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JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS

The BYU Family Historian is an online academic journal published by the Center for Family History and Genealogy at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Visit our Web site at http://familyhistory.byu.edu.

We invite researchers to submit an article, book review, or CD-ROM review for this publication. We publish articles relating to family and local history, research techniques and procedures, descriptions of genealogical and historical records and collections of international scope, documented compiled genealogies, professionalism, and reviews.

We solicit articles on beginning genealogy as well as scholarly articles. Articles should include footnotes and be well documented. They will be peer reviewed. We follow The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

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GARY MOKOTOFF

How do you document a member of your family who vanished without a trace, whose immediate family disappeared too, whose religious records were destroyed, who lived in an area where government sources are uncooperative in providing records? Some may conclude that it would be more productive to set the search aside and concentrate on more fertile areas. When the number of family members that fit this profile is one or two, the conclusion might be valid. When the number of family members is in the hundreds, it poses a problem that must be solved. Virtually all Jewish-American genealogists with roots in central and eastern Europe fall into the latter category.

As a second generation American whose ancestors arrived in the United States at the turn of the century from Russia and Poland, my family was safe in the United States during World War II but for those family members who fought during the War; the Holocaust was an event that happened to Jews, but other Jews. This viewpoint ended shortly after I began identifying the descendants of my third-great grandfather Tuvia David Mokotow (c1774–1842), a merchant of Warka, Poland. To date, I have documented over 300 descendants of my ancestor who were murdered during the Holocaust. I have located fewer than twenty survivors.

What is significant to the genealogist is that this is not a list of 300 names. During the past twenty years, I have been able to locate information that has made it possible to determine the birth date, death date, hometown and occupation of many of the victims. I found documentation that described the family structure of the victims: who the parents, the grandparents, and the children were. In certain cases, there was information at the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and U.S. National Archives that allowed tracing of these disappeared branches back to Tuvia David Mokotow. Access to genealogy-related material on the Internet also aided in uncovering additional information.

THE MOKOTOWSKIS OF OTWOCK, POLAND

When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, precipitating World War II, more than fifty men, women, and children named Mokotowski lived in the town of Otwock, Poland, a suburb of Warsaw. When Germany surrendered in April 1945, not one of these people was alive. Those who were not victims of the atrocities committed against Jews in Otwock were deported to Treblinka on August 19, 1942, and immediately gassed to death. My research demonstrated that all persons named Mokotow, Mokotoff, and Mokotowski were descended from Tuvia David Mokotow. Therefore, as Mokotoff family historian, it was my responsibility to document how these persons were part of the family and find as much information about their lives as possible.

FIRST-PERSON SOURCES

Even though many Holocaust victims had no immediate surviving family members, there are still people that remembered them. These remembrances have been documented in two of the most important sources of information about Holocaust victims: yizkor books and Pages of Testimony.
YIZKOR BOOKS

After World War II, the survivors of the Holocaust published books that memorialized the destroyed Jewish communities of Europe, called yizkor books (yizkor means “memorial” or “remembrance” in Hebrew). They commemorate not only the victims but also the Jewish communities themselves. To date, more than 1,200 towns² have been commemorated in this manner. The New York Public Library has digitized approximately 700 of these books and placed them on the Internet at http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbooks_intro.cfm.

Although each book was written independently of the others, yizkor books have a typical structure. The first section describes the history of the Jewish community of the town from its inception, sometimes hundreds of years ago, to the events of the Holocaust which invariably culminated in the destruction of all Jewish religious property (synagogues, cemeteries, etc.) and the immediate murder of the Jewish population or deportation to labor or extermination camps. For the genealogist, this overview section provides much material about the Jewish community life of the town. The next section is a group of stories that are the personal remembrances of survivors about their individual families. If the family historian is fortunate enough to find an article about the victims of his family, it usually contains a wealth of information, sometimes quite poignant.

For example, the yizkor book of Przedecz, Poland, has a description of Bronka Mokotow, a 17-year-old Holocaust victim who was gassed at Treblinka, written by her brother, who left Poland in the late 1930s for Palestine. “The Purim meal always brings me to sentimental thoughts for my sister Bronka was born at that time. Who wasn’t able to recognize her, with two pigtails on her head? She was charming and noble as well as quiet and serious. People who knew this girl told me that when she grew up, she turned into a very nice and high lady.”³ Even this statement is of genealogical significance. The brother indicates his sister was born on the Jewish holiday of Purim. In an interview, he told me his sister was four years his junior. This pinpointed Bronka’s birthday as March 11, 1926. It was confirmed a few years later when I was able to get a transcript of her birth record.

The next section of a yizkor book is devoted to families in which there were no survivors. They are usually brief, one- or two-paragraph descriptions headed by the name of the father and mother as well as the names of the children. Where the name of a parent could not be remembered, it is left blank. If the children’s names were not remembered, the notation might be “three children” or “two sons and a daughter.”

The final section is a necrology—a list of all the victims from the town.

Almost all yizkor books are written in Hebrew and Yiddish. This creates a challenge to most genealogists because they are confronted not only with an unfamiliar language but an unfamiliar alphabet. Remarkably, it is an obstacle that is not that difficult to overcome. This is because the genealogist is not attempting to read the book but is looking for something very specific: people’s names.

Turn to the table of contents of a yizkor book and you see a sequence of words, flush left, and another, flush right. It becomes obvious to the reader that the flush left words are the author’s name and the flush right words are the title of the article. This may seem backwards, but remember, Hebrew is written right to left. Leaf through the book and look at the captions of pictures. A picture of a single person has two or three words below the picture: the person’s name. The caption of a picture of ten persons has many sets of two or three words separated by commas: the names of the persons in the picture. The back of the book has pages in table form. It is observed that the table is in sections where the first letter of the last word of each section is identical. It is the necrology listed in alphabetical order.
How do you find information about specific individuals? Again, the genealogist has the advantage that the search is only for people’s names. The name Mokotowski, whether it is in Hebrew, Cyrillic, or the Roman alphabet is written phonetically as mukutusvski. I have successfully located information about family members written in Cyrillic by transliterating the family name into this alphabet and searching vital statistics registers looking for the Cyrillic pattern that looks like mukutusvski.

Scanning the table of contents of the book, no person named Mokotowski was found. Scanning the captions of pictures, the word Mokotowski was not found, despite the claim of an Israeli relative that there was a picture with a caption that included the name “Joshua Mokotowski.” However, the necrology portion of the book had a wealth of information. Under the Hebrew equivalent of the letter “M” were the names of no less than fifty Mokotowskis. They are listed on pages 106 and 107 in the following manner:

- Mokotowski, Esther Raizel, Bela(?) Shmuel (slaughterer) and their children;
- Mokotowski, Yrachmiel Yizhak, Chava Leah;
- Mokotowski, Leibel, wife and children;
- Mokotowski, Yehoshua, wife and two daughters;
- Mokotowski, Pinchas, wife and their sons;
- Mokotowski, Yente;
- Mokotowski, Leizer and his daughters;
- Mokotowski, Itshe (daughter of Idel);"M"}

Excerpt from the necrology of the Otwock Yizkor book for the letter “M” identifying some of the Mokotowski (מאקאטאװסקי) victims.

Each set of names appears to be a family unit. Note the occupation of Shmuel Mokotowski. It seemed unreasonable that the book would contain no information about Mokotowskis given the number that lived in the town. I therefore very carefully read every story title and subtitle and finally achieved success. On page 52 was an article, written in Yiddish, with the entitled “Mein Vater Eliezer Mokotowski” (My Father Eliezer Mokotowski). The author was not named Mokotowski, because the author was a woman, Sarah Landau. I allowed my male chauvinist bias to get the best of me by assuming that all Mokotowskis would be named Mokotowski and had
excluded married women. On page 73, I located as part of a greater story about the Jewish citizens of Otwock a paragraph devoted to a man named Yitzhak Mokotowski. Since I do not understand Hebrew, I copied both articles and had them translated. Of genealogical significance was that Eliezer was born in Karczew, Poland, in 1865 and died on the 7th day of the Jewish month of Tishri, 1936. Using a Hebrew/Secular date converter, I was able to determine that the date was equivalent to September 23 of that year. There are many such calendar converters on the Internet. Yitzhak Mokotowski was a food store owner. He was described as rich and short, with bushy eyebrows and a short temper.

PAGES OF TESTIMONY

The major archive and documentation center for the Holocaust is Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel. Since 1955, Yad Vashem has been attempting to document every one of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust on six million pieces of paper called Pages of Testimony. They have requested persons to come forward and submit on this preprinted form a host of information about the victim including name; place and year of birth; place, date and circumstances of death; name of mother, father and spouse; and in some cases, names and ages of children. Each submitter is required to sign this Page of Testimony showing submitter’s name, address, and relationship to deceased. In signing the document, the submitter is testifying—hence its name—to the accuracy of the information. To date, three million victims have been documented. Despite the tragic event that caused their creation, these documents are a genealogist’s gold mine, given the wealth of information provided. In 2004, these documents were placed on the Internet at http://www.yadvashem.org with a search engine that allows retrieval of documents based on any or all of the above data fields.

Pages of Testimony of Otwock

In 1984, a letter was sent to Yad Vashem asking for copies of Pages of Testimony of all persons named Mokotow or Mokotowski. Many weeks later, 23 documents arrived including nine documenting persons named Mokotowski from Otwock. They listed:

- Pina Mokotowski, daughter of Yitzhak and Chava, born 1906, died Treblinka.
- Yenta Mokotowski, daughter of Yitzhak and Chava, born 1908, died Treblinka.
- Leibl Mokotowski, son of Yitzhak and Chava, born 1902, died Treblinka, wife Golda.
- Yenta Mokotowski, daughter of Leibel and Rachel, born 1920, died Treblinka.
- Rachel Mokotowski, daughter of Bezalel and Helena, born 1899, died Treblinka, husband Aryeh.
- Yitzhak Mokotowski, son of Eliezer and Idel Tsurna, born 1890, death unknown, wife Chava
- Leibel Mokotowski, son of Eliezer and Idel Tsurna, born 1889, died Warsaw, wife Rachel.

Note that the last two Pages of Testimony were for the same family. The first was submitted by a cousin who did not know as much information as the second person, a brother-in-law.

Two of the Pages of Testimony, the ones for Yitzhak and the last one listed above were submitted on June 1, 1955 by Abraham Dov Landau, Kiryat Shalom, Israel. This document created
a link between the victim and a living relative. A check of the Tel Aviv telephone book showed no person named Abraham, Dov or Sarah Landau. This was reasonable. The Page of Testimony was submitted in 1955. It was likely that neither party was alive in 1984.

How do you locate a person or descendants of a person in Israel? This question led to one of the most remarkable tracing organizations in the world: the Search Bureau for Missing Relatives in Jerusalem.

SEARCH BUREAU FOR MISSING RELATIVES

Shortly after World War II, the Jewish Agency, an international Jewish help organization, established a division to assist Holocaust survivors in locating relatives. Situated in Jerusalem, it is known as the Search Bureau for Missing Relatives. This department would be destined for obscurity except for the individual who was its one-person operation: Batya Unterschatz. Batya, a native of Vilnius, Lithuania, immigrated to Israel in 1971. In 1972, she joined the Search Bureau. Her warm personality, dedication to her job, knowledge of seven languages and access to Israeli government records have made her a legend in locating persons living in Israel. I sent her a copy of the Page of Testimony for Leib Mokotowski written by Abraham Landau in 1955, and some weeks later, she responded that neither Sarah nor Abraham Landau were alive, but that their son, Moshe Landau, lived in Holon. This led to the breakthrough that allowed me to document the Mokotowskis of Otwock. In January 1985, Avi Landau, son of Moshe, came to the United States on a business trip and brought with him the complete family tree of his branch of the Mokotow family.

Most Pages of Testimony are written in Hebrew because they were submitted by Israelis. The Internet site that displays these documents will display an English language version of each document. Among the data on the document is: (1) Last name: Mokotowski; (2) First name: Leib; (3) Father’s name: Elizur; (4) Mother’s name: Czarna Aidel; (5) Family: four children; (6) Birthplace: Kolbeil, Poland; (7) Spouse’s name: Rachel Finkelstein; (8) Children: Yenta, Hinda, Tzvi, Feiga. It is signed by Abraham Dov Landau, Tel Aviv, Kiryat Shalom 108, his brother-in-law.
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Friends and neighbors of Holocaust victims can often provide valuable information. In 1985, more than 5,000 Holocaust survivors from throughout the United States gathered in Philadelphia to remember the Holocaust. The Jewish Genealogical Society of Philadelphia participated to assist survivors who were still trying to determine the fate of their loved ones. At the event, I met a woman from New York, who told me the tragic story of how she had to abandon her six-year-old son on a street in Warsaw during World War II and was looking for advice on how to locate him today. All survivors wore name tags showing their name and European town of origin. She was from Otwock. After discussing her plight, I commented that I had relatives named Mokotowski from Otwock. Her face lit up. “Do you mean Yitzhak Mokotowski?” she asked. “He and his family were neighbors of mine.” This meeting was a chance encounter, but other interviews have occurred on a more formal basis. At the Eighth Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy in 1989, genealogists were matched with Holocaust survivors who lived in the towns of their ancestors. In some cases, these survivors were able to provide information about the fate of those members of the genealogists’ families who did not survive the Holocaust. An organization called the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors maintains a registry of more than 100,000 Holocaust survivors and their descendants living in the United States. They honor genealogical inquiries. This registry is now located at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. For privacy reasons, it is not available on the Internet.

GERMAN WAR RECORDS

There is much documentation of World War II. The extermination of Jews, gypsies, and other “undesirables” is no exception. The level of documentation falls into three categories: those events for which information about individuals was documented, those events that were documented but the specific names of the individuals were not recorded, and those events for which there was no documentation. Those persons who went to concentration camps or labor camps and were assigned to forced labor were documented. Rosters have survived which show individuals’ names, places of birth, birth dates, and the identification numbers tattooed on their arms. Some of these documents were captured by United States and British forces and are available to American genealogists through the National Archives.8 These include registers from Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps. Others, captured by the Russians, are only today being made available to the public. Where deaths from disease, starvation, and abuse did not occur on a massive basis, even deaths of individuals were recorded. In the category of events which were documented but the specific names of the individuals were not recorded, the records of the Einsatzgruppen provide the death dates of more than one million Jews. After Germany invaded Russia in 1942, these special squads of the German SS had the responsibility of killing every Jew, gypsy, and Bolshevik in the towns captured by the regular German army. Consequently, their reports provide the death dates for the Jews of the town. In the category where there is no documentation fall the millions of people who were immediately gassed at the various extermination camps. No attempt was made to document these people. However, in some instances, deportation lists exist today that provide useful information to the genealogist. The best-known lists were published in book form under the title “Memorial to the Jews Deported from France.”9 It lists more than 70,000 individuals, their names, places of birth, and birth dates. Because it is organized by train convoy and date on which the convoy left France, it is possible to determine the arrival date at Auschwitz and, consequently, the death dates of individuals who fell into the category of those immediately gassed, namely children under fourteen, elderly over fifty,
and mothers with children under fourteen. Similar books exist for Belgium and Germany. These deportation lists have been integrated into the Pages of Testimony database and are available on the Internet at the Yad Vashem site.

**German Records of Otwock**

The archives at Yad Vashem have a number of documents relating to the fate of the Jews of Otwock. None had information pertaining specifically to persons named Mokotowski. However, one interesting artifact from Otwock is a broadside which was posted in Otwock shortly after the Germans occupied the town, demanding the Jews raise 100,000 złotys. The poster named fifteen persons responsible to raise the money. One of the names was Tobiasz (Tuvia) Mokotowski.

**Otwock Marriage Record**

Portion of the 1864 marriage record of Szaja Ephraim Mankotow showing his name and the names of his parents—Isaac and Esther. It linked the Mokotowski family to the Mokotow family tree.

The archives at Yad Vashem have a number of documents relating to the fate of the Jews of Otwock. None had information pertaining specifically to persons named Mokotowski. However, one interesting artifact from Otwock is a broadside which was posted in Otwock shortly after the Germans occupied the town, demanding the Jews raise 100,000 złotys. The poster named fifteen persons responsible to raise the money. One of the names was Tobiasz (Tuvia) Mokotowski.

**VITAL STATISTICS RECORDS**

Although everything Jewish was destroyed in the Holocaust, government records, specifically vital records, for the most part were not. It is a credit to the archivists of the world that despite the attempts by the human race over the centuries to destroy each other, our archivists have been conscientious in trying to preserve the original source material of our history. Vital statistics records for Poland, Hungary, and Germany have been readily available to the public for many years. With the fall of the iron curtain, other countries have opened their doors to genealogical inquiries. Genealogists have made contact with many communities in the countries of the former Soviet Union and family history information is flowing east to west.

**OTHER**

The Holocaust is called the most documented event in Western history. There are tens of thousands of books written on the subject. Consequently, a number of bibliographies exist on the topic. In a book titled *Am I a Murderer? Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman* the author recounts the events in Otwock during the Holocaust. There are two references to Mokotowskis. He relates how, after the majority of the Jews were deported to Treblinka, two Mokotowski sisters—given names not provided—were marched to a wall and shot as they were holding hands. A similar fate befell Tobiasz Mokotowski, described above, who, while walking to the wall, was approached by a local townsman who asked him for his coat, since he would not need it anymore. Mokotowski responded that he would not give up his coat because he wanted to die with dignity. This book provides two more stories to add to the Mokotow family history.
LUCK

We genealogists like to attribute some of our successes to luck. I propose that there is no such thing as luck. In an article in *Avotaynu*\(^{14}\), I note that luck is the product of trying. A genealogist will try and try, often thousands of times. Most tries are unsuccessful; the few that do succeed we attribute to luck. This essay ends with a story of luck: how I linked the Mokotowskis of Otwock to the main tree of the Mokotow family. The veteran genealogist will see that, in truth, it was nothing more than taking all the resources available to the researcher and piecing them together to come to a successful conclusion.

The vast majority of information I had about the Mokotowskis of Otwock was from the Otwock yizkor book and the recollections of living persons that had secondary information. A letter to the Polish State Archives in Warsaw indicated that there were no vital statistics records for Otwock from the nineteenth century; therefore, it was not possible to go back in time through that path. It was at the Second Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, held in Washington, DC, in 1983 that I located the Otwock yizkor book and had a person translate for me the article “My Father Eliezer Mokotowski.” Toward the end of the seminar, while sitting in the Jewish division of the Library of Congress, convincing myself that I had done everything possible that could be done at the Library, I recalled that the article stated that Eliezer Mokotowski was born in Karczew. There is a book called *Shtetl Finder* which lists about 2,100 towns in Eastern Europe where Jews lived in the nineteenth century. To give the book more substance, the author included the names of individuals from the town that were prepublication subscribers to books written in Yiddish during that era. Under the description of Karczew was the entry “In 1879, advanced subscribers to the book *Da’at Moshe* were…Yehosie Efraham Monkitow…” *Monkitow* is the Yiddish pronunciation of Mokotow. At that moment, I recalled that I had a marriage record from Karczew of a Monkitow.

Some months earlier, I devoted a full week at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City searching the vital statistics records of the Mokotow ancestral town of Warka, located about thirty miles south of Otwock. After completing that task, in ever-widening concentric circles, I searched records of adjacent towns. This included Karczew, for which there was only one Mokotow record, a marriage record. I had brought my LDS findings to the seminar and opened my file folder to the Karczew record\(^{15}\). The name of the groom was Efraim, but the previous word was not Yehosie until I realized the registrar did something I had seen on other documents. He had come to the end of the line when he wrote the groom’s name and, not having enough room, arbitrarily hyphenated the name. The groom’s name was “Szaja Efraham.” The yizkor book article about Eliezer Mokotowski said his father’s name was Yehoshua, *The Shtetl Finder*\(^{16}\) noted a Yehosie Monkitow from Karczew, and the marriage record found at the LDS library had the name Szaja Efraham. Yehoshua, Yehosie, Szaja; all these names are Yiddish/Hebrew variants of the name Joshua. All the documents were talking about the same man! The marriage record had the name of the groom’s parents. The father’s name was Icek (Issac). The founder of the Mokotow family had a son Isaac. Through an incredible set of slender threads, I had linked the Mokotowskis of Otwock to the Mokotow family tree. Sarah Landau’s father, Eliezer Mokotowski, was the son of Joshua Efraham Mokotow, son of Isaac Mokotow, son of Tuvia David Mokotow.

Notes
1. *Luach Ha’Shoah M’Polin* (Calendar of the Holocaust in Poland).
is not in public view. It has a search engine that will indicate whether the named town has a yizkor book, but it is not possible to list all towns at once.


5. Yad Vashem, PO Box 3477, 91034 Jerusalem, Israel. For e-mail contact, go to [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) and click the “Contact Us” link. This will display a variety of e-mail addresses organized by nature of the inquiry.

6. Unfortunately, this service closed down in 2001 when Batya retired.


8. For a list of collections, go to the National Archives Web site at [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov) and search for “Holocaust-Era Assets.”


12. For a detailed list by town of the holdings of the Yad Vashem archives, see *Guide to the Unpublished Works of the Holocaust*, Volumes 3–6 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, various years).


15. Karczew, Poland, Jewish Marriage Register, 1864, Document #17. Family History Library microfilm #702,444.


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COMMUNICATING, ORGANIZING, AND SHARING FAMILY HISTORY
PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, AND PHILOSOPHY

MARLO E. SCHULDT

One of humankind’s most prized possessions, and the thing that separates us from the animals, is our ability to communicate.

Humans live in a highly verbal society that has evolved and has mastered many diverse forms of communication. Drums in the jungle, smoke signals on the plains, signal flags, letters, libraries, telegraph, the wireless short wave, Morse code, telephone, radio, sign language, television, satellite phones, and e-mail, not to mention the advent and impact of the cell phone. Now it is possible to play games, send text messages, take photos, designate the caller with a special song or ring tone, and access the Internet, all with the same cell phone that allows us to communicate from almost anywhere, at any time, to almost anyone in the world.

On a more basic level, humans communicate in many subtle ways, such as a wink, a tone of voice, the cadence of words, and the gestures used to express actions. Even the way people sit and move as they speak sends information about them.

Communication may take even more abstract forms, such as tattoos, ceremonial dress, makeup, hairdos, feathers, and medals worn that represent skill and rank. Even graduation, wedding, and sports rings send nonverbal messages. People today are immersed in a world filled with many different forms of communication.

The challenge of family historians is to find the best methods to accurately perceive, capture, and convert these messages into interesting stories for the benefit of present and future generations.

Definitions and Associational Problems - in a word

Communication in any form, no matter how laboriously prepared and translated, may be inherently inaccurate or may unintentionally convey different meanings to the reader, listener, or viewer than what was intended. What causes this? A good example may be found in the common dictionary or thesaurus. A quick study reveals that almost every word has multiple definitions or synonyms. This probably indicates that there are not a sufficient number of words in the human language, so the same words are reused in different contexts.

Consider how the usage and tense of the word read changes when used in a sentence. For example, “He read the book with great interest.” However, when the same word is used as a question, “Can you read?” the pronunciation changes. Conversational speech becomes even more complicated since there may be no difference in the way the words read or red are spoken in a sentence as demonstrated in the phrase, “He read the red book.”
The specific meanings communicated during conversational speech become more confusing if the speaker and listener associate the same words with different meanings. Both the speaker and listener may initially be unaware of these differences while they are conversing. However, later in their discussion, these little misunderstandings may culminate in a heated debate that hopefully ends with apologies, clarification of terms, and a handshake. This confusion of meaning frequently occurs when people of different religions attempt to discuss and share their beliefs. Ideally both parties will discover they are arguing the same point, just using different words!

Legal professionals have long been aware of the problems lay people have in understanding legal terminology. Lawyers have adopted a simple solution. A legal contract usually starts with a list of definitions of the words that will be used in the text of the contract. However, even these highly defined contracts can still be argued at great length in court.

Time has the power to magically change the meaning of words, adding more confusion. Some words die out while new words creep in with the next generation. Old words, like cool may take on a new meaning that does not have anything to do with temperature. Regional differences of word meaning and pronunciation may cause confusion or embarrassment for newcomers or “outsiders.” Translation from one language to another presents even more confusion.

What can the family historian do to minimize misunderstanding and reduce the confusion generated by imperfect language?

1. When interviewing, avoid asking questions that result in a yes/no answer. Draw the person out to increase clarity by asking the standard who, what, how, and why questions. “How did you feel about that?” “Why do you think that happened?”

2. When necessary, present additional information that adds, expands, or provides a different perspective than may be found in the written or verbal accounts of different individuals.

3. Supply related information about the event or story in the form of photos, video clips, written descriptions, or newspaper accounts.

4. Provide references. Obviously, such great detail and depth would be necessary only to clarify important or controversial information containing obvious discrepancies.

In summary, it is important to be aware of how miscommunication occurs to avoid adding another layer of confusion to the information gathered and communicated to others. Family historians must try to create records or histories that are accurate, unbiased, and nonjudgmental since they probably were not there to observe and record. It is not a sin to use the word about when referring to dates or times.

Can Accuracy be Flexible?

Unfortunately, accuracy may often be more relative than absolute. It is true that dates, names, times, and locations are concrete references. My response to this statement is, “It all depends on the veracity, perceptiveness, and attention to detail of the witness, reporter, and recorder.” Two or three witnesses may not confirm a fact unless the observers have conferred and modified their original renditions of the facts so that they all agree. The most prudent course is to present all the original accounts, even if the “facts” conflict or contradict. This will make it possible for readers or viewers to form their own opinions.

Another problem in creating an accurate family history may be the skill of the editor, and not the facts. By default and regardless of qualifications, limited resources may require the family historian to become the archivist, editor, or storyteller. Try as they may to be objective, their
bias may be indirectly communicated by the selection of the information published. The amount of material shared may also be restricted by limited monetary resources.

How, then, can family historians create accurate accounts? The obvious answer is not to quote or take any material out of the original context. However, including all the supporting material of a quote may unreasonably increase the size of the account, document, book, or presentation. One solution is to cite a reference containing the original content. Unfortunately, this may create yet another problem if the reader cannot access or view a reference because it is no longer available or it is stored in a remote location. What should the family historian do in this situation? Get the necessary permission and duplicate or copy the source material. Next, scan the content into a digital format to be stored in a personal CD/DVD family archive for future reference.

Another solution that improves the accuracy and reliability of information is to let individuals tell their own stories in their own words—spoken, written, or video taped. This creates a first-person record that is directly attributable to the person interviewed. This also helps reduce many of the confusing aspects of communication mentioned in this article. Personal interviews and accounts help keep information in the current or historical context.

**Organization—just another synonym for frustration**

It is helpful to understand that family information may be found in many forms and in many places, such as photos, old letters, journals, albums, deeds, documents, tape recordings, records, 8mm movies, old family bibles, VHS tapes, and other memorabilia.

All of this material needs to be organized and preserved. In my personal experience, the meaningful and logical organization of these materials became highly frustrating and essentially impossible to achieve initially or to maintain. This conclusion was the result of hundreds of hours of trial-and-error attempts at devising different ways to categorize and organize family history information.

Picture in your mind (pun intended with mixed meaning) my entire living room floor covered with carefully arranged stacks of photos. Something resembling organization resulted when the stacks of photos went into a box with tabbed folders and labeled file separators. However, this accomplishment was short lived. My children decided to look through and explore the newly organized family photo collections on a couple of different occasions in my absence. Briefly stated, my children did not put the photos back into the groups I had worked so long and hard to create. My photo collection box reminded me of the sorting shelves in a library and I had just become the new librarian. After calming down, I realized that the photo collection also belonged to the family and that they should have the right to look at and enjoy the
photos even if mass disorganization resulted. I also had to concede that photos are to be looked at and shared, not just organized and stored away in untouchable files!

All was not lost. Eventually, I found and developed a very flexible and useful way to organize all my family history media. The solution will come later in the discussion.

Why Organization Seems Impossible

There is an old phrase, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” This statement also demonstrates why photos cannot be logically organized into collections. Just as one word has several meanings, one photo may contain several people, making it difficult to determine where to store the photo. Until recently, the only solution was to make several duplicates of the photo so it could be placed into several different collections. This is a costly solution. Creating duplicate images to be imported into a computer is also unacceptable because duplicate files use additional disk space.

Another problem with organization is that it requires a defined target or a specific outcome to work toward. The outcome also helps determine the foundation and structure of the organizational system being developed and used. In other words, what is the goal of organizing all of the information? Initially, the family historian might not know what can be accomplished until the information has been imported into a computer.

Determining a starting place or continuing the attempt to become organized may seem more difficult than answering the age-old question, “Which came first: the chicken or the egg?” Initially, the purpose for organization may be to preserve, protect, and get all information into one place—the computer. However, this random, undirected approach to get everything into the computer will create even bigger problems in the future.

The fruits and failures of attempts at organization may not be manifest until a specific photo or media file is retrieved from among the thousands of files already stored in the computer, on CDs or DVDs, or in other devices. The family historian then has great difficulty in finding and pulling all these resources together to create a volume of family history, video presentation, slide show, calendar, or other project.

What can be done? The Mixed Media section below offers suggestions on how and where to start and how to eliminate the need to make duplicate photos.

Bringing it all Together – Using Mixed Media Collections

Thus far, several of the problems and barriers associated with finding, organizing, presenting, communicating, and verifying historical information have been discussed. The article will now look at some workable solutions to these problems.

It should now be obvious that the capability to organize, store, retrieve, and preserve different kinds of information becomes an absolute necessity even though it seems an impossible task. The recommended solution will require the use of a personal computer with external storage capability found on CDs/DVDs, external hard drives, or other storage devices. It will be necessary to start converting and reducing original source information into digital files using a scanner, digital camera, word processor, and video and audio capture devices. Yes, this sounds
like a monumental task, but it will be worth it and not be as hard as one might imagine! If that thought is overwhelming, consider just starting with current materials.

Some forethought, preparation, and planning is imperative, and will save much confusion and frustration later when attempting to find and access media files. It is essential to consider some new or different approaches to organizing and storing information.

Before beginning this process, it is important to relax and not to get overwhelmed by the project. For the next few moments, think and reminisce about various recent activities. Give some thought to the categories of these experiences.

For example:
- Baptisms
- Baby blessings
- School graduations
- Birthday parties
- Family vacations
- Easter egg hunts
- Hiking or camping trips
- Family reunions
- Humorous events

These and other events represent modern family history and are an easy place to begin the experiment with organization and information storage.

Chances are good that there are photos, video clips, or maybe even journal entries about the event. Consider letting these events become natural topic headings for organizing information. Next, create a list of topic headings to be used for folders and file names to store various types of media, such as photos, video clips, and text files. Do not make it complicated or too exhaustive; keep topic headings natural and simple. Here is a sample of topic headings with some subheadings from my personal family history information system:

- **Olsen Family History**
  - Martin Flat Dry Farm
  - Carl Steen Olsen Home
  - Wagon Box Prophecy
  - Fishing on Willow Creek
  - TE Olsen’s Mission

- **Australian Mission**
  - Sydney Mission Home
  - Parramatta
  - Toowoomba

- **Grandkids’ Birthdays**
  - Mary’s Second
  - Ethan’s Third
  - Jacob’s Fourth

- **Kathleen’s Wedding**
  - Kathleen Growing Up
  - Nate Growing Up
- Courtship
- Engagement
- Marriage
- **Hikes and Bikes**
  - Provo Canyon
  - Aspen Grove
- **Vacations**
  - Disneyland 1985
  - Yellowstone 2004

Organization, classification, and retrieval of resources will be greatly improved by placing all the related files into specific folders whether the family historian is using electronic folders or a hardcopy system.

For example, I placed photos, sound files, video clips, topographical maps, GPS coordinates, and text files (documents) into the Wagon Box Prophecy, Martin Flat Dry Farm, and Fishing on Willow Creek collections.

The organization, association, and storage of these media files into “topic” collections provide the ability to immediately view, listen to, study, and edit these resources. This resource combination greatly amplifies, associates, clarifies, and deepens the understanding of anyone viewing or listening to the material. Best of all, this type of resource organization and presentation naturally piques viewer/listener curiosity, while beckoning them to continue to interactively explore related topics and resources.

Most photos have been taken to preserve a special event or occasion. One temptation when organizing is to place photos into collections identified with a person’s name such Mary’s Photos, or use the date photos were taken as a file or folder name. This may seem to be an easy and logical way to organize photos. These actions will ultimately cause three serious problems:

1. The original event and the context of the photos taken at that time will be lost. Photos and video or audio recordings were made to preserve an event or celebration. Moving these files to different collections will cause the event or photo to become lost, meaningless, and confusing to others. Remember, the event or topic serves as a natural reference point with which to associate the information resources gathered about the experience.

2. Collections can become very large and unmanageable. This usually happens when a collection or a folder is created using a person’s name. It may seem logical to copy or move every file or resource relating to a person into a single file or collection. Over time, this will create a collection that becomes so large and unmanageable that the file cannot be moved from a computer to a CD or DVD for archiving or preservation. If personal names must be used for the title of a collection, break the file or collection up into a natural chronology. Mary’s Baby Photos, Mary Growing Up, Mary the Adolescent, Mary in High School, and so forth.

3. Folders that are named with dates are very difficult to use. Most camera software automatically creates folders named with the date the photos were imported. This is definitely *not* a good way to organize and store photos. In six months or a year, when a
specific photo is wanted, it is not always possible to remember the exact date the photo was imported into the computer. It is then necessary to start opening many folders and scrolling through endless lists of files or thumbnails trying to find the right photo. This problem will become severely compounded if there are lots of photos. The same is true for video clips.

The Absolute Necessity of a Database

Collectively and loosely speaking, all photos, text documents, sound files, and video clips form a base of information or library of files. Unfortunately, most people are already painfully aware of the time loss and futility of hunting through countless folders and stacks of CDs to find the necessary resources. Using a database search engine should make it much easier to find all the photos for a book, slide show, or special presentation.

Over the years, a statement has continued to persist in the computer industry, in spite of all the wonderful technological advances that have been made.

“Garbage in = Garbage out”

The preceding discussion has supplied the information necessary to negate the “garbage in” portion of the statement by first being selective in choosing the material and then carefully organizing the resources once they are imported into the computer. The following discussion will provide the information necessary to eliminate the “garbage out” part of the statement.

Traditional computer databases have been around for a long time and were originally designed to retrieve files and information stored in a computer. Unfortunately, most of the traditional and more modern database systems were not designed with the family historian in mind, and are therefore complicated, costly, and inflexible. The challenge then becomes finding or developing a robust relational database that can be easily used to find and quickly access useful information.

During the past four years I have been involved with some dedicated, creative, and intelligent individuals who developed and tested a highly flexible database specifically designed for family history purposes. This new database will search captions, descriptions, characteristic tags, dates, hot spots, and GPS coordinates and display the results in seconds. It can create and search offline archived CDs/DVDs, providing thumbnail images on the computer so the family historian knows which CD or DVD to insert to locate the desired media. This feature also solves the problem of large photo, video, and audio files filling up the hard drive while archiving and preserving the resources. The database is embedded into a comprehensive management system offering all the tools family historians need to maintain, preserve, manage, and share all their family history resources. This software program will appear in the reference section.
The Art and Science of Story Telling

In my opinion, photos, video clips, sound files, and text documentation should be combined and used to relate stories that will entertain, amuse, educate, and transmit significant values to our posterity in a stimulating multimedia environment.

What are the basic elements of a good story?

Photos – Allow the viewer to associate a name with a face. Photo captions, descriptions, and hot spots (a mouse over used to designate a name, description, and play a sound file) give meaning and enhance interest. Photos help visualize the different parts of any story. A photo can tell a complete story. Adding hot spots allow others not present to “speak” and orally tell the story contained in the photo.

Maps – Provide directions and “where” the story exists in terms of geography or topography. A map shows how to travel to the general location.

GPS Coordinates – Tell exactly where the event occurred. The audience (children and relatives) may want to visit the exact location to see, feel, or experience something tangible about the event.

Dates – The “when” of the event gives an actual reference in time and history allowing for the association of other concurrent events with the experience.

Video Segments – The combination of seeing and hearing communicates emotions that make the story engaging, believable, and real. That is why people like to watch movies and will even pay money for the privilege of seeing, feeling, and hearing.

Oral History – Written or typed stories can never compensate for the loss of actually hearing or experiencing the personality of the speaker. The accent, vocal quality and pitch, the way they laugh, or the pauses accentuated by a little sniffl e, punctuate the sincerity or tenderness of the memory that is being shared. A personal declaration is much more sensitive and powerful when spoken.

What makes a good story?

There is a simple answer. The very best stories are actual, ordinary, everyday experiences everyone can understand and relate to. For example, a humorous experience is funniest when readers can easily put themselves in the shoes of the one who experienced it or was responsible for the embarrassing event.

A good story can teach, entertain, and motivate at the same time.

Stories are the little bits of reality remembered and shared that make each person interesting and unique.
The most motivating stories are the ones that demonstrate sacrifice and the rewards that result from the dogged tenacity to hold tightly to solid family values and principles. It is through stories that posterity will come to know and vicariously experience memorable events just as if they were there to experience the event. In a sense, it allows for the projection of individuals through time into the future, via voices, images, video clips, and written descriptions of meaningful events. It allows for the sharing of personal experiences and strong convictions by embedding them into the context of real life experiences.

Finally, and most importantly, family history stories have the power to turn the hearts of the children to their forbears. As editors and storytellers, we will also start to feel our hearts being turned to our yet unborn posterity as we prepare family stories for them.

At a future time, we will become a forbear that will speak as one from the past because we will be gone, but our influence and a record of our experiences will still be here to help protect them as they learn and grow, treading the same paths we walked many years before.

Reference
LifeStory Productions, Inc.
ProMedia Manager Suite
http://photocollector.net

Screen captures of ProMedia Manager Suite courtesy LifeStory Productions, Inc.
Photographs used with the permission of Marlo E. Schuldt.
The Coming of the Maori

It was between 950 and 1400 BC that a group of people from the Americas built ships and sailed across the Pacific Ocean. It is known from legends and stories that their travels took them to some of the Pacific Islands. For instance, in Rarotonga they have a story of the seven stones placed by the shores of the lagoon in Ngatangiia that represent the seven canoes that left from those shores in ancient days. They traveled to New Zealand in canoes, arriving at many places on the East and West coasts. The trip was difficult, but they arrived with a great knowledge of their ancestors, having been taught somewhat in the language of their forefathers. The Maori people were taught to memorize their ancestry from father Adam down to themselves, which allowed them to know who they were and where they came from. The Maori people believe that they were led by their God because of their immense faith.

Some of the more well-known canoes that came to New Zealand are:

- Aotea
- Takitimu
- Mataatua
- Tainui
- Kurahaupo
- Te Arawa
- Horouta
- Nuketere
- Tokomaru
- Mamari
- Mahuhu

These are just a few of the many canoes that came to New Zealand and to Chatham Island, which is located off the east coast of the South Island. It is told that the Moriori people, who are a race of people that were in New Zealand when the Maori arrived, came to New Zealand at a much earlier time. They settled on Chatham Island and parts of the South Island. From the many canoes came different Tribes and Hapu (subtribes).

Some of the better-known Tribes include:

- Ngati-Tuwharetoa
- Ngati-Kahungungu
- Ngati-Awa
- Ngapuhi
- Ngati-Porou
- Ngati-Toi
- Ngati-Maniapoto
- Tainui
- Whanau-Apanui
• Ngere Raumati
• Ngai Tahu
• Ngati Whatua.

Some of the subtribes or Hapu are:
• Ngati-Kuri
• Ngati-Kahu
• Ngati-Hikihiki
• Ngati-Hine
• Ngati-Pou
• Ngati-Whatua
• Ngati-Hine
• Ngati-Wai
• Ngati-Matu

It is very important to know the Canoe, Tribe, and Hapu of the family before beginning research. This will assure that the correct research is being done.

The Lineage

Historically, the Maori people taught the eldest son the names of the family ancestors. If the eldest son was unable to fulfill his duties, the names were taught to the son who was found to be most capable. The young man would be taught to Tatai (recite) in a special Whare (house) called the Whare Wananga (House of Learning). This house was considered by the Maori people to be a very Tapu (sacred) place. This is where the young man would be instructed in the memorization of his Whakapapa (genealogy) by the Kaumatua (older men). As late as the 1970s, there were still some Kaumatua who could Tatai their Whakapapa as far back as Adam. When the Whakapapa is recited, the Tatai will begin at Adam and follow the line of succession until the individual who is reciting reaches himself.

A Tatai is a recited family line or lineage of descendants from a Canoe Chief or a Tribal Chief down to the person reciting. The following example is part of a family genealogy going down from a tribal chief to an ancestor nearer to the author.

RAHIRI
↓
UENUKU KUARE
↓
MAIKUKUK
↓
TE RONGARE
↓
HINEAMARU
↓
PERA
Carving

The carver in a tribe would carve the lineage using wood from trees found in the local forest. This was a special event because the people respected the trees of the forest, so a Karakia (prayer) was always said before a tree was cut down.

It was not uncommon to find the Whakapapa of a family carved on a pole in their Wharenui (meeting house), which is a building on the Marae (gathering place) where people would meet or gather together for meetings. This meant that the people who attended the Hui (gathering) would sleep by the pole where their Whakapapa was carved. Each Wharenui would have a carved wooden statue on the roof outside the entrance. This statue would be a tribal ancestor of the area where the Wharenui was erected. This can be a great source of research for family who belong to the Marae.

The Kaumatua of the family usually had in his possession a wooden Tokotoko stick (walking stick), which he used when speaking to the people who gathered on the Marae for a Hui. This stick would have the names of the Whakapapa that goes back to the wooden statue, or perhaps just part of the descendants or some of his family carved on it. A Kaumatua or an older person in the family who has the Tokotoko can help locate the names of individuals on a particular Whakapapa.

Waiatas and Chants

Whakapapa books have songs written in them, providing information in the form of Waiatas (songs) and chants. The Ancient Maori sang these songs about their ancestors and in them mention their names and sometimes some history about them. The researcher can often find clues in the words in a Waiata. A chant is a song that is sung in just a few notes and takes much longer to give. Both Waiata and chants will provide the researcher with information about the culture through music and spoken word.

Legends

Maori people are known for having an extensive knowledge of their ancestry, and there are many legends that get handed down orally. Some legends contain information about families, while others speak of Tribes and Tribal Customs, their Chiefs, wars, and the coming of “the White Man” (Pakeha).
One well-known Maori legend explains who they are as a people and where they come from. This history has been passed orally from one generation to the next. The belief is that they came from two large landmasses that were joined by an isthmus. They believe that they came from Hawaiiki, which is the name of the place that the Maori claim to have come from. No one really knows where that place is, because there are a lot of different versions.

There is a Maori phrase that states this belief: “Tawhiti nui, Tawhiti roa, Tawhiti pamamao, I-Te Hono-I-wai rua.”

- Tawhiti-nui means a far distant place.
- Tawhiti-roa means a longer distant place – Tawhiti Pamamao, means a far greater distance and
- I-Te Hono-I-Wairua, means The joining of man to the Spirit World

Stories

The older people (Kaumatua and Kuia) tell interesting stories that provide an untold wealth of information to the listener. It is useful to listen carefully to what is being said, because the stories might contain information regarding which canoes certain individuals were on and other information that helps further the search for genealogical information. The different stories of the lives and loves of the Maori people are fascinating and beautiful. They believe that history needs to be written down in a Book of Remembrance for future generations, so those that come later can be proud of their heritage. The Books of Remembrance will have a description of the ancestor and what happened.

Beginning Research

To begin research, it is a good idea to speak first with immediate family, usually with the Kaumatua and Kuia within a family, because they have a wealth of knowledge that is rarely available anywhere else. They are a valuable resource, and it is best not to leave this sort of research until the last minute, because it will not always be available.

1. Records Found in the Home

There are many records that can give clues to help further research. Some records that might be found in the home are:

1. Christening records
2. Family Bibles: possibly with names and dates regarding births and marriages.
3. Documents: wills
4. Letters: either from family members or friends
5. Books with Whakapapa and histories written in them
6. Pieces of paper that older members of the family have taken notes on or have written Whakapapa lines on.
7. Civil records: Original birth, marriage and death certificates
8. Photos: sometimes these have names and other information on the back
9. Maori Land Schedules: Maori Land Court schedules have lists of names of the people who are shareholders of a block of land and in some cases will include the ages of the persons entitled to possession such as: fa (Female adult) or ma (Male adult) or just eight years or sixteen years—or whatever the person’s age was at the time the court hearing was held. The name of the block of land and the date of the court will be on the first page of the schedule.
10. Family graves are often on the land near the home, especially if they lived in a rural area.

2. Kaumatua and Kuia
   When a Kaumatua or a Kuia gives information, he or she will sometimes prefer that the Whakapapa is not written down; usually this is because it is expected to be memorized. The best way to memorize the information is to return and visit the Kaumatua or Kuia often. Some will be happy to allow for note taking and maybe the use of a small tape recorder, but it is important to ask regarding these two items before beginning. It is essential to respect the individual that is sharing the information and adhere to any traditions they may have.

3. Relatives
   It is better to not bombard older members of a Whanau (family) such as aunts, uncles, and cousins with lots of questions. It is best to sit quietly with them and talk about their lives, putting the focus on them and not the information that is desired. This allows them to share information when they feel comfortable doing so. It is vital to inform the Kaumatua or Kuia that none of the information they share will be used in a negative or disrespectful way. It is sometimes better to have someone in the family who is not too young; ideally, the interviewer should be an adult, because the Kaumatua or Kuia might not feel comfortable sharing the information with a young person if they feel that the Whakapapa will not be respected or used for the right purposes.

   The same research rules apply when sending letters to relatives. The letter should be about the person who is to receive the letter and should not just ask for information. The best way to get information is to make a general comment about the ancestor whom you are seeking, such as “I was wondering which school he/she attended and if it still exists” in order to allow the letter receiver to give the information in the reply. Before beginning, it is best for researchers to check their own homes to collect any information that is available there, so that they are better aware of what to ask those whom they speak with later. This will save a lot of unnecessary expense, time, and frustration. Relatives are one of the best resources when it comes to research, because not only can they share necessary information but they can provide the researcher with stories and histories which help to make those who are being researched part of a family rather than just names on a page.

Record Sources
   After getting all the information that is available nearby, the next step is to go to the localities where the ancestors lived; in each area there will be different sources depending on what is available. It is best to check with those who live in the district regarding whom to contact to get information about a certain family in the vicinity.

1. Cemeteries
   Almost all Maori people erect headstones on family graves about a year after the burial date of the person. These headstones sometimes have the birth date, tribe, and names of parents and children inscribed, along with a picture of the person. Headstone information, though not always reliable, can be a guide to further research. Please remember that Maori cemeteries are very Tapu (sacred) and permission is needed before entering the graveyard. Those living in the area can usually help guide the researcher in following the traditions of the cemetery. For instance, some cemeteries have certain days of the week when one can visit, among other traditions. It is important to abide by the wishes of the local people and adhere to local tradition as a sign of respect.
Do not forget that some burials took place on the land where the ancestors once lived. These graves may not have headstones, but the family living on the land and families who now live in the area will know about them. They are usually fenced in by a white paling fence, which in New Zealand is a fence made of thin slabs of timber that are pointed on the top end and painted white. Some Maori cemeteries in New Zealand have had the headstones transcribed and are accessible at many LDS family history centers.

2. History of Maori Land Court Records

Between 1840 and 1862, the government kept indexes and registers of some inward correspondence that was dealt with by the Native Department (later called Maori Affairs Department). These indexes and registers are now available at the National Archives in Wellington, New Zealand. In 1862, the New Zealand government changed the Native Land Act, so that the courts decided who rightfully owned blocks of tribal land and issued certificates of title. Then in 1865, another act was passed that set up Native Land Courts, which were absorbed into the justice department between 1893 and 1906. These courts later became known as Maori Land Courts. When this took place, the Kaumatua appeared in court along with members of the family to claim possession of their ancestors’ land. The claim was usually made by reciting the Whakapapa, which was written down in the minute book by the clerk of the court under the supervision of the judge who was in charge of the proceedings. All Maori Land Courts have in their archives minute books that contain records of court sessions dealing with particular land blocks. All the original books are held at the Maori Land Courts. Each district has its own records, and some of the records have been microfilmed. The National Archives, now known as Archives New Zealand, has at its head office in Wellington a large collection of Maori Land Court Minute Books on microfilm. All the minute books for all of the New Zealand Land Courts have been filmed. These films are available through family history centers, or they can be ordered from the Family History Library.

Some Research Guides:

New Zealand Land Court Department:

Maori Land court records of all Maori affairs and land affairs were kept and are available for research purposes in the districts below.

The Districts throughout New Zealand are:

- Taitokerau – Whangarei Land Court Office
- Maniapoto – Hamilton Office
- Waiariki - Rotorua Office
- Taairawhitii – Gisborne Office
- Aotea – Wanganui Office
- Takitimu – Hastings Office
- Te Waipounamu (This includes Stewart and Chatham Islands) – Christchurch Office

1. Most land courts prefer that customers go into the district offices themselves to do research, because the staff does not have the time. Research may be done in original books, papers, and films.

2. In some district courts, the records are available on computer.

3. The records are not usually listed under tribal areas.

Other records that will be helpful in research, such as adoption records and application files, might be accessible at some district courts. There are also probates and letters of administration, and
succession orders. The best way to check for these other records is by asking the staff, who are very helpful in finding records. Maori Trust Boards and other Iwi organizations (organizations that families or tribes or subtribes set up) will sometimes have copies of records relating to their tribal lands, so this is also a good place to check for information.

To be able to do any searches in the minute books, one would need to know the following:
1. The names of the person who inherited the block of land.
2. The name of the block or blocks of land the ancestor owned.
3. A chronology of owners of the land is very helpful but is not a necessity.
4. An approximate death date.
5. Most indexes list persons alphabetically by first given name or by a name the person has been given by another tribe. This is quite common in older people and many have several given names. Maori Land Court records are an excellent source for research of ancestry and should be used, but as with anything else, it is very important to check the information to make sure it is accurate.

3. Whakapapa Books

In the early 1900s, many of the Kaumatua traveled around New Zealand visiting other older people, gathering genealogies from those who could Tatai. They spent many days korero (talking) together about their ancestors. Usually a scribe accompanied them to write what was being said as they recited their oral genealogies. This was done because the older people felt the necessity to have family genealogies written to preserve the records for future generations. This is how Whakapapa Books came into being.

Today, many families have old, hard-covered books filled with Whakapapa and histories. However, not all the books have survived; many have been buried with the dead or burned by younger people at or after the burial of their ancestors. The Tapu of Whakapapa Books was not always understood by younger generations; hence, they would be afraid of the consequences and destroy the books, making it difficult for some families to find their ancestors. These Whakapapa books, though owned by a particular Kaumatua or family, do not have just one family’s genealogy in them, but multiple families. This is because when they met together at a Hui in a Wharenui on a Marae or in various homes around the country, the genealogies were written of all those who gave a Tatai. The Kaumatua were not the only people who helped collect Whakapapa; there were many foreigners who helped with the project. Some of those that helped collect the Whakapapa were:

- Stuart Meha
- Te Ao Wilson
- Hohepa
- George Watene
- Taranaki Tarau
- Martin Pohatu
- Rangi Davies
- W. Naera
- Elder William Cole
- Elder Jensen
- Elder Wadoups

These individuals and others like them have done a great service not only to researchers but also to the families who have had their Whakapapa preserved because of these efforts.

Whakapapa can never be completely dependable, because they are passed down orally. Hence,
the more books available with a family’s genealogy, the better. More books will help create records that are as accurate as possible.

4. Some Tips on Distinguishing Male and Female

Genealogies of the New Zealand Maori do not always indicate the gender of the person named.
1. Legends can be helpful for distinguishing if one knows and understands the legend; ask Kaumatua and Kuia for help.
2. A male or a female ancestor could have the same name: Toma or Hikihiki are examples of names that can be either male or female.
3. Often, a Waiata can help determine gender of the ancestor. Strong words in the song tell that a person is a male, while sweet, flowing words can indicate a female name. For example, words like Rakau mean tree, so where this word is used as part of a name it would probably be a male name. A female name may include the word Ra meaning day or sun. Adding Ihi to Ra makes Ra-ihi, meaning “the early sun’s rise in the sky.” Usually the researcher needs either to have knowledge of the Maori language or help from a Kaumatua or Kuia to distinguish the gender of an ancestor.
4. Even some authorities and scholars in Whakapapa may disagree about the genders of certain names. This does not mean that the average person is incorrect when making a decision regarding gender.

5. Maori School Records

There are many Maori schools throughout New Zealand, some from before 1879 when the Department of Education took control from the Native Department. Some early settlements in New Zealand organized small schools; later, both Maori and early settler children from Britain and other countries attended the local schools. School records are very reliable. They contain the English names given to many Maori children because the teachers could not pronounce the children’s Maori names. These records may help families compile all names that ancestors were known by.

Many schools in rural areas have been closed down and many buildings demolished. These school enrollment books can usually be found in family homes or local museums. To locate these records:
1. Archives New Zealand has a regional office in Auckland with many of the records that are available. Contact the Auckland Regional Office.
2. Inquire in the district among older people.
3. Offices of the education department hold many of the original books. Some schools may still have the records—it is good to ask!
4. Some books have been microfilmed. To see if a particular school has been microfilmed, look it up at an LDS family history center or look on http://www.familysearch.org.

6. Religious Records

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been keeping church membership records in New Zealand since the 1860s. If an ancestor was a member, there will be church records that contain good information. Some of these records have been microfilmed and are available at LDS family history centers. If there is a question about whether someone was a member, it is best to check with older family members; they will have more information involving family religions.

Clergy of different religions such as the Church of England, Wesleyan Methodist, Catholic,
others from England began to arrive in the northern part of the North Island as early as 1813 and had soon traveled throughout the country. The Maori people believed what they were told by the men in the white shirts with the collars turned backward. They were told that they needed to be baptized and married; although they did not fully understand what “the White Man” said, they agreed to do as they were taught. According to their customs, their marriages were legal regardless of whether they had been married by the church, as long as they were married by Tribal Law. In compiling Whakapapa, the tribal record is considered the marriage date. The language barrier caused a number of problems with parish records; the main problem is that there are several parish records recording the same event. For example, an individual may have been married to the same person several times by different religions, because the Maori people did not understand that they did not need to repeat the ordinances. Therefore, these records are an important source. Most church records contain information involving christenings, marriages, and burials.

Available Parish Records
Church of England (Anglican) records are available from 1813 to the present day. These records are held at the following places:
- Auckland Parishes—the records for north of the North Island from Spirits Bay to Franklin County, in the south of Auckland are held at the Auckland Diocesan Office.
- Hamilton-Taranaki Parishes—at the Diocesan Office in Hamilton.
- Tolago Bay-Waiupu Parishes—some are held at the Anglican church at Tolaga Bay, and other places on the east coast.
- Waimate North Parish—these records are at Kaikohe Public Library and other libraries.

All other Church of England records are held in the church’s head office in New Zealand. It would be best to check in the area that is being researched to see what is available.

Other churches that hold early New Zealand parish records are:
- Wesleyan Methodist Church
- Catholic Church
- London Missionary Society

Most of the main offices of the different churches in New Zealand will help look up records, but most will charge a fee to do this. However, these records are an excellent way to trace information.

7. Census Records
There are some early Maori census records in New Zealand that have family information. Census records today are destroyed after a few years and do not hold information that could be used as a source for research. The early ones that are available are located in some libraries; always ask about them.

8. Maori Registration
Compulsory registration for Maori people in New Zealand began in 1911. Of course, not many registrations happened among Maori people until 1914–1918 during the Great War period. Some Maori people registered false birthdates for men during this period of time to enable those who wished to qualify to enter the Armed Forces. It was not until about 1935, when new legislation came into Parliament, that people started registering children at birth and having legal marriage performed instead of being married by Tribal Law, so registrations between 1935 and 1961 are more complete and very helpful. The compulsory registration records give information regarding
an individual’s Tribe or subtribe and sometimes parental information and Mokopuna (grandchildren) names. Later in the 1960s, all records were standardized and combined in one filing system. Under this system, all records have the same information and are in the same format. All the district registrar’s records were sent in to the registrar general and now all records for New Zealand births, marriages, and deaths are at the registrar general’s office in Wellington.

9. Public Libraries

Public libraries are another great source of information regarding New Zealand research. There are many resources in all public libraries throughout New Zealand. Extensive lists of books, Whakapapa, and other items exist in their collections. It is best to check with the libraries in a particular area to see what resources are available, which might include books of histories of the early Maori Tribes. There are also books that are written about individual cities, towns, districts, and villages that will help provide information for further research. Some libraries have original records, microfilms, and microfiche of many of the records. Some hold shipping lists, naturalization papers, Maori index cards and other research material that will be helpful.

Comments

This article was written to teach researchers about Maori records and where to obtain information to compile a Whakapapa that will be as correct as possible, remembering, of course, that Maori records were passed down only orally until the 1860s. There might be discrepancies between Whakapapa, but that does not mean that either person is incorrect; it is simply another version. Thoroughly researching a family makes it easier to compile a record that is as correct as possible.

Try to collect stories that are will help the generations yet to come to know their ancestors: their lives; their mistakes; things of good report; the way they disciplined their children; the clothing they wore; the food they ate, such as the different Kai Moana (sea food); and life on the Marae. Life on a Marae was very different from that of the Europeans. For instance, disciplining children was a personal responsibility, and they valued cleanliness. The only way to obtain genealogical information is to talk to relatives and search books and other available resources.

Glossary

Hapu: subtribe
Hui: gathering of people
Kai Moana: seafood
Karakia: prayer
Kaumataua: adult or older person
Kuia: older woman
Korero: to speak
Marae: the courtyard of the meetinghouse (an open space)
Mokopuna: grandchild
Tatai: lineage or to recite a lineage
Tapu: sacred
Tokotoko: walking stick
Tupuna: grandparent or ancestor
Waiata: song
Whakapapa: genealogies
Whanau: family or families
Whare: house
Wharenui: meeting house
Whare Wananga: house of learning
IDENTIFYING ANCESTRAL HAUNTS: FAMILY HISTORY, GIS, AND INFORMATION NEEDS

MARY B. RUVANE

Introduction: Mapping Family History

Imagine the possibility of an online interactive map as an interface, with symbols indicating the location of events in each person’s life, such as the place of birth, marriage, offspring, migration routes, death, and burial site. Add to that links to family photographs, audiovisual material, biographies, and information on the world events that shaped their lives. This is a realistic goal, as evidenced by historians utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GISs) for similar pursuits in picturing the past. Other initiatives demonstrate alternate methods of implementing interactive mapping of chronological events, some incorporating multimedia (Southall & White, 1998; Zerneke, 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to understand the information needs and the process undertaken by family historians, or genealogists, in their quest to build a GIS database for visualizing ancestral haunts. Do online sources provide the geographic information necessary, or are traditional institutions, such as archives and government records offices, the sole keepers of material needed for validating the physical context of past events? What environmental barriers, such as time and cost, exist in locating suitable information? What accessibility and credibility factors are encountered when using online or traditional information sources? It is expected that this research will demonstrate the limitations of both online and traditional research material, indicating an opportunity to build bridges aimed at reducing unnecessary detours in the search for family history.

The first part of this paper provides an overview of the information necessary for building a digital map of past places and related events. It discusses traditional access to relevant material versus that offered by online databases and individual contributors. The search for location evidence is not limited to genealogists; in fact, historians and geographers have similar needs as cited in the literature. A model is presented illustrating the common information needs of these groups and is related to previously published models of information theory and behavior.

The remaining half of this paper describes a preliminary case study completed to identify and evaluate the relevance of information found to map location history, using both traditional and online sources. The study objective was to trace one individual’s lineage back to a known relative living in the American colony of Virginia around the 1700s. Relevance ratings were assigned to each source and are presented along with the findings and unresolved information gaps. Although this study was limited to a small sample, it points to future research opportunities.

Background: Sources for Mapping Family History

Locating historical digital map data is the greatest obstacle shared by historians interested in applying GIS technology to illustrate the past. While digital map data has become plentiful in the past ten years, and includes feature files representing boundaries (e.g., country, state, city, town), locations of interest (e.g., cities, towns, cultural heritage sites), and other physical characteristics (e.g., rivers, roads, mountains), the data available typically represents current geographical conditions. Historical digital map data is usually nonexistent, or if available it is not in the format, time period, or detail required. Many academic and scholarly organizations are working on projects to address this dearth of GIS material for historians (CSISS, 2003; Long,
1998), and in time family historians may benefit from these efforts, as well as become instrumental in assisting with future collaborations.

Currently, building a spatial database from scratch is the only solution to enable the mapping of historical locations in a GIS. A spatial database links complex geographic coordinates to the attributes that describe each feature. Attributes in a family history spatial database would include place names and the events, or points of interest, associated with each location, such as a birth, place of residence, marriage or death. Some of the most challenging historical coordinates to locate include long-ago state, county, and city boundary divisions, which shifted frequently during the colonial period. To ensure an event is visualized in context with its time period, a variety of administrative units ideally should be included in a family historian’s spatial database.

To be successful in tracing an individual’s lineage and in pinpointing locations for mapping, a family historian needs access to a variety of materials administered by such groups as genealogical societies, individual families, libraries, archives, and government records offices. In the brick-and-mortar world, these groups are often physically separated and typically work independently of each other. A presence on the Internet offers them an opportunity to break from this traditional model and work toward a common goal.

The traditional research method for uncovering historical information about an individual involves physically inspecting primary and secondary resources maintained in libraries, archives\(^1\) and government\(^2\) records offices, often requiring out-of-state travel to visit numerous collections. In the early stages of the search for information, genealogical publications and existing family histories are invaluable starting points for locating material likely to pertain to an individual, but establishing authenticity requires finding birth certificates, marriage certificates, military records, deeds, last wills and testaments, and other authoritative documentation (Greenwood, 2000). It is these latter resources that provide credibility and identify historic locales, yet they are the items most difficult to find in a timely and affordable manner using traditional methods.

The online research method, which involves the use of content and tools provided primarily by genealogical and digital library Web sites, holds promise for streamlining the traditional procedure. Genealogical sites are often commercial ventures (Ancestry.com, 2003), which encourage registered, paying members to create family trees for sharing with members and nonmembers alike. Online family trees are a good place to start, but the user contributions are far from ideal; duplicate and incomplete records are unmonitored, contradictions are common, biographical material is scarce, and credible sources are rarely cited to resolve any discrepancies. An added disincentive is the commercial nature of many genealogy sites, where a paid membership is necessary to access proprietary databases of dubious worth and coverage. Even the few genealogical sites that represent themselves as not-for-profit (GenWeb, 2003; LDS, 2003) in the end ultimately point you in the direction of these same fee-based commercial sources.

Online digital libraries, on the other hand, are typically maintained by nonprofit organizations such as archives, libraries, and government records institutions (KY, 2003; VA, 2003). The online content, presented and physically maintained by these authoritative institutions, ideally could resolve ambiguities found on genealogical Web sites by providing access to highly coveted images of original documents. Regrettably, at present, their coverage and areas of interest are diverse and often incomplete for satisfying a family historian’s research needs.

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1 Archives for this research study include those maintained by libraries, museums, families, and local historical societies.
2 Government records offices refers to federal, state, and local authority establishments charged with maintaining public records for use by the general public.
In either research approach, once dates and places of events surrounding an individual have been identified, the next challenge is in preparing the data for use in a GIS. This entails interpreting and converting the locations identified into present-day geographical coordinates for display by a GIS. One tool suited for finding coordinates is a gazetteer, a type of geographical dictionary that indexes place names accompanied by descriptions and location information, including the necessary longitude and latitude information (GNIS, 2003; 2003; US Gazetteer, 2003). Not all gazetteers document the provenance of a place name, adding to the challenge of verifying past versus present-day locations. For example, in the 1600s the town of Harrod’s Creek was in Virginia, but by the mid-1700s that same town had been incorporated into the newly formed state of Kentucky. In other instances town names were changed to suit the preferences of political interests of the time.

Problem Statement: Information Sources

The greatest benefit of the Internet is its ability to build bridges seamlessly across multiple resources, yet this advantage appears to be underutilized by many Web sites, including those provided by genealogical sites and digital libraries. While genealogy sites have a strong and growing user base, indicating a robust interest in family history research (Quinn, 1991; Ridge, 2000), they lack standardization, authentication, adequate search filters, and access to mapping tools, leaving room for improvement. Digital libraries, on the other hand, have a reputation and the expertise for presenting suitable resources, which could compliment this growing demand. Unfortunately, the majority of emerging online tools are merely duplicates of the traditional research model, each organization focusing on a small piece of a larger puzzle with cursory, if any, consideration to each other’s complimentary areas of expertise.

Literature Review

Maps: A Common Tool for Geographers, Historians, and Genealogists

Geographers, as well many historians, have traditionally relied on maps to place into context their findings and aid in the visualization of chronological events. Paper maps have been a primary source for illustrating such changes over time (Sauer, 1940). With advances in technology, the use of GISs has emerged as a viable tool for accomplishing this task. For example, Knowles’s (2002) compilation of essays demonstrates how geography and GISs are being used in real-life projects and suggests this method “contribute[s] a good deal to historical research.” Rumsey and Williams (2002) echo this belief in their opening chapter by giving an overview of the potential GISs offer to historical researchers.

The importance that geography plays in historical research is evidenced by the commission of Gregory (2002), a geographer, by the History Data Service to develop a practical guide for historians on how to use GIS in their research. There are also projects utilizing various forms of interactive mapping (Fitch & Ruggles, 2003) for the display of chronological events relative to geographical locations, and others incorporating multimedia, using maps to communicate the unfolding of historical events (Hoppe, 2003; Mohr & Nicols, 1997).

For the genealogist, maps are a “must” according to Greenwood (2000). They help in visualizing the larger relationships between cities, towns, and counties in respect to their proximity to ancestral habitats. This information can suggest additional places to search for material related to past relations, since records may be located in different jurisdictions, “especially if the place your ancestors lived happened to lie near a boundary line” (Greenwood, 2000). Helmbold (1976) corroborates the importance of maps in genealogical research, particularly topographic maps for
understanding existing transportation routes of the time period and the physical barriers, such as mountain passes that would have limited interaction between communities. For a particular locality, detailed maps are extremely valuable, such as city street maps and land ownership maps.

**Information-Seeking Behavior of Historians**

Case (1991) synthesized the findings of several studies related to “what historians say they do” when researching a project. Although each study used different terminology, they appear to agree that historians typically focus on research related to either a particular time, a particular subject, or a particular place. Case (1991) further summarized these studies, illustrating that each fell into one of three types of research focus: “chronological (divisions by centuries, decades, periods, eras, and specific range of years), topical (persons, events, and themes), and [or] geographical (continents, regions, countries, states, provinces, cities, and so on (pp. 65–6)).” Case (p. 73) also noted that scholarly historians seek primary resources in support of their research, yet libraries and historians hold different views as to what constitutes a primary resource:

what is secondary and tertiary to the scholar is primary to the librarian…the books, bibliographic databases, and reference tools that we [libraries]…provide are not the source materials that scholars most often seek…original evidence is especially important to historians, who make a strong distinction between primary and secondary material.

For the historian, the primary material is to be found in the archives.

Numerous studies have focused on the tasks historians engage in when searching for historical material (Delgadillo & Lynch, 1999; Jones, Chapman, & Woods, 1972), while others have specifically assessed the use of archival material by historians (Case, 1991; Duff & Johnson, 2002). Holdsworth’s (2003) research indicates that historical geographers have comparable information needs and utilize similar search strategies. A common thread echoed in these studies is the task-intensive nature of the traditional “hunt” for historical information and the barriers encountered such as cost, physical location, credibility, and the limitations of search tools or archival finding aids.

**A Branch of History: Genealogy and Family History**

Greenwood (2000, pp. 1-2, 8-9) defines genealogy as “that branch of history which involves a scientific study for the determination of family relationships…” Though a branch of history, genealogy is a subject which you cannot approach in the same way you would approach most other branches. In genealogy you cannot make a brief general summary of a historical period—but must consider the details of each ancestral problem individually and thoroughly…This is not done by copying but rather by research.” He further clarifies his definition as only applicable “to genealogy when it is properly practiced. However, as practiced by many it falls short in some respects. We can truthfully say that genealogy should be a science…but the methods of some tend to lower it to the level of a mere pastime built upon false premises…So many compiled genealogical records lack credibility and so many printed family histories and genealogies are pure tripe…”

Like Greenwood, Null (1985) groups genealogists into two types, the hobbyist versus the scientific researcher. The former he refers to as a genealogist, the latter as a family historian. In Null’s view genealogists are less rigorous in their research and tend to record dubiously documented basic facts such as births, marriages, and deaths of direct descendants in their rush to construct a family tree. Family historians, on the other hand, seek to verify meticulously not
only these basic facts, but also extended relationships, along with locating contextual material such as biographical sketches and historical events that define the time period.

The information-seeking behavior of the more rigorous family historian mirrors that of the professional historian (Null, 1985). While family historians focus on both topical research (related to a particular person or family) and chronological (covering many generations), they rely on the same resources and behave in the same manner as other historians when searching for material relevant to their area of study. Family historians typically begin their query employing a surname search, then they utilized the places, dates, and events uncovered as filters in subsequent searches to bolster their findings.

Greenwood (2000, p. 11) substantiates that history and genealogical research are intertwined. “Genealogy and history (religious, economic, social and political) cannot be separated. Men cannot be dissociated from the times and places in which they lived and still be understood. It is impossible to recognize the full extent of research possibilities if you are not aware of the background from which your ancestors came.” He explains that knowledge of history provides the clues needed for determining the types of records that existed, whether they survived, and which institutions currently maintain the documents still in existence.

The interest in genealogy research is steeped in tradition and has continued to grow steadily (Kemp, 1997; Null, 1985). It is clear the Internet is playing a role in this phenomenon (Howells, 1999; Tedeschi, 2002) as evidenced by projects aimed at building digital indexes focused on ancestral research (Austen et al., 2003; “Business Wire,” 2002; Goeken, Nguyen, Ruggles, & Sargent, 2003; Oka & LaGuardia, 2002). The demand for improved access to these resources appears to be going unnoticed by many of the academic library and archive communities holding relevant material. They frequently view family research as a mere hobby, worth limited attention (Kniffel, 1993; Manley, 1996; Null, 1985). Others in the field point to the research value and benefits of catering to this substantial audience (Boyns, 1999; Cadell, 2002; Kemp, 1999b; Null, 1985; Quinn, 1991). In fact, family history research offers many benefits such as the ability to document a family’s medical history (Greene, 2003) or build upon knowledge in the field of social sciences (Brunet & Bideau, 2000; Fitch & Ruggles, 2003; Null, 1985).

One alarming trend indicates that certain libraries are granting exclusive rights to commercial ventures to digitize ancestral public records. Once digitized, these electronic records are only accessible to paying members (Nakada, 2001). It seems that the tables should be turned and these commercial ventures should be paying libraries for the privilege to publish these holdings, and be required to adopt a standardized format to ensure interoperability with ongoing and future digitizing initiatives.

This study is interested in genealogy as a scientific study of family relations, as defined by Greenwood (2000) and by Null’s (1985) synonymous description of a family historian. Both terms, genealogist and family historian, are used throughout this paper and should be construed as meaning those researchers intent on seeking the highest level of authentic material available in their pursuit to document and map the location of family events.

Although the information seeking process and sources used to map ancestral place locations is the focus of this study, each location is inextricably tied to the events that occurred in a family member’s life, such as the place of birth, marriage, or death. It is the knowledge concerning these events that adds meaning to the locations that the researcher ultimately wishes to map. The information needs of the genealogist entail identifying people and the events, places, and dates that reflect their lives. Once this data is gathered, geographic coordinates can be construed to enable mapping of ancestral habitats for display in a GIS.
Problem Defined: Information Needs Model & Definitions

To begin a search, historians typically start by looking for information related to a known item, as substantiated in Duff and Johnson’s (2002) research. They cite an early study that contends 90 percent of archive researchers can associate their information needs to a person’s name or an organization. They also established that search terms such as ‘date, place, and from,’ were used almost as frequently’ (p. 476). These findings agree with several other studies that have identified persons, places, events and dates as key search terms used by historians and genealogists alike (Greenwood, 2000; Helmbold, 1976).

Table 1: Conceptual Model of Genealogical Information Needs

The conceptual model presented in Table 1 puts into context the information needs of a family historian intent on mapping locations inhabited by their ancestors. The process starts by identifying one person in the lineage. The objective is to verify events in that individual’s life, such as birth or marriage, by documenting the date and specific place of each occasion, followed by establishing relationships to other persons. The model defines a circular pattern that continues until there are no more associations to explore, or the information trail disappears. For each step in the procedure, primary documents, as defined by Case (1991) earlier, should be located to verify each event. If official documents do not exist, multiple sources must be consulted to substantiate an event, its date, and its place, thereby serving as a surrogate in lieu of primary documentation.

Information Need: Person

The search for ancestors begins with locating information related to one person in the family lineage. A surname (last name) search is a good place to start and can be done online or in published indexes. Unless the surname is very rare, such as Zubl (LDS, 2003), finding the right person can be difficult, especially if family records no longer exist to provide clues about unique events in that individual’s life, such as a birth date or birthplace. It is especially challenging when working with a common surname such as Smith, or dealing with variant spellings of family surnames such as Brinckerhoff or Brinkerhof. Variants occurred frequently for numerous reasons. For example, some family surnames were anglicized upon arrival in the American colonies, either for personal reasons or due to recording errors. Misspellings were also common due to low literacy levels and variations in native language, leading to the apparent legal acceptance of phonetically equivalent spellings.

To narrow the initial surname search the use of additional qualifiers, such as a person’s first or middle name, spousal name, year of birth or state of residence may help. Without some background details, focusing the hunt can be quite difficult and time consuming. Ideally one ought to start by interviewing family members, recording both oral recollections and examining
family archived keepsakes, such as old letters, news clippings, and photo albums, to identify unique facts related to past generations. From there research should focus on the most current generation and proceed backward to establish links sequentially to each preceding generation. With background information providing the benchmarks, surname indexes, both online and traditional, become useful tools for identifying likely relations and eliminating those with incompatible event characteristics, such as an incorrect birth date or place.

Information Need: Events

Primary events in a person’s life include birth, marriage, and death. Additional events may include the schools attended, residences occupied, careers, and membership affiliations, including professional organizations, social clubs, or churches. Events can represent time periods, such as the Great Depression, or military actions, such as the Civil War. These latter attributes are ideally suited for visualizing the historical influences surrounding each generation. The goal of this study was to locate primary documents, or the equivalent, for each individual along the branch of a particular family tree (e.g., birth certificate, marriage certificate(s) and death certificate), if available.

For relatives that lived prior to the 1800s, locating proof of these three events will rarely be easy. Many states had not implemented mandatory recording of vital records until the early 1800s or later. Locating church records or digging deeper into family archives may be the only option. It is the verification of these key events that provides the crucial evidence needed and clues for continuing with the information seeking process.

Information Need: Dates

In order to map events for chronological display in a GIS, a date must be linked to each event and the place it occurred. Dates also add another level of confirmation in documenting a person’s familial relationship; for example, it would be unlikely that a person born in 1880 was the parent of someone born in 1885. Dates can be explicit, such as a birth date; a range of time, such as the years a particular school was attended; or continuous, such as from a certain date to the present. Contradictions may exist between multiple information sources, and each case should be documented for later analysis and resolution.

For relatives living in the year 1752, the Gregorian Calendar replaced the use of the Julian Calendar in the British American colonies that year, resulting in an adjustment of eleven days. Helmbold (1976, p. 37) warns that because of differing customs among the settlers, the new year began on 25 March or on 1 January. When the calendar was changed, the Parliament also established 1 January 1752 as the legal New Year’s Day. Birthdays of people then had to be expressed as Old Style or New Style. For example, a date would be written as 14 February 1727/8. This means that the event took place in 1727 if the year was thought to begin on 25 March but the birth date was in 1728 if the year was thought to begin on 1 January. Since the 25 March date is the turning point, only dates from 1 January to 24 March have to be indicated in the above way.

Information Need: Places

The most important information required to enable GIS mapping is knowledge of the place, or location, where an event occurred. There are several levels of location precision that need to be considered, not only in the context of a particular time period but in terms of scale. Scale
determines the level of detail available for mapping. For example, while identifying the state and county an ancestor inhabited is essential, it is even more desirable to map locations at the city or town level, as well to identify land holding and pinpoint actual street addresses.

Once a place name and its attributes have been identified, the geographic coordinates can be determined. These coordinates are what enable a GIS to display symbols representing the physical location of recorded events on a map. For example, places may include symbols of countries, regions, states, cities, towns, landmarks, natural features, or buildings. The temporal nature of places requires that additional dates and coordinates be defined each time the physical traits, jurisdictional boundaries, or name of a place changes. Capturing these adjustments puts into context the before, after, and present-day characteristics of a location.

**Information Need: Relationships**

Relations typically involve identifying an individual’s familial associations with a spouse or spouses, siblings, children, and parents. Secondary relations of interest include people with whom an individual socialized outside of their immediate family circle such as business partners, neighbors, and organizations. Knowledge of relationships is important not only in defining a family unit, but also as an aid in identifying subsequent ancestral connections, or for eliminating those not fitting the profile. After gathering sufficient information about a particular individual, the family historian’s information-seeking process begins again by researching the next individual of interest, which may have been identified as a relation to the last person searched or someone else along the family tree.

**Multiple Resources: Online or Traditional**

Multiple resources are consulted in the quest to document each ancestor and the events, dates, places, and relations that shaped their lives. Traditional and online resources include, but are not limited to, genealogical societies, archives, government records offices, libraries, family records, newspapers, cemeteries, and published biographies. Information concerning the same event may be recorded in multiple resources and each should be cited to substantiate the date and place, or point out discrepancies. It is especially important to consult several sources to establish undocumented events.

For this study, family archives provided the initial information needed to begin a search for ancestors along one branch of a family tree. Thereafter, the goal was to utilize primarily online resources, beginning with a search for matching surnames. Names that included matching characteristics to the family records, such as the correct state of birth or date of marriage, were compared for relevancy. Those not containing distinguishing details or matching facts were eliminated. From here it was possible to establish links to previous generations and fill in event details missing from the family archives. Traditional brick-and-mortar establishments, that were geographically accessible, were later consulted in an attempt to substantiate the online findings.

**Spatial Database**

Throughout the information-seeking process, a family historian needs to record details and document sources related to the persons and events being researched. Traditionally, genealogists have used standardized paper forms for collecting much of this data (see “Research Guidance-Family Group Record” link: LDS, 2003). In the online method, commercial software programs employ modified versions of these forms to aid in the process (Hirsch, 2002). While both traditional and online data collection tools are plentiful, none appear to be designed for recording
geographical coordinate (e.g., longitude and latitude) information needed for use within a GIS. Thus, facilitating GIS mapping requires the creation of a spatial database capable of linking event attributes to geographic coordinates for display in a digital map.

Any number of database software packages can be employed for building a spatial database, such as Microsoft’s Excel, Access, or MySQL. Another method worth considering is the use of extensible markup language (XML) as suggested by Lu and Scaramuzza (2003). While the building of a spatial database is not the subject of this study, it has been addressed here to highlight the additional barrier to successfully mapping ancestral haunts. Not only does the family historian need to find and carefully document location information required for mapping, they often need to transcribe their findings into a compatible format for use in a spatial database. This second step is a time-consuming duplication of efforts and could be avoided if electronic family group records were designed to record location data automatically into an underlying spatial database.

Information Theory & Models of Information Behavior

In the fields of Communication and Information Science, the term information may be defined as: “The decrease in uncertainty of a receiver...in going from the before state to the after state. It is usually measured in bits per second...” (Schneider, 1999). This definition is attributable to Shannon’s (1948) development of a mathematical formula known as Information Theory, which is aptly described in The Meaning of Information (Bell Labs, 2003): Information Theory regards information as only those symbols that are uncertain to the receiver. For years, people have sent telegraph messages, leaving out non-essential words such as “a” and “the.” In the same vein, predictable symbols can be left out, like in the sentence, “only information essential to understand must be transmitted.” Shannon made clear that uncertainty is the very commodity of communication. The amount of information, or uncertainty, output by an information source is a measure of its entropy. In turn, a source’s entropy determines the amount of bits per symbol required to encode the source’s information. Basically “The theory addresses two aspects of communication: How can we define and measure information? and What is the maximum information that can be sent through a communications channel? (channel capacity)” (Schneider & Lewis, 2002).

Several theoretical models of a person’s information needs have been developed that include Shannon’s aspect of uncertainty, although from a humanistic viewpoint. Wilson (1999) compared these models and grouped them into three categories, information behavior, information-seeking behavior, and information searching (Dervin, 1983; Ellis, 1989; Kuhlthau, 1991). Wilson contends that these models are complimentary and can be “nested” within each other, as they address a different scale within the information need process, from the macro to micro level. Wilson further recognizes that “information behaviour is a part of human communication behaviour...” although in communication studies the “strong focus [is] on the communicator and the channels of communication...” unlike information behavior studies, which focus on the information seeker (Wilson, 2000, pp. 263–64).

This study intends to evaluate the quality of resources that aid in reducing uncertainty related to the information needs of the family historian intent on mapping ancestral haunts. Of particular interest are two intervening (or environmental) barriers that Wilson (1997, pp. 559–61; 1999) defines in his model as economic variables and source characteristics. Economic variables are described as direct costs and the value of time, while source characteristics include accessibility,
credibility, and the channel of communication.

**Research Approach and Rationale**

Using a descriptive approach, a case study served to identify and evaluate the relevant information found during a “first pass” attempt to build a spatial database for mapping ancestral habitats. The search terms employed were based on the information needs of the family historian as presented in Table 1 (e.g., persons, events, dates, places, relations). The reasoning behind this study was twofold: to assess the barriers (time and cost) encountered in locating suitable family history content for mapping and to rate the characteristics (accessibility, credibility, and channel of communication) of each source used. A limitation to this research is the inherent nature of a case study, which focuses attention on a few examples of a particular observable fact. In this case, the analysis was limited to the tracing of one individual’s lineage back to a known relative living in the American colony of Virginia (later generations migrated to Kentucky) around the late 1700s. The resources consulted were restricted to selected online content and geographically accessible traditional material.

**Research Questions**

This study sought to answer six questions, loosely based on those posed by Toms and Duff (2002) in similar research. They have been modified to capture the information behavior of family historians:

1. How many and what type of source(s) provided relevant information (e.g., online or traditional; individual contributor, archive material, government records office, library)?
2. How credible are the resources that contained relevant information?
3. How many ancestors were located and what amount of information was found relating to each individual?
4. How many of the sources included complete information suitable for mapping three events: a person’s birth, marriage, and death? (e.g., for dates—the month, day and year of the event; for places—the country, state, county, and town where the event occurred).
5. What barriers (cost and time) were encountered during the search?
6. What other kinds of tools or information would have been helpful to improve the credibility of the findings?

These questions were selected to investigate the impact of the two intervening (or environmental) barriers to information described by Wilson (1997, p. 559–61; 1999): economic variables and source characteristics. It was expected that certain barriers would impact the source selection; for example, as economic variables became excessive a less credible source would become acceptable. Ideally the barriers encountered would identify where gaps in information existed and point to opportunities for improvement in servicing the information needs of the family historian.

**Methodology**

This project was intended as a pilot study to determine if the method was viable for use in studying a larger population of family historians. The goal was to do a preliminary evaluation of the search process primarily using Internet sources, followed by an analysis of the relevant information retrieved (e.g., persons, events, places, dates, relations) in relation to the source characteristics (e.g., accessibility, credibility, and channel of communication).
Case Study

Using a case study, the lineage of a living individual’s deceased parents was traced backward along at least one branch in each preceding generation. The objective was to uncover which branch of the family tree led to a particular ancestor known to have lived in the colony of Virginia in the 1700s. It was unclear which branch needed to be followed (e.g., paternal, maternal, or a combination) to make the connection back to the known relation presumed to be the first in this family line to have settled in America. The focus was based in the context of the user as information seeker and the use of any formal information systems as defined by Wilson (2000):

any device, product or system intended for information representation, storage, conservation, retrieval, or re-packaging. That is, for example, any library, information service, abstracting journal, primary journal, on-line bibliographic data base, organizational record file, etc., etc…

To initiate the study, a surname search of “Ancestor-1” was performed using the FamilySearch.org Web site (LDS, 2003) maintained by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). This site was selected based on its breadth of search filters, access to multiple databases, content quality, and perceived credibility. The holdings of the LDS Family History Library are considered the largest nondenominational collection of genealogical material in the world. The majority of the records contain information about people who lived before 1920, the preponderance of this study’s population.

The goal was to substantiate three key events in the lives of the branch followed within each generation: their birth, marriage, and death, along with the places and dates each of these events occurred. Additionally, family trees linking each generation to subsequent or prior generations were important for documenting provenance. FamilySearch.org maintains an archive of member-submitted charts to aid in establishing these potential relations. If sufficient information was uncovered concerning the place an event occurred (e.g., at the town level), geographic coordinates were later determined for future use in generating a GIS map.

Several events in the life of “Ancestor-1” were already known based on family archive records. These events include birth date, birthplace, parents’ names, spouse’s names, and date of death. It was anticipated that because of this knowledge the initial search would successfully uncover additional lineage information such as events related to the parents or grandparents. From here the process was unstructured and followed information clues as they presented themselves, regardless of the resource format (traditional or online).

While family archives provided many of the initial clues, the LDS FamilySearch tool was employed whenever an uncertainty existed regarding a current or newly-discovered person. Whenever nonsurname information was required, such as locating a cited reference, the UNC-CH online catalog or their electronic databases were consulted. Geographic coordinates were found using several different gazetteers (GNIS, 2003; 2003; TGN, 2003; US Gazetteer, 2003). When information was needed to clarify a historical place name, the online search engine Google was utilized.

The identification of siblings and their spouses, related to direct descendants in the branch, were not a requirement in this pilot study, although when found they were documented and used in additional surname searches to help evaluate the credibility of the study’s findings. Extended relations, such as cousins, business partners, or organization affiliations were also excluded, unless these affiliations appeared useful for uncovering missing information related to a direct descendant.
Diary

A diary was employed to record the information-seeking process undertaken and the relevant people and events discovered. This method was chosen because of the insight diaries provide, as evidenced by the study completed by Toms and Duff (2002) in their analysis of archival record usage by historians. For this study, log entries documented the beginning and ending time of each search, the search terms used, and the information found as a result. Entries also identified the communication channel (online or traditional) and type of information provider (individual, library, archive, government records office, etc.). For online resources, screen captures of the initial search results were saved as a supplement to the diary entries, with relevant findings highlighted during the analysis. Monetary costs associated with a search, if any, were noted.

The results of each search were analyzed for familial connections. Information deemed relevant to the lineage being studied was recorded onto family group worksheets created using Microsoft Word. These forms were based on those typically used by genealogists for capturing information related to family units (see “Research Guidance-Family Group Record” link: LDS, 2003). The source that was discovered for each item was documented using Thomson ISI EndNote 6 bibliographic software.

Once adequate information was discovered to connect the most current generation back to the first relative in this branch to have arrived in the American colonies, the study was considered complete, with the exception of deciphering geographic coordinates for those locations suitable for town level mapping.

Project Justification

Finding accessible, authoritative, and relevant historical digital data, such as locations in context to time-specific boundaries (e.g., state, county, city, or town), is nearly impossible. Genealogists are not the only researchers faced with the problem of unearthing chronologically accurate place information. Historians doing subject-based research, such as that related to a person or an organization, and historical geographers interested in the study of human migration, are repeatedly challenged when seeking a suitable level of geographic detail for use in a GIS.

The intent of this study is to identify opportunities for streamlining the current information-seeking process of the family historian and to point to collaboration opportunities for incorporating online mapping technology. As traditional institutions expand further into the use of online content they should consider their strengths and look for partners in the development of an integrated set of tools, especially those that incorporate geography and its related temporal shifts. Also needed is a universal tool to facilitate the use and documentation of trustworthy sources, such as a reputable bibliographic program similar to EndNotes or ProCite.

Implementing an integrated method to document credible sources and pinpoint locations during the search process could substantially improve the quality of material published online by family historians and reduce the need for multiple versions of the same family tree. The result would be a growing library of credible historic data related to family history, fit for sharing with family members as well as scholars interested in the study of humanities and social science. What characteristics are missing from the digital library holdings to achieve this goal? What is missing from the genealogical sites?
Study Results

Comparison of Information Behavior Models

The process employed in this study was in keeping with Wilson’s (1999) evaluation of several information theory models that he described as subsets of each other: information behavior, information-seeking behavior, and information search behavior. Information behavior encompasses the general nature of information theory as a form of investigation. Its subset is information-seeking behavior geared towards understanding “the variety of methods people employ to discover, and gain access to information resources….” The final subset is information search behavior, “particularly concerned with the interactions between information user and computer-based information systems….”

Borrowing from Wilson’s (1999) 1996 general model of information behavior, the impact of two intervening variables he identified (environmental and source characteristics) were observed in relation to information-seeking behavior. As the environmental barriers increased (e.g., cost and time), alternate information sources were sought. The resource characteristics (e.g., accessibility, credibility, channel of communication) not only influenced the initial choice of sources to consult, but the selection of alternate material when faced with unacceptable environmental barriers.

The conceptual model of genealogical information needs, presented in Table 1, incorporates characteristics of several of the information-seeking models evaluated by Wilson (1999). These include Ellis’s (1993) nonlinear model that defines the information-seeking process in terms of starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying, and ending. Kuhlthau’s model is comparable to that of Ellis, although more general in terms of the concepts defined. Dervin’s sense-making model, defines information-seeking behavior as a problem situation (or information uncertainty) that needs to be resolved, the gap in known information, and the outcome (or resolution of uncertainty).

Wilson (1999, p. 267) observed that not all of the models he evaluated included feedback as a facet of information-seeking, yet this feature should be inherently assumed. “For example, a person at any of Kuhlthau’s stages may have to revisit an earlier stage as a result of problems experienced or new information found and, in Ellis’s model, a person engaged in…extracting may…need to return to chaining or browsing to gather further information.” This was routinely the case in dealing with ancestral information uncovered throughout the research process of this case study. As unknown bits of information were discovered, the situation was frequently reevaluated and approached from a different angle based on this new feedback.

Genealogical Case Study Results

Question 1 Findings

A total of eleven sources provided concurring lineage information and event details related to at least one individual within the eight generations uncovered. Six sources provided content online; five consisted of traditional research material. Source types were categorized and given a credibility rating based on the author’s interpretation of the source’s value, and are presented in Table 2. Citations to sources that provided relevant information are included. Unfortunately, primary material of interest, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, were not readily available online or geographically accessible.
Table 2. Relevant Sources, Type & Credibility Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Sources (**Online)</th>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none found</td>
<td>Government vital records—official copy or facsimile</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1880 Census, 2002) **</td>
<td>Government records—index</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Death Index-NY, 2000) **</td>
<td>Government records—index</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none found</td>
<td>Archives—institutional manuscript collections</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“News Article,” btwn. 1899-1921)</td>
<td>Family Archives—news clipping</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“Obituary,” 1940)</td>
<td>Family Archives—news clipping</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“unknown,” 1907)</td>
<td>Family Archives—news clipping</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stewart, 2003)</td>
<td>Family Archives—undocumented</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Baskett, n.d.) **</td>
<td>Biographic material—documented</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Burke, 1939)</td>
<td>Biographic material—documented</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none found</td>
<td>Biographic material—undocumented</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none found</td>
<td>Online family tree file—partially documented</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hopkins et al., 2003) **</td>
<td>Online family tree file—undocumented</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hurley) **</td>
<td>Online family tree file—undocumented</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ruvane, 2003) **</td>
<td>Prior Research—undocumented</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2 Findings

The credibility ratings were determined based on each source’s perceived authenticity, taking into account the quality of references cited and channel of communication (e.g., source type). The highest information credibility rating of eight was reserved for government vital records, either original or a facsimile, with lower ratings given to sources that lacked cited references. Four source types that were not encountered (e.g., government vital records, archives—institutional, biographical material—undocumented, and family tree file—partially documented) are included in Table 2 to place into context the credibility rating they would have been assigned. It is expected that relevant material will be found within each of these four source types in future research.

Question 3 Findings

From the eleven sources that did provide relevant information, thirty-two unique individuals were uncovered in this branch of the family. Family archive material provided corroborating facts regarding the known ‘Ancestor-1’ (in Table 3; Generation #1-H) and provided sufficient information to link each successive generation back to the first ancestor to have settled in America; a male (in Table 3; Generation #8-H) who apparently immigrated to the colony of Virginia in 1705.
with his brother.

The ancestors found corresponded to eight generations, including sixteen parents, a partial list of offspring, and some of the siblings’ spouses. Several sources provided concurring information that established the links between each generation. Two sources were in agreement regarding the lineage of generations one through four (“Obituary,” 1940; Stewart, 2003), two tied together generations four through eight (Baskett, n.d.; Hopkins et al., 2003), and two connected five or more generations (Burke, 1939; Hurley, 2003). The findings in this preliminary study were not exhaustive, especially for siblings’ spouses and offspring not directly responsible for the next generation. The primary focus was on the search process and the environmental barriers (cost and time) and source characteristics (accessibility, credibility, and source type) encountered in the process of locating relevant information for mapping ancestral habitats.

In Table 3, a cumulative source rating was determined to characterize the overall information credibility rating for each unique item of information uncovered (e.g., first name, last name, birthday, birth month, birth year, etc.). The more information items recorded, and the greater the number of times each was cited, the higher the overall rating. Although the rating is a contrived value, it is useful in illustrating the volume of concurring or relevant information that was collected regarding each individual. The findings indicate that the first three generations relied heavily on information found in traditional material, while online sources provided the bulk of material related to later generations.

Table 3. Information Items Found, Channel of Communication, & Quality Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quality Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td># Items</td>
<td># Sources</td>
<td># Items</td>
<td># Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 4 Findings

While a good deal of information was found relating to each individual, as indicated in Table 3, to effectively map an event using a GIS requires that a complete date (e.g., the month, date, and year) in combination with a specific location (e.g., state, county, and town) be identified for each event. Here the results indicate a shortcoming in the information collected, as illustrated in Table 4. Only five out of sixteen births, one marriage (out of eight), and two deaths were uncovered that united both dates and town-level information related to place. Therefore, out of the possible forty-two events that could have been mapped (e.g., sixteen births, eight marriages, sixteen deaths) only eight included the preferred level of detail. Just two individuals, from generation three, have sufficient information for mapping more than one event—the date and location of their birth and marriage.

Table 4. Event Information Suitable for Mapping: Combined Dates and Places of Births, Marriages, and Deaths
(Including number of matching sources and overall source credibility ratings)

| Generation | BIRTH | | | | MARRIAGE | | | | DEATH | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | DATE | PLACE | DATE | PLACE | DATE | PLACE | Sources | Sources | Sources | Sources | Sources | Sources |
| | # | # | # | Rating | # | Rating | # | Rating | # | Rating | # | Rating |
| 1 | H | 3 | 16 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 7 | - |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | H | 2 | 11 | 4 | 18 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 5 | - | - |
| | W | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| 3 | H | 3 | 10 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| | W | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 | - | - | 2 | 5 | - | - |
| 4 | H | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| | W | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| 5 | H | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | W | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | H | 3 | 6 | - | - | 2 | 5 | - | - | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| | W | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | H | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | W | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | H | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| | W | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Question 5 Findings

Regarding the time and cost associated with each search instance, the online search tool (LDS, 2003) repeatedly retrieved unqualified results or linked to commercial sites where the information was accessible only for a fee, often in excess of one hundred dollars for a quarterly membership. The dubious nature and limited coverage in these membership-only databases did not appear to warrant the expense and therefore were avoided.
The information available online for free was not easily found because of several limitations discovered in the search tool. For instance, while results could be filtered by including an individual’s first name, last name, parents’ names, birth date, and birth state, no relevant results were retrieved when combining these filters in search for Ancestor-1. In a subsequent search using fewer filters, a record of this same individual was found to contain corroborating information used in the failed filter. Another limitation to the search tool was the restricted application of the exact spelling filter, which only functioned in selected combinations and never when it was really needed. For example, exact spelling could be used only when searching for one individual (first and last name) and optionally limited to a particular state, but could not be used to filter the search further based on parents’ names, the county, a particular event (e.g., birth), or time period. These limitations resulted in the retrieval of a great deal of irrelevant information, requiring an unnecessary amount of time to sift through.

The geographically accessible traditional material was relatively easy to analyze, and the information took little time to extract, having the advantage of being provided mostly by records in one family archive. The only traditional source (Burke, 1939) found in a nearby library involved the cost of parking fees and gas estimated to be less than five dollars. In light of the characteristics and limited number of sources consulted, it is probably unfair to compare the economic barriers of time and cost related to using either online or traditional material. In the author’s judgment, however, traditional sources appear to remain the only viable method for authenticating family history information at this time, which reflects poorly on online endeavors.

**Question 6 Findings**

Access to facsimiles of primary information facilitates family history research done online or from geographically remote locations. Improvements to search tools would also be beneficial. For example, online search filters could be upgraded to reduce the unnecessary amount of irrelevant material retrieved. Traditional institutions should expand their holdings to aid in the identification of relations born out of state. At present these collections are typically restricted to material related to the state in which they reside. This makes it difficult for a researcher who lives in North Carolina to find information regarding a person born in Kentucky. One promising tool traditional providers may want to consider is HeritageQuest by ProQuest (Oka & LaGuardia, 2002), a growing online database collection of genealogy and local history resources with links to original document images and interlibrary loan information. At present this database is extremely limited, but it may prove invaluable as its content expands.

**Discussion**

The goal of this study was to connect one branch in the family tree back to its first ancestor to have arrived in America, an aspiration that was successful but not soundly supported. For family history research to be credible, vital records must be located, as substantiated by experts in the field (Greenwood, 2000; Helmbold, 1976; Null, 1985). This study sought to locate birth, marriage, and death certificates or an equivalent level of corroborating primary material; this objective was not achieved. Unfortunately, American births and marriages were not included in the LDS FamilySearch database. LDS does provide a Social Security Death Index, and although it is not certified by the Social Security Administration, it was compiled from their Death Master File (SS FAQ, 2003) and provides the place and date of an individual’s death and Social Security number. Two caveats to the availability of this information should be noted: the issuance of Social Security numbers began in 1936, and not everyone living applied for one. Therefore a death record
is available only for those who were issued a Social Security number and whose deaths were reported to the Social Security Administration (SS FAQ, 2003).

To acquire official death records or copies of an original Social Security application, a Freedom of Information Act Form (SS-5) must be completed and sent with a payment of up to twenty-nine dollars for each individual document requested. Payments are not refundable if no record is found. Regrettably, searches to verify the existence of a record can be performed only by Social Security Administration staff, which seems a bit archaic in light of today’s technology. The fee required also seems to be a form of double taxation since we pay annually for the salaries, services, and maintenance associated with these vital records. At minimum, vital records searches should be accessible to the general public for free, and the purchase price for official copies substantially reduced.

One online source appears to have taken a lead in streamlining the process of obtaining authorized birth, marriage, divorce, and death certificates (VitalChek, 2003). This site was discovered after completing this study while using Google to conduct a search for Kentucky government records offices. VitalChek links you not only to the Kentucky records office, but also to vital records offices in all fifty states. Each state office has its own specific fee structure and method for requesting particular documents, all of which can be processed via VitalChek’s secure ordering system.

This study demonstrates that relying totally on Internet sources to authenticate one’s lineage is not yet possible, as evidenced by the missing information and lack of readily accessible vital record evidence. The same can be said for relying on traditional resources when the research is restricted to a limited geographic location outside of the realm of ancestral activities. In both cases the information gathered was insufficient to map the entire branch of this family effectively. The one advantage, or perhaps disadvantage, to the Internet was the wealth of material provided by individual member contributors (Hopkins et al.; Hurley, 2003). Although the majority lack credible source citations, they do provide an opportunity for those armed with at least some familial background information to locate a few missing details, especially locale particulars and full dates. The drawback is that they may also send you down an unrelated branch of someone else’s family tree if you lack authoritative records for comparison.

For the Internet to become a credible source for researching family history, facsimiles of official records must be made available online, or an integrated, affordable method of acquiring them must be provided. These records are essential for verifying legal names, dates, relationships, and the exact places each event occurred. Currently only selected government documents are accessible online that partially satisfy this requirement, such as the 1880 U.S. Census data available from the FamilySearch site (LDS, 2003). This information is useful in identifying family units living together, but it lacks important information found in vital records, such as complete legal names, and the names of parents and offspring not sharing a residence.

Are the online providers currently looking to partner with traditional institutions to incorporate access to primary material? If not, vital records may remain geographically inaccessible and available only to those with the financial means and time to travel in search of these documents. Additional collaborations between genealogical information providers appears warranted too, for instance, developing partnerships and providing links to regionally specific source material, such as guides to local data (e.g., city maps, postal directories, newspaper archives, and telephone and city directories). The more inclusive each site becomes, the less streams researchers will need to forge in an attempt to build a picture of their ancestors’ past.

If genealogical Internet sources are not prepared to provide access to facsimiles of vital records,
it may be beneficial to upgrade the method and software their members currently use for publishing online family trees. While the software they recommend, and in many cases produce, have some excellent features, there still is considerable room for improvement (Hirsch, 2002). If the tools facilitated the capturing of properly formatted source citations, and a method for members to share images of vital records in their possession, the problem may in time be solved. Ideally software enhancements should incorporate bibliographic citation features (such as those found in EndNotes or ProCite) be linked to a geographic place names gazetteer that recognizes temporal accuracy, and be capable of connecting to GIS software for visual display or printing of the mapped results.

Study Limitations
This preliminary research left more questions unresolved than answered, in part because the case study was probably too large for the time frame allotted. It may have been more insightful to focus on one generation, two at the maximum, to allow adequate time for acquiring vital records for authentication and identifying missing date and location details. Unless these records or equivalent credible evidence is found, the results reported here remain incomplete for use within a GIS.

Another limiting factor to this study was the restricted use of Internet search tools. Surname searches were performed entirely on one Web site (LDS, 2003) and only immediate links contained in the results were explored. Google was used on rare occasions to uncover the provenance of long-vanished places, and in one instance to uncover biographical material on an ancestor in Generation 5. There are many other search engines equipped for the task of family history research that may have resulted in greater success.

Future Research
Aside from repeating this study on a smaller scale, the following additional avenues appear worthy of exploration in future research:

1. Evaluating online tools, or projects, focused on facilitating the use of GIS for mapping historical events (Block & Thomas, 2003; Fitch & Ruggles, 2003; Gregory, 2002; Holdsworth, 2003; Johnson & Fletcher, 1995; Mohr & Nicols, 1997; Humphrey Southall, Gregory, & Ell, 2000; Zerneke, 2003). It would be particularly interesting to evaluate each project in relation to its potential usefulness as a tool for mapping events in family history. Do these projects provide historical GIS digital mapping data? Or are any developing a spatial database product to facilitate data entry of past events linked to the geographic places where they occurred? What benefits will they offer to genealogical researchers?

2. Comparing online search tools provided for family history research (Kemp, 1998, 1999a; LaGuardia, 2002). What filters are employed by their search tools? What databases do they offer? How much do they cost? What sources do they draw their content from? How current is the information? How many unique surnames do they maintain? Do they provide information related to old maps and geographic locations?

3. Evaluating software available for recording family history (Kemp, 1998, 1999a; LaGuardia, 2002). There are many existing software tools on the market aimed at simplifying the recording of research material used as evidence in documenting an ancestral lineage. What event attributes do they capture, and at what level of detail? What features do they provide? Do they all offer the same? Is there anything missing that would be an added benefit to the historian interested in GIS mapping?
4. Developing a statistically grounded method for calculating source credibility and overall credibility ratings. The contrived source credibility rating used in this study was elementary. It may be valuable to consider adopting a statistical method in future studies. The quantity of unique information items uncovered (e.g., last name, first name, middle name, name variants, birth month, birth year, state, county, city, etc.) and the numerous sources containing concurring information regarding each unique item warrant evaluation by an expert to identify an appropriate method. The goal would be to select a statistical theory suited for analyzing these large unequal sample sizes—one that presents the results in a standardized format for better comparison.

Cited References


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