Sharing Your Family History

Getting Started

Share your family history research with family, friends, and fellow researchers so the fruits of your labor can be enjoyed for years to come.

Tips for getting started:

• Shift your mindset from research to creation.

• Define your goal: What do you want to achieve? Who is your audience? Do you have a deadline?

• Choose the best format to reach your goal/audience.

• Assess your tools: What do you already have, and what do you need?

• Create a plan—and, if helpful, an outline.

• Establish a timeline.

• Start small and break projects into manageable tasks.

Sharing Research

Can others easily access and understand your research? Make your research **organized**, **preserved**, **digitized**, **accessible**, and **communicated**.

Organize your physical and digital materials using a consistent system—such as surname-based or chronological—and clearly **communicate** both the system and **access** instructions to your intended audience.

Preserve your materials by storing them properly—avoid using staples, glue, or tape, and use archival storage when possible. **Digitize** printed records to ensure long-term accessibility. Regularly back up your digital files, including exported GEDCOM files and family trees, and store copies in multiple locations to protect against data loss.

Engagement

Looking for a simpler way to engage your family? Small efforts can make a big impact. Try one of these options:

Use **newsletters**, **email**, **traditional mail**, and **holiday cards** to share highlights of your family history—or to gather new data through surveys and requests for information. You can create and distribute a physical or digital newsletter using a word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word or Google Docs), a web-based design platform (e.g., Canva), or a mass email service (e.g., Mailchimp).

Organize a reunion or gathering to share manageable amounts of information using engaging formats such as photo albums, printed family trees or charts, and key documents. Invite attendees to help fill in gaps —and be ready to take notes when family members begin sharing stories!

Share documents and photos digitally using cloud storage services such as Google Drive, Google Photos, OneDrive, iCloud, or Dropbox. You can also use platforms like Facebook, YouTube, or Google Earth to present and distribute your family history content.

Crafts and décor offer creative ways to express your love of family history. For inspiration, explore resources like Pinterest, Etsy, Shutterfly, and Family Tree Magazine.

Activities like storytelling, family interviews, and learning a traditional recipe or craft can help engage younger family members. You can also explore countries of origin using CultureGrams Online, a database available with your PPLD library card.

Websites

Create a website from scratch to make your research accessible online:

1. Create and register a domain name through a provider like Namecheap or Domain.com.

2. Choose a web host, like Bluehost or DreamHost, to host your domain.

3. Design your website using tools like WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, or Dreamweaver.

All-in-one Website Services

Platforms like WordPress, Squarespace, Wix, and Google Sites can handle all setup steps, with free and paid options offering varying levels of control. Learn website creation through LinkedIn Learning (accessible with a PPLD library card) or online tutorials.

Don't want to build your own website?

Some genealogy websites allow you to build family history sites within their platform. Options include MyHeritage, Ancestry, FamilySearch, Geni, and WikiTree. Genealogy software such as RootsMagic, Reunion, Legacy Family Tree, and Ancestral Quest can generate simple websites using your existing data. Also, many tools and services can turn Genealogical Data Communication (GEDCOM) files into websites. Cyndi's List offers more info on these options.

TOP TIPS

- *Assume someone is—or will be—interested.*
- *Perfect is the enemy of good.*
- *Be transparent if you fictionalize any story.*
- *Leave them wanting more.*
- *Be mindful of the privacy of living relatives.*
- *Consider purchasing extra copies to donate to libraries or archives.*
- *Explore additional resources on sites like American Ancestors and Cyndi's List.*

Writing & Publication

Whether you're crafting an article, photo book, or full family history, presenting your research clearly makes it easier to share with others.

Writing Considerations

- **Planning**: Define your project's scope, audience, size, type, and format.

- **Content**: Create an outline and decide what to include.

- **Writing**: Consider tone, software tools, and citation needs.

Printing & Publishing

The best printing or publishing option depends on your project's nature, goals, timeline, and budget.

Consider these options:

- Print it yourself — at home, at a copy shop like Staples, or at your local library.
- Use a photo book service — such as Shutterfly, Snapfish, Blurb, or SmugMug.
- Pay a print-on-demand or self-publishing website — like Lulu, Blurb, or iUniverse.
- Seek out a traditional or genealogical publisher or professional book printer.
- Don't forget about eBooks — many self-publishing platforms also offer eBook options.

Copyright

In the United States, copyright protection is automatic as soon as an original work is saved or recorded. However, it may be wise to take additional steps:

- Add a copyright statement to the back of your title page.
- Register your book with the U.S. Copyright Office.
- If you plan to sell it, obtain an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and a Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN).