Sharing & Preserving Genealogical Data
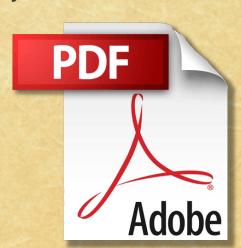
Genealogical Angst

- I have a Windows computer. My cousin has a Mac. I use Legacy, she uses Reunion. What if she can't open my files?

- I have so many files and some are pretty large. How do I share them all with her?

- If my home catches fire, would I be able to get my precious genealogy and photos to safety in time?

- Will I ever be done researching so that I can publish my book?

- If I were to die tomorrow would my genealogy and photographs end up in a dumpster?

- None of the young people in my family are interested in genealogy. Who can I leave my genealogy to?

- Will my as yet unborn 1st cousin four times removed be able to find my research and build on it 50 years from now?

Sharing GEDCOM files

- GEDCOM (GEnealogy Data COMmunication) standard released by LDS in 1984

- A GEDCOM is a text file (.GED) that describes your family tree and its structure

- It can be imported into any genealogy program on any operating system

- Programs in the distant future are very likely to be able to import today's GEDCOMs

- Let's take a look at one…

Document Files

- Text (.TXT) or Rich Text Format (.RTF)
  - Do not assume word processing files (eg: Microsoft WORD .DOC) are can be opened by everyone else

- Adobe Acrobat (.PDF)

- Web Pages (.HTML or .HTM)

- Spreadsheets (.CSV)
  - Comma Separated Values
  - Excel files may work (.XLS) but .CSV is safer

Image Files

- .TIFF or .TIF (uncompressed or compressed) or .PNG
  - Lossless - Better for long-term archival
  - But can be 50 times a large as a .JPG

- .JPG or .JPEG (compressed)
  - Quality reduced a little due to compression
  - Much smaller files – Better for sharing by email

- .BMP or .GIF
  - OK too but usually can be converted to one of the above formats

Video

- Mpeg (.MPG and .MP4)

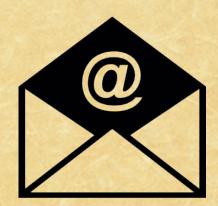- Apple Quicktime format (.MOV)
  - .MPG is probably a little safer

Audio

- .MP3
  - There are others like .AU and .AIFF but I usually stick to .MP3 because everything can play it

Compressed Archive

- .ZIP
  - Not for long-term archival
  - Fine for sending large files by email

Sharing With Another Genealogist

- Send them an Email
  - Keep attachments under 10 MB
  - Use archive compression software (ZIP)
    - Makes files smaller
    - Bundles many files and folders into one file

Sharing With Another Genealogist

- Burn a CD/DVD/BluRay Disk and mail it to them
  - CD = 650 MB
  - DVD = 4.7 GB
  - BluRay = 25 GB
  - Make sure destination computer will have a drive to read it!
  - Media lasts 3-10 years at best (not good for archival!!!!)
  - M-Disk BluRay disks supposedly last 1,000 years ($4/disk)

Sharing With Another Genealogist

- Mail a Thumb Drive (Flash Drive, Jump Drive, etc.)
  - Requires USB port in destination computer
  - Various capacities, access speeds, & prices
  - Format in FAT (File Allocation Table) for computers
  - Good for long-term storage if not handled or re-written frequently

Sharing With Another Genealogist

- Cloud-based Storage
  - Dropbox (2.5 GB free)
  - Apple iCloud (5 GB free)
  - Google Drive (15 GB free)
  - Shutterfly, Flickr, etc. (for photos)

- Personal Web Site
  - Fringe benefit of having a hosting service
  - Good for enormous files
  - With or without FTP (File Transfer Protocol)

Create a Backup Plan

- "Belt and Suspenders"
  - Multiple redundant backups
  - On different schedules
  - Using various media
  - In different physical locations

- Local Backups (in your house)
  - Frequent
  - Incremental

- Off-site Backups (as far away as possible)
  - Less frequent
  - Mirrors/clones – often bootable drives

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"We back up our data on sticky notes because sticky notes never crash."

Backup Products

- Backup Software
  - Windows: Genie Backup Manager & Norton Ghost
  - *Mac: TimeMachine & Carbon Copy Cloner*

- Cloud-based Backup Services
  - Carbonite
  - Backblaze
  - iDrive
  - Google Drive
  - iCloud
  - DropBox

Ensure Your Genealogy Outlives You!

- Digitize everything you have on paper
  - Your off-site backup becomes your fire insurance!
  - Scan all your records, files, correspondence, etc.
  - Scan all your old photos
  - Photograph & label your family heirlooms

- Organize your digital files for posterity
  - Explain your organization in text files
  - Caption all the photos
  - Your target audience is someone who finds your work long after you're gone

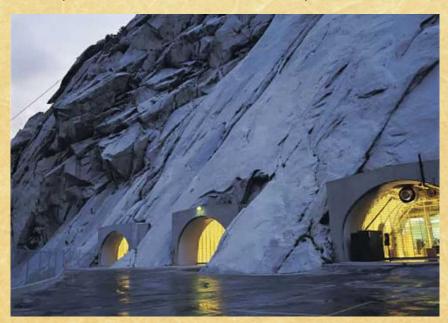# Ensure Your Genealogy Outlives You!

- Your data might survive fires, floods, and hard drive failures – but not your sudden death

- Publish your book <u>now</u> (backup to paper)
  - Don't wait until you're "done" - you will never be done!
  - You can always publish Volume II or errata later

- Give copies of your genealogy and photos and files and book <u>now</u> to anyone who will take them…

Ensure Your Genealogy Outlives You!

- Put your genealogy on public trees
  - "Nothing ever gets deleted from the Internet – EVER!"
  - Ancestry, WikiTree, FamilySearch, personal web site
  - Use notes & sources to explain conjectural data
  - Great "Cousin Bait" too!

- Create caches for future genealogists to find
  - Mail CDs, DVDs or thumb drives with all your data and images to cousins in several branches of your family & in many locations

Ensure Your Genealogy Outlives You!

- Contribute your digital materials and book to local historical & genealogical societies and libraries

- Submit your GEDCOM to the FamilySearch Pedigree Resource File (Granite Mountain)

Discussion