Salt Lake County Births 1908-1915
 - * Tennessee - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Tennessee - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave *
 - Tennessee - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Texas - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Texas - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Texas - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave
 - * Utah - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Utah - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Vermont - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Virginia - 1850 US Federal Census_General
 - * Virginia - 1850 US Federal Census_Mortality
 - * Virginia - 1850 US Federal Census_Slave
 - * West Virginia Vital Records





Carolyn's Corner

VISTA

I am sure that you have heard some bad things about VISTA the new operating system from Microsoft. I have been using Vista since April and love it. I think that you will too when it is time for a new computer. I have not heard of one person who has upgraded their Windows XP machine to VISTA that is happy. So, hold out for a new computer.

Bernie tells us what we need to consider when we replace our old computers.

You may also go to this site and read and make notes of what you should consider

http://www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/howto/tips_on_purchasing_a_new_computer.html

Identity Theft

We all have been hearing so much about this lately. This link will take you to a FREE online course titled Preventing Identity Theft

http://www.aarp.org/learntech/personal_finance/identity_theft_intro.html

Recalls

Many times there is a recall or alert I hear about on TV but don't get all the details.

You may go to this site and read about the latest Recalls, Market Withdrawals and Safety Alerts <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/7alerts.html>

Free On Line Computer Classes?

Go to this site and look at the list of classes. You may sign up to be notified when a class that you are interested in starts. <http://tinyurl.com/33ml4e>

I hope that you are all having a Happy New Year.

Till next month



Why RED Xs?

One of the main areas where people see the red X is in their e-mail. If you use Outlook Express and are having trouble seeing pictures in your e-mails, open it up and go to **Tools, Options** and choose the **Security** tab. Make sure the "**Block images and other external content in HTML e-mail**" box is unchecked. Now, if you are sending an e-mail and people have been complaining to you about the pictures not showing up, try this: open up OE and go to **Tools, Options, Send** tab. Under the "**Mail Sending Format**," make sure **HTML** is selected and then click on the **HTML Settings** button. In there, make sure the "**Send pictures with messages**" box is checked. That should solve your e-mail issues.

Now, if you are having trouble seeing images in Internet Explorer, go to **Tools, Internet Options** and click on the **Advanced** tab. Look for the **Multimedia** section and make sure the box that says "**Show Pictures**" is checked. For Firefox, go to **Tools, Options** and click on the **Content** icon. Make sure the "**Load images automatically**" box is checked as well. Another cause may be that your browser security settings are set too high, which prevents you from accessing the Web site that handles the images. To fix this In IE, go to **Tools, Internet Options**, choose the **Security** tab and click on the **Default Level** button. Make sure your settings are somewhere around the medium level.

Another cause could be your antivirus or firewall settings. Look for a setting that says "Disable Web bugs" and make sure it is turned off. This should allow all the images to pass through so you can see them clearly. There are also a couple of other more simple reasons why your images may be blocked. One is that you're looking at a Web site that is busy or temporarily shut down or offline, causing the images to be down. this might just be your problem. Just try the site again later.

Editor's Note: I received pictures recently that I really wanted to see —and got only Red Xs. I appealed to Carolyn for help and this was her reply! I have heard others discuss the problem so am sharing.... Thanks, Carolyn! PNB



United States Department of Health & Human Services

U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative

Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and even rare diseases—like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families.

If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy.

To help focus attention on the importance of family history, the U.S. Surgeon General in cooperation with other agencies with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has launched a national public health campaign, called the U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative, to encourage all American families to learn more about their family health history.

In addition to the Office of the Surgeon General, other HHS agencies involved in this project include the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) at the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

My Family Health Portrait

Access My Family Health Portrait web version

Americans know that family history is important to health. A recent survey found that 96 percent of Americans believe that knowing their family history is important. Yet, the same survey found that only one-third of Americans have ever tried to gather and write down their family's health history.

Because family health history is such a powerful screening tool, the Surgeon General has created a new computerized tool to help make it fun and easy for anyone to create a sophisticated portrait of their family's health.

This new, revised version of the tool, called "My Family Health Portrait" is a web-enabled program that runs on any computer that's connected to the web and running an up-to-date version of any major Internet browser.

The new version of the tools offers numerous advantages over previous versions, which had to be downloaded to the user's computer, but only those running the Microsoft Windows operating system.

The web-based tool helps users organize family history information and then print it out for presentation to the family doctor. In addition, the tool helps users save their family history information to their own computer and even share family history information with other family members. The tool can be accessed at

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>.

If users prefer, they still can download the My Family Health Portrait software directly onto their own computers. The downloadable version of the tool can be accessed at:

<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/download.html>.

The U.S. Surgeon General makes the tool freely available to all users. No user information is saved on any computer of the U.S. federal government. See the Privacy and Security Policy on the tool for more information.

When you are finished organizing your family history information, the tool will create and print out a graphical representation of your family's generations and the health disorders that may have moved from one generation to the next. That is a powerful tool for predicting any illnesses for which you should be checked.



" 101 A GEDCOM Primer

By George Morgan

It's the beginning of a new year and people who got computers and software over the holidays are lined up to pursue their genealogical research with a vengeance. If you're just beginning to work with your genealogy software, or if you're spreading your wings from the basics, it's important to learn about how data from your genealogy databases software is shared. let's have a little GEDCOM 101 discussion.

Just What

?

The term GEDCOM is an acronym, standing for Genealogy Electronic Data COMmunications. It is a data format standard that allows data from one genealogy computer program to be shared with and read by another genealogy computer program. Juliana Smith, the editor of the "Ancestry Daily News," and I were talking by phone today and she mentioned an analogy she once read on this. Let me try to present a scenario to you. Let's pretend that three people meet on a busy street corner in the city and each is lost. However, each knows something about the city but, because one speaks French, one speaks Swahili, and the third speaks Chinese, no one can understand the other. They are each speaking in their own language. Finally, one speaks a phrase in English, and the other two realize that they, too, can speak English. A common ground has now been defined for the exchange of information. They exchange information and directions, and they all can now better find their way to their destinations in the city.

The GEDCOM standard acts as the 'English' on the analogy above.

Genealogy database programs typically save information in their own, proprietary format (or language, as it were). However, they also provide the ability to save the same information in another format -- the GEDCOM standard, and that format is used to export the data to other computers. The format of the GEDCOM can be used by any other genealogy computer to import and read the same data. The way it does so is simple.

In a GEDCOM file, each record type has an identifier attached to it so that a name, for instance, always has the same identifier code, the date of birth has another identifier, the birth location has another identifier, and so on. The receiving program knows that one individual's information has a starting code and an ending code, like an envelope. Inside, the record identifier codes tell the receiving computer where to put the data attached to it in its own program. That means that it know what field in its own program to place the name, the date of birth, the birth location, etc., and how to attach which spouse and children, and so on. It sounds complicated, but it really is relatively simple for a programmer to set up.

For us, the users of the software programs, it is a "no-brainer."

Now, there are different handlings of the GEDCOM files by some programs. For example, a life event defined in your Family Tree Maker database, which will be coded with an identifier code, may be treated as a separate event in one program or the data may be dropped into the notes area of the receiving program. The most important thing, of course, is that the data is moved intact and placed somewhere. Note also that some software programs allow you to specify how much information you want to export in your outgoing GEDCOM file. You could specify everything, which means text, events, notes, source citations -- the works. Or you might opt to include only a finite amount of information in the GEDCOM you create and export. It is important for you to read your program's HELP file and learn about the following topics:

- 1) File formats in which your data may be saved
- 2) GEDCOM files that can be produced from your program
- 3) How to create a GEDCOM file
- 4) How to export a GEDCOM file

GEDCOM Tips Privatizing Information 'of Living Individuals

It is always important to privatize your GEDCOM data. Privatizing is the process of excluding some or all information about living individuals. That means either suppressing their names, their vital dates, or other information so as to keep their information private. I believe that most genealogy database software programs include opting to use this built-in capability before you create your GEDCOM file. If your program does not have this function, there are utility programs available at various places on the Web. Gedliving is one of these, available from the Roots-Web site at www.rootsweb.com/~gumby/ged.html. There are, however, others.

When you submit a GEDCOM to a responsible Web-based database entity such as Ancestry.com or Roots-Web.com, you can be assured that information about living people will be privatized and not shown. Neither will the data be sold, leased, or published for sale on CD-ROM. In other words, the privacy of living individuals is respected and will not be compromised.

And What About My Graphics?

Graphics in your database are not part of the data included in the creation and export of a GEDCOM file. I often hear people complaining that they had created a vast database and had embedded photographs of people, places, tombstones, and other subjects. They were distressed and disappointed that the pictures weren't in the GEDCOM. Well, the GEDCOM standard wasn't originally conceived to deal with these graphics, only with text. Perhaps a future version of the standard can and will incorporate that. However, until ultrahigh-speed communications is available universally, the addition of graphics into a GEDCOM file transfer would be pretty unwieldy for most people.

An Educated Consumer

Before you spend a great deal of time creating, uploading, downloading, exporting, importing, and merging all these GEDCOM files, please invest a little time reading the HELP text of your genealogy program and learn more about its capabilities and/or limitations. You will then be able to make more informed decisions about your own use of the facilities.

Happy Hunting! George

Genealogy Database Hits 150 Million Names

Pedigree Resource File database also adds ability to view names in family tree format SALT LAKE CITY —

FamilySearch™ announced today that the Pedigree Resource File (PRF) database has reached over 150 million searchable names. FamilySearch databases now contain over one billion searchable names online. Along with the milestone achievement, a new feature has been added that allows users to view genealogical and extended information for deceased individuals in a familiar pedigree (family tree) format. Users can search or contribute their personal genealogies to the free database at www.familysearch.org.

The PRF database is a popular destination for family historians seeking to find missing branches of their family tree and then preserve or share family histories online. People from around the world can submit their genealogies online at FamilySearch.org. Using a genealogy software program (such as the free Personal Ancestral File program found at FamilySearch.org), users can easily donate a copy of their personal family histories to the Pedigree Resource File. Details can be found online by clicking the Share tab on FamilySearch.org. Since its launch in 1999, the database has grown at a rate of about 19 million names a year. Today, it boasts over 150 million searchable names. To respect privacy, only information about deceased individuals is displayed online.

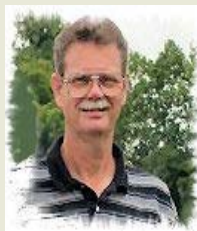
“Prior to this latest search improvement, users didn't always realize that there was additional information available for an ancestor found in the database. We also wanted to display search results for an individual in the more familiar context of a family tree,” said Steve Anderson, Marketing Manager for FamilySearch. “This new feature allows them to do just that.

The Pedigree Resource File can be found by on the advanced search page on FamilySearch.org: www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp

FamilySearch is the public channel of the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU), a nonprofit organization. FamilySearch maintains the world's largest repository of genealogical resources accessed through FamilySearch.org, the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and 4,500 Family History Centers across the country.

The President's Message

Bob Franklin



I have been quite busy with Christmas and all the festivities that goes along with the season. I am now ready to settle down and do some genealogy research and hopefully break some of those brick-walls that my ancestors left for me to stumble over.

I am eagerly looking forward to GENCOM's January meeting. Our guest speaker will be Charlene Jacinto Mast, director of the LDS Family History Center in Shreveport. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn what the LDS Family History Center has to offer and how to use it's resources. I can't think of a better way for GENCOM to start the new year.



**Happy
New Year!**

Bob Franklin

GENCOM

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2007-2008

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