Re-Do Your Genealogy Research?
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Genealogy Do-Over
- In December 2014, Thomas MacEntee, on his Geneabloggers website/blog introduced his "Genealogy Do-Over"
- He broke his "Genealogy Do-Over" down into 2 to 3 topics per week and it ran for 13 weeks with a total of 28 steps or topics

Setting Previous Research Aside
- Disregard your previous research materials, practices and results
- But it's ok to keep specific items such as previously acquired certificates, census images, etc.
- You can also keep all the paper you have accumulated through the years
- If you haven't already digitized your files, now would be a good time to do it

Preparing to Research
- Think about the times that you have done your best research and set-up your workspace each time you start any research
- Think about how you've research in the past in terms of time, location, tools used, etc.
- Don't think just paper, think about putting everything on the computer

Establishing Base Practices and Guidelines
- This is actually very important. Consider:
    - What you're doing
    - Set goals like tracking all your work, even dead ends
    - Citing your sources, even if just rudimentary
    - Slow down, look at all the information that you have in front of you, analyze it
- Come up with a list of the 5 top procedures that you will commit to in doing your research
- Review your procedures and then compare what you have with what other people are doing
- You might learn something

Setting Research Goals
- What are your research plans?
- Reviewing your own family group sheet and create a set of initial research goals
- This can be as simple as "find the birth location of my grandmother" or "determine the parents of my 2nd great-grandparents"
- Use paper, Evernote, OneNote, or any program to track your research goals

Conduct a Self-Interview
- Put down your own information as you would an ancestor on a family group sheet
- This might be a good time to do a mini-autobiography

Conduct Family Interviews
- Create a list of aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc. who might have information
- Send a family group sheet to each of them and have them fill them out
- Think about recording your personal interviews with them

Tracking Research
- Did you track your 'old' research?
- Did you simply enter your information and possibly mark it as unsourced then lie to yourself and tell yourself you would go back and clean it up later?
- From this point on, your goal should be:
    - To track your goals, in other words what you want to prove and then
    - After collecting the data, evaluate that evidence and prove or dis-prove the fact
- Record your tracking
- You can use a separate genealogy research log
- Many genealogy software programs have "to-do" lists and research guidance features

- You can also use the notes section of your software program

Conducting Research
- Once you have your research goals and the way to track them, then you are ready to research
- This includes not only online research but also offline research at archives, libraries and repositories
- A few suggestions:
- Enter all the information from your searches into your genealogy program
- Make sure you enter the source of the information
    o Don't do a 'formal' source citation yet, just in the notes section
    o Make a note to yourself on what the information represents

Build a Research Toolbox
- Build your own research toolbox filled with various tools such as historical value of money calculators, links to historical newspaper sites, etc.
- The toolbox can take many forms:
    o An Excel spreadsheet, a Word document, or a cleaned-up and organized list of bookmarks in your browser

Citing Sources
- Why use source citations?
    o Establish proof
    o Determine reliability of evidence
    o Track records and resources
    o Expand your research
    o Discover conflicts
    o Understand the research process
    o Placeholders

Evaluating Evidence
- If you really evaluate your research findings, it will tell you where your are in your research cycle
- "Guidelines for Evaluating Genealogical Resources" by Linda Woodward Geiger
- Normally, evacuating the evidence is broken down into four categories:
    o Source Type – Original, derivative, primary, etc.?
    o Clarity – Can you read the text?
    o Information – What is on the document?
    o Evidence Type – Birth, death, marriage, census?

Personal Education Options
- Why do you need to further your genealogical education?
    o New record sets
    o New research techniques
    o Research techniques for specific areas
- Online
    o Webinars are the key and keeping up to date with what else might be available
    o And don't forget the blogs……………
- Offline
    o National Conferences
        ▪ Jamboree
        ▪ RootsTech
        ▪ NGS
        ▪ FGS
    o Local Conferences
        ▪ The Bash
        ▪ WAGS
        ▪ SOCCGS
        ▪ NOCCGS

Genealogy Database Software
- Every genealogist is different and you are responsible for making your own choice or choices
- Some of the more popular choices (for the PC) are:
    o Legacy Family Tree
    o Roots Magic
    o Family Tree Maker

Digitizing Photos and Documents
- This has become an important part of genealogy
- To do it properly you must know the correct way to scan and digitize your family photos as well as your research documents
- There are many articles written about how to properly digitize your research
- Spend the time and do your own research because you never know when you might lose all your paper

Collateral Research
- Collateral Research: A search for those who are not direct line ancestors, but who are considered part of the same family
    - These include siblings, half-siblings, in-laws and others through marriage
    - Example: take time to look at the siblings of a woman's husband or her husband's parents and who they married, as well as their children

Cluster Research
- Cluster Research is: When you research the friends, associates and neighbors (aka F.A.N. club) who were part of the community of your direct line ancestors
- This usually means focusing on the geographical area where your ancestors lived
- This has a lot of implications for your ancestor, especially his/her experiences on coming to this country and the friends they made
- Groups of people usually moved together from one location to another

Organizing Research Materials – Documents and Photos
- Here are some guidelines:
    - Think preservation as well as access – how are you going to preserve your items and how are you going to retrieve them?
    - Select a system that works for you – research and see how other genealogists do it
    - Schedule maintenance time – block out one to two hours per month to 'tidy' up you materials
    - Do you really need that item? – be your own curator. Do I really need to keep that piece of paper that is now digitized? Do I need all these magazines when I can get a PDF copy and put it on my computer?

DNA Testing Options
- If you are thinking about doing a DNA test, then do it
- There are 3 major testing houses
    - Family Tree DNA
    - 23 and Me
    - Ancestry
- You might find some interesting facts

Organizing Digital Research Materials
- The "Digital Dark Ages"
- Paper verses Digital
- I am a firm believer in Digital but there is a lot that can go wrong
- You must constantly monitor JPEG, TIFF, and other format changes to make sure what you digitized 10 years ago is still relevant
- Naming conventions for your files – pick one and stick with it
- Metadata in digital photos
    - This is the information that is imbedded in the digital image. Definitely worth looking into.
- Backing up your digital materials is very important if you are going to 'go digital'
    - Backup, backup, and then backup again
    - You never know when someone is going to turn off the switch

Social Media Options
- Social media seems to be taking over where queries posted in online groups, online bulletin boards and newsletters used to be
- Facebook has over 4,500 links to various papers and groups covering almost every aspect of genealogy and family history
- There are even Facebook groups to help citing your sources and organizing your genealogy

Building a Research Network
- By being here, you are part of a "Research Network"
- Being with like-minded people that have certain skills that you don't have are part of your research network
- Plus, you are a part of theirs
- You can build your research network in many ways, including Facebook
- Give your knowledge freely and you'll attract others who can help you in the future

Sharing Research
- Yes, share your research
- There are some interesting Do's and Don'ts on Collaborating and Sharing:
    - Be Nice
    - Ask for credit and give credit
    - Don't give to get
    - Track you work

Securing Research Data
- Ask yourself these 4 very important questions:
    1. If you lost all your data, would you be able to recreate it?
    2. Would you even know where to begin?
    3. If you died today, do you know what your family would do with your research?
    4. Have you made plans to preserve your research for generations to come?
- Backing up your data:
    - Create a backup plan – you need to determine what data needs to be backed up and how
    - Identify what data is to be backed up – emails, browser links, etc.
    - Backup method – copy to a flash drive, external hard drive, cloud backup service
    - Future proof your technology – if you have information on CD's or DVD's make sure it is still valid
- Future proofing your research:
    - If you don't put safeguards in place for your years of research and stories, your family members won't know what to do with it
    - Take inventory of what you have including hard copy and digital assets
    - Include your research in a will to what you want done with it
    - Talk to your family about your research and get commitments from them not to discard it
    - Post items online to preserve your family stories
    - Put you tree on Ancestry or some other site
    - Do it NOW

Reviewing the Journey
- The need for change – if you have been doing genealogy for years you have probably begun to realize that your early research may not provide the best foundation
- No guilt, no shame, and no regrets – it's ok that you started out as a name collector
- Collaboration counts – genealogists have always been collaborators
- Meetings, research trips, and conferences are the ways we collaborate, to name a few
- We all have quirks and biases but on a whole, genealogists are good people
- Genealogy is meant to be fun – basically, if you can't have fun with your genealogy, don't do it

There are other ways of "Re-Doing" your research
- Genea-Musings, Randy Seaver, blog post December 14, 2014
- "I am not going to do a Genealogy Do-Over"
- He started in 1990 using a genealogy program

- He, like most of us were name collectors in the beginning
- In 2006 he got more professional about his research and started seriously citing his sources
- To quote Randy: "*I don't want to throw away 8+ years of hard work finding quality sources for events concerning people in my genealogy database. During these past eight years, I have tried very hard to find records to support assertions of births, marriages, deaths, and other events in the lives of my ancestors, and draw reasonable conclusions about those persons and relationships from the available evidence.*"

52 Ancestors in 52 Weeks
- This has allowed him to focus his efforts on one ancestor each week
- Helps him find more records, source them, analyze them, and craft notes that describes the events in the person's life
- His goal is to leave a well-sourced genealogy database that will provide his descendants and relatives knowledge about the lives of their ancestors, while helping future researchers search for and find records of their ancestors
- "*I've worked too hard for too long to get to this point. My view is that a good database should not be forsaken in the pursuit of a perfect database, the goal should be to constantly improve it."*

Other Ways to "Re-Do" Your Genealogy Research
- Change genealogy programs
- Publish your family tree
- Digitize your research papers
- Organize your research
- Preserve your paper records
- Modify your database

Conclusion…………
- There is more than one way to "Re-Do" your genealogy without "Re-Doing" it
- By looking at and analyzing both Thomas's and Randy's ideas, you can pick up several ideas that will help you in your research efforts
- You don't have to do research "their" way, you have to do it "your" way…………
- And remember, keep your genealogy fun……

Websites used in this presentation

Geneabloggers
http://www.geneabloggers.com/

Genea-Musings
http://www.geneamusings.com/