

- Genealogy Computer Society
- Meeting the Second Saturday of each month at the Roswell family History Center 9:00AM to Noon

Let's search our ancestors on the Internet

Our next meeting is January 13th

Today's genealogist has never had it so good. The competition to build a better genealogy software program for your computer has given us excellent programs.

The e-mail has allowed us to rapidly exchange information with new "cousins." Searching the Internet is rewarding, but it can be overwhelming. There are so many possible options. Where do we go? Which engine should we use? What should I ask for?

On Saturday, I will discuss a number of search engines and meta-search engines. The best part of the program will be the handout. You will have a list of all the engines discussed and their address.

I talked to Larry Maurer recently. After the operation, he got an infection, so has not started further treatment at this time. The best news is that he hopes to join us Saturday.

Most of this issue consists of an excellent article by George Morgan that you will find more interesting than my words.

See you Saturday.

Don

Genealogy in the 21st Century

– George G. Morgan

We are finally at the threshold of the 21st century and the beginning of a new millennium. (Last year's celebration was a little premature.) As the old year ends, I have been pondering the way we have conducted our genealogical research in the 20th century and what we might expect in the next century. In "Along Those Lines . . ." this week, I'd like to share some thoughts about old vs. new methods of researching our family history.

Where We Came From. In the nearly 40 years since I first became interested in my family history, research methods have certainly changed. At one time, you could pretty much only research genealogy in three ways: visit the place where you wanted to conduct research, write letters to request that copies of documents be made for you (or engage a researcher to do so), or publish queries in newspapers, genealogical society publications, or the few genealogy magazines that existed.

Things are very different today, primarily because of the huge impact of electronic communications and the Internet. Today we can still use the older methods mentioned above, but we can also do the following:

Conduct research in online databases such as those at Ancestry.com, RootsWeb, FamilySearch.com, and scores of others. Locate resources at compilation Web sites such as Cyndi's List, where massive amounts of links to other sites are listed.

Research people's personal Web pages on which they publish their genealogical information, or create a Web page and publish our own data. View data transcribed and posted at Web sites, such as the USGenWeb and WorldGenWeb Projects.

Access digital images of documents, photographs, and other Web sites of government offices, libraries, and archives. Access thousands of "how-to" and reference texts to help in understanding of genealogical research methods and different record type[s].

Access library catalogs around the country and the world to holdings, request Interlibrary Loan (ILL) services, or effectively plan research trips to a facility.

Read, post, and respond to messages and queries on genealogical message boards.

Create and exchange GEDCOM files containing our genealogical data files with others, or submit our files to online database entities for inclusion in massive database.

Exchange e-mail with researchers all over the world who share an interest in genealogy and who may be able to provide leads for our own research.

Subscribe to genealogy newsletters via e-mail and read other newsletters at various Web sites. Subscribe to e-mail mailing lists for the surnames we are researching, for the areas in which we are searching, for the religious or ethnic groups we are researching, and for a wide variety of other topics.

Post online queries in many types of Web sites. Participate in online chats with other genealogists who share our interests in the research of specific areas, groups, surnames, or other topics.

Download and print charts and forms to help record our research data. Whew! Isn't that amazing? Even though some of these facilities were available through online bulletin board services as far back as twenty years ago, most of these changes have come along during the last ten or fifteen years with the introduction of online services such as America Online and CompuServe and with the proliferation of the Internet. You now can conduct a great deal of preliminary research from the comfort of your own home at any hour of the day or night. (Yes, that means you can turn your insomnia into productive research time!)

The tools you use in your research can vary, but if you are reading this column, you are already using a computer, and you may be using a printer, a scanner, a digital camera, CD-ROMs, and other electronic equipment. If not, there are many places to shop for them, ranging from retail stores to Internet stores such as The Shops @ Ancestry.com, CDW, MySimon, and others. (You will generally find that online prices are lower than retail store prices, even when you add shipping and handling charges.)

Where Are We Going? Who is to say what new and exciting changes may be coming in our genealogical research in the 21st century? Like H.G. Wells, let's look at some of the wonders that might impact us in the future. Communication will move tremendously fast (much more so than ever before) and will no longer depend on wiring. Universal wireless voice, data, and video service will be available throughout the world. The devices with which you communicate will also be data storage units with huge data capacities measuring in terabytes (a trillion bytes). They will be small and light weight; they will travel with you wherever you go so you can quickly transfer data to and from your larger home data system—

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whose data storage capacity may be measured in petabytes, exabytes, or even yottabytes! Wow! (Check out the definitions of these data quantities here.) Government offices, courthouses, libraries, archives, and other facilities will use expert computer systems to allow you to format inquiries and search their voluminous online information systems, connecting you with a human for exceptional types of inquiries.

You might use a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit to locate your ancestor's specific property location or the cemetery (and plot) in which he or she is buried, basing everything on data you obtained from a courthouse's database.

Online databases will be massive repositories of genealogical information. When new records are added or when corrections or changes are made to areas in which you have researched or expressed an interest, you will be notified and/or an updated record will be transmitted to you.

There will be a universal, global online library catalog with a detailed hyper-index. You will be able to search for keywords and phrases (translated as necessary), allowing you to locate pertinent published genealogical materials anywhere and request copies and/or data to be transmitted to you.

Electronic books (E-books) will become integral parts of every library, and you will be able to access them online, download them to personal readers, or import them directly into your genealogy database. Integrated translation software will allow for the universal language-to-language translation of all texts.

Your genealogy database will be a sophisticated system, which integrates seamlessly with your other applications. It will be able to communicate with all other programs on computers worldwide and perform research, gather data, summarize that data, and format it for input into your database. It will also be able to format and publish your data in a wide variety of presentation formats and languages. Data imported from other sources will cause the automated generation of concise source citations, and manually entered data will prompt you to use an integrated voice recognition system to dictate both the data and the citation.

Digital image processing will have progressed to the point of producing 3-D, holographic photographs and video images, all of which can be manipulated and imported into your database and your electronic publications. Enhancement programs will capture a one-dimensional, photographic image of your great-great-

grandparents and render a three-dimensional representation of them. Document images will be clear and crisp, and will be printed on archival paper that replicates the color and texture of the original.

You will subscribe to electronic newspapers, magazines, journals, newsletters, and all other publications related to genealogical research. The preservation of the environment will preclude the production of paper-based periodicals and serials, and electronic versions of these resources will be delivered to your computer or personal reader. Electronic archives of older publications will be available for research, and the Periodical Source Index (PERSI) will access both electronic text and digital images of vast holdings going back many decades.

Are We There Yet? Does all of this sound like science fiction? Perhaps, but many of these technological miracles have their basis in fact, and some are actually being pioneered today. GPS technology, the units that connect to them, and the software they use are rapidly becoming more sophisticated and detailed. Integration of multiple, diverse, online library catalogs and the use of E-books is being implemented in the United States and elsewhere today.

Online databases are growing exponentially and are incorporating expert systems to facilitate data inquiries. Digital imaging techniques are becoming more sophisticated every year, and HDTV will replace our traditional color TVs before long (just as color TVs replaced black-and-white models). Data storage devices are growing ever smaller and can hold greater amounts of information all the time, and high-speed, reliable wireless technology is rapidly replacing the old telephone pole and "wire-in-the-wall" technology of the past. If you think sitting in your pajamas at your computer at 3 a.m. to conduct research is impressive today, just wait to see what you'll be able to do tomorrow! I don't claim to be a visionary, but it doesn't take too much imagination to analyze the products and services available today and project additional features onto them in the future. If you are just beginning to learn about computers, scanners, data communications, file types and transfer capabilities, digital cameras, and imaging, you need to concentrate on learning more. There is so much you can already do today, but just think of what you will be able to do in the 21st century!

Happy New Year!
George

Editor's note: The above article is from the current issue of Ancestry Daily News. For some time, I have been amazed at the technical advances recently available to the genealogy researcher. George does an excellent job of summing it up.

Don

This Month's Quote

**People will not look forward
to posterity who never look
backward to their ancestors**

Edmund Burke 1790

This Month's Epitaph

**On a grave from the 1880's in
Nantucket, Massachusetts:**

**Under the sod and under the trees
Lies the body of Jonathan Pease,
He is not here, there's only the pod;
Pease shelled out and went to God.**