



Step 5: Citing Sources and Building a Research Toolbox

The Genealogy Do-Over

<https://www.genealogydoover.com>

Step Five's focus is all about tools: finding and curating online tools to assist with your genealogy research and and understanding the basis of citing sources as a tool to document your research.

BUILDING A RESEARCH TOOLBOX

For several years I've been advocating the following concept: every genealogist should create a consolidated research toolbox filled with various tools such as historical value of money calculators, links to historical newspaper sites, etc.

The reason? Efficiency and increased productivity. Think of how much time you spend looking for a link to a site you saved a week or a month ago? Wouldn't you rather spend that time looking for ancestors? On the other hand, when you need to calculate something – like how much \$1 USD in 1910 would be worth in today's money, you spend time out on the Web searching for a site to do the calculation. Don't forget that each time you wander out to the Internet, you are at risk of being attracted by those BSOs ("bright and shiny objects") and time is wasted!

A genealogy research toolbox can take many forms: a blog, a website, an Excel spreadsheet or even a cleaned-up and organized list of bookmarks:

BONUS: Building a Research Toolbox syllabus

Each year I am asked to present one of my most popular lectures – Building a Research Toolbox – both in-person and via webinar. Visit <https://genealogybargains.com/genrestoolbox> to download the FREE syllabus!

BONUS: Tools to Get You Started

Here are some tools that I recently located while preparing for a recent online webinar. They are so useful that I can't see doing without them . . . so why not have them ready to access in a toolbox?

- **A Genealogist's Guide to Old Latin Terms & Abbreviations – GenealogyBank**
<http://blog.genealogybank.com/a-genealogists-guide-to-old-latin-terms-abbreviations.html>
- **Glossary of Medical Terms Used in the 18TH and 19TH Centuries**
<https://www.thornber.net/medicine/html/medgloss.html>
- **Abbreviations & Acronyms for Genealogy**
<http://sites.rootsweb.com/~rigenweb/abbrev.html>
- **List of Occupation Abbreviations – GenealogyInTime Magazine**
<http://www.genealogyintime.com/dictionary/list-of-occupation-abbreviations-page-a.html>
- **Spelling Substitution Tables for the United States and Canada – FamilySearch**
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Spelling_Substitution_Tables_for_the_United_States_and_Canada
- **Street Name Changes**
<http://stevemorse.org/census/changes.html>

CITING SOURCES

True confession: Like many beginning genealogists, I did not always cite my sources during research. I was a name collector. I've evolved as my research skills improved and as I took advantage of educational resources. For me, citing sources is not about impressing other researchers or meeting any standards established by others. I cite sources so I can go back and find the original information. Plain and simple. Source citations are the equivalent of a trail of breadcrumbs along my genealogy journey.

So, why do we use source citations?

There are many reasons why a genealogist might want to cite sources while researching ancestors.

- **Establish Proof.** Cited material gives credibility to a fact or relationship while proving a connection.
- **Determine Reliability of Evidence.** Some sources are more reliable and make a stronger proof. Compare points of evidence based on their source.
- **Track Records and Resources.** Easily go back and locate records and their repositories. This is effective when the original record or a copy is lost.
- **Expand Research.** When encountering a difficult area of research, look for sources that were successful in making a proof and check them again for further information.
- **Discover Conflicts.** Locate contradictions in existing research or when new evidence is found.
- **Understand the Research Process.** When using another researcher's work, sources can give a glimpse at how that research was developed.
- **Placeholders.** Pick up a research project where you left off by looking at source citations.

How do I create a basic source citation?

A basic source citation has the following components:

Author, Title, Publisher, Locator

For the book *Evidence Explained*, here is a basic citation:

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Pub Co, 2007, p. 103.

- **Author:** Format can be "First Name Last Name" or "Last Name, First Name."
- **Title:** Format can be *Title* (italics) or Title (underline). In addition, article titles may precede publication title.
- **Publisher:** Format often includes publisher location, name and year published and sometimes appears in parentheses.
- **Locator:** Usually a page number or range of page numbers depending upon the source type.

In addition, for online sources you may need:

- **Accessed:** List date when source located as in "accessed on March 29, 2009" since online sites are known to disappear.
- **Examined:** List search criteria as in "examined for any reference to 'xyz'."

Following the Basic Source Citation format above, you will want to add more "locator" information when using records such as census pages, death certificates, etc. and specify the name of the person(s).

1850 U.S. Federal Census, Lewis County, New York, population schedule, Leyden, p. 84, dwelling 1254, family 1282, line 36, Clarinda PARSONS, digital images, Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 16 October 2011); from National Archives microfilm publication M432, roll 523, image 168.

How can I access the citation format templates?

I have added the source citation templates to the Genealogy Research Log (on the Citation Formats tab) a list of common citation formats can be found at

<https://genealogybargains.s3.amazonaws.com/RESOURCE+Citation+Formats.pdf>.

STEP 5 TO DO LIST – FULL DO-OVER PARTICIPANTS

- **Citing Sources:** If you own a copy of *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (either hard copy or digital), read Chapters 1 and 2. Doing so will help you understand how source citations are constructed and why they are so important to genealogy research.
- **Building a Research Toolbox:** If you don't already have a research toolbox, download, and review the *Building a Genealogy Research Toolbox* handout here:
<https://genealogybargains.com/genrestoolbox>

STEP 5 TO DO LIST – REVIEW OR “GO-OVER” PARTICIPANTS

- **Citing Sources:** If you have cited sources for your previous research, review the cites and check them for formatting and accuracy. If you don't have a cheat sheet or template to help speed up the process, consider creating a way to use pre-set source citation templates.
- **Building a Research Toolbox:** Consider creating a research toolbox, especially if your current toolbox consists of tons of bookmarks or favorites that are not very well-organized.