

Genealogy Do-Over – Step 11

Topics: 1) Reviewing Social Media Options, 2) Building a Research Network, and 3) Reviewing Research Travel Options

Reviewing Social Media Options

Recently I had a conversation with a group of genealogists, of varying ages and levels of experience. One person made the following statement: *You really can't succeed with your genealogy research these days without some use of social media.*

And the reaction? Most of the heads nodded yes. I think that five years ago such a statement would have caused quite a debate. But in the past five years we've seen social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest take over for the tools we may have used 10 or 20 years ago: queries posted in newsletters, lookup requests posted in online groups or online bulletin boards (remember those?), and even items posted in periodicals like *Everton's Genealogical Helper*.

Social Media Resources

Here are some social media resources that you may not have considered as a way to assist in your genealogical research:

- **Genealogy on Facebook List** (<https://socialmediagenealogy.com/genealogy-on-facebook-list/>) – an amazing resource of 16,000+ links to various pages and groups on Facebook covering every aspect of genealogy and family history.
- **Technology for Genealogy** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/techgen/>) – do you have a technical question related to genealogy software or even what type of scanner to buy? Here is a group of over 18,000 helpful genealogists who will gladly answer any type of question.
- **The Organized Genealogist** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/organizedgenealogist/>) – over 31,000 people sharing ideas about getting their genealogy materials and digital files organized. Covers filing systems, file naming conventions, archival practices and more. Again, another group where you post a question and other helpful genealogists provide answers and options.
- **Genealogy – Cite Your Sources** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Citesources/>) – do have a question about the proper way to cite a specific record? Not sure how to get started on citing your sources? This group will point you in the right direction and show you how easy it is to get your sources cited.

- **Pinterest** – while some people think Pinterest is purely a bunch of BSOs (“bright and shiny objects”), others have been able to build research toolboxes and even ancestor timelines to share with others. Keep in mind that Pinterest is currently the #3 source for website traffic (after Google and Facebook). See the Abundant Genealogy boards on Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/genealogybargains/>) for examples.
- **Twitter** – did you know you can search Twitter without having a Twitter account? Remember that a hashtag is simply a label or a way to tell people what the posted message is about. Use this link to search the #genealogy “hashtag” (<https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=%23genealogy&src=typd>).

Review your options and don't be afraid to sign up for a social media account, even if you have to delete it later.

Building a Research Network

You might be wondering, “What does *research network* mean?” Well, by participating in The Genealogy Do-Over, you're already part of a network.

“No genealogist is an island.” While pursuing one's roots may seem like a solitary obsession, the truth is that as researchers we soon realize that we cannot “go it alone.” Whether it is joining a local genealogical society or engaging with a regular group of researchers at a local library or even joining a genealogy-focused Facebook group, you'll get more out of the entire experience if you slowly build a network

Research Network = Research Toolbox

Don't forget that one of the earlier topics for The Genealogy Do-Over was Building a Research Toolbox. Well, approach building your genealogy network the same way.

This does not mean that you only engage with other genealogists who can offer you some knowledge or help you with your research. It is a two way street. In fact, my approach has been more of a one way street: give your knowledge freely and you will attract others who can help you in the future.

If you have a hard time remembering a person's name, face and genealogy focus area, consider using a contact program or even **Evernote** (<https://www.evernote.com>) to “keep tabs” on your network. Another great platform, believe it or not, is **LinkedIn** (<https://www.linkedin.com>). With LinkedIn, you can create your own profile and then seek out other genealogists and people with similar interests. Check out my profile at <https://linkedin.com/in/thomasmacentee> to see how you can add skills, publications and even articles and then make connections with other users.

Reviewing Research Travel Options

While I travel quite a bit delivering genealogy lectures, I always try to squeeze in some research during a trip. It could be a visit to a local genealogy society library, a cemetery or a historical site. And if I get a chance to take a personal vacation, chances are it will involve genealogy research!

Sponsored Research Trips, Genealogy Cruises and More

While you may have been doing genealogy for years, you may not realize that organized genealogy research trips sponsored by genealogical societies as well as individuals have become very popular. In addition, a genealogy cruise is a great way to take a vacation yet still get a solid genealogy education.

- **Genealogy Society Trips.** Most organized research trips don't include the actual travel expense of arriving at the destination – that is your responsibility. But once there, your accommodations and some meals are covered as well as consultation sessions with professional genealogists. Check out the upcoming trips at the **National Genealogical Society** (<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/research-trips/>). In addition, **American Ancestors** (aka New England Historic Genealogical Society) offers organized research programs (<https://www.americanancestors.org/education/research-tours-and-programs/>).
- **Individual or Vendor-Sponsored Trips.** Very often a professional genealogist will organize a research trip to a well-known repository such as the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah or the New York State Library in Albany, New York. Leland Meitzler, of Family Roots Publishing, sponsors the **Salt Lake Christmas Tour** the second week of December each year (<https://sites.google.com/site/saltlakechristmastour/>) which includes accommodations at the Salt Lake Plaza Hotel right next to the Family History Library, help from consultants and also close to 30 classes throughout the week!
- **Individually Tailored Trips.** There are times when you know where you want to go and what records you want to look at, but the language and culture might be a barrier. Kathy Wurth of **Family Tree Tours** (<https://familytreetours.com/>) can assist you with genealogy research in Germany and arranging assistance from local German genealogists who know the records.
- **Genealogy Cruises.** Once you've taken a genealogy cruise, you'll wish that all your genealogy trips were this much fun! Check out the many different cruises offered by **Unlock the Past** (<https://www.unlockthepastcruises.com/>).

Do-It-Yourself Research Trips

You may prefer to “fly solo” or find that an organized trip does not exist for your specific area of research. Or you may want to attend a national genealogy conference for the first time and then tack on a few days for research. No matter the reason, many genealogists prefer to plan out their own trips.

Here are some areas to review and consider when planning the ultimate genealogy research trip:

- **What Type of Traveler Are You?** This may seem silly, but it really does matter that you understand your travel habits. Why? Well, one reason is that recognizing your “must haves” and how you respond to unexpected changes can help you plan a more productive and enjoyable trip.
- **Preparation and Packing.** Some of us pack at the last minute while others pull out the suitcase weeks ahead of a trip. Whatever works for you, make sure you have a checklist and consider the tools you’ll need to get the most out of your research.
- **Preferred Mode of Transportation.** Do you hate to fly? Do you love the nostalgia of a train ride? Or are you a road warrior with an RV ready to go? Use the method of getting there and back that works for you!
- **Accommodations.** Spartan, since you’ll spend little time in the room? Or luxurious so you can be pampered after a tough day of research? Where you stay can really set the mood for your entire trip.
- **Expenses.** Create a budget and prioritize items as “must haves” and “optional.” Find ways to save money so you can purchase books and souvenirs or splurge on a celebratory dinner the last night of your trip.
- **Emergencies and Last-Minute Changes.** Things happen, and how you react and can adapt to change can sink or save a research trip. Make sure you have emergency information for each location including hospitals, urgent care centers and pharmacies. Also let your friends and family know where you are and how to reach you during the trip.

Also, if you plan on traveling with another researcher, make sure you review all the items above with that person. There is nothing worse than being on a trip you have planned all year for, only to find out that you have different “must haves” and “likes” than your traveling companion.

Step 11 To Do List – Full Do-Over Participants

- **Social Media:** If you have not used social media in any form, you may want to go slow and start with one platform, such as Facebook. Also, get help from someone who knows Facebook and can help you get set up. And my best advice: only use it for genealogy. No games, no drama, no nonsense. I’ve found that with a very narrow use of Facebook (mainly connecting with other genealogists), I’ve had a much better experience on the site.

- **Research Trip:** If you have not taken a research trip in a while, make sure that you are using your best research (meaning from The Genealogy Do-Over) when you head out. Also, check out all the new apps and sites that make traveling easier!

Step 11 To Do List – Review or “Go-Over” Participants

- **Social Media:** If you are currently using social media, challenge yourself to look at other platforms besides the ones you are currently using.
- **Research Trip:** Although you are “reviewing” your previous genealogy research, there should be no need to retrace your steps and revisit old research locations . . . unless you believe you will locate new items and make progress. Consider trying a sponsored research trip or heading out to a new locale!

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