THE GENEALOGY COMPUTER SOCIETY

Bytes & Branches

Karen Opp and Jack Bolton, once again, gave us an excellent program.

On Saturday, April 14th, they told us about the many resources available at the Roswell Family History Center .

Karen

Jack

For years, the Family History Centers have been a major resource for genealogist searching for their ancestors. It still is. Today, many commercial companies are selling their information on the Internet. And some of this data is available free, but none can compare to the resources of the Church of Jesus Christ of latter Day Saints. We usually shorten their name to LDS or the Mormons.

Karen and Jack explained the wealth of information available and how to use it.

If the Family History Centers are not part of your research trips, you are missing a one of the best sources. There are a number of centers in the Atlanta area. There are manned by volunteers and most of them are very knowledgeable and helpful

They Came in Ships

One of biggest challenges to genealogists is to identify how our ancestors arrived in America. One of most enlightening talks I ever heard on the subject was here at GCS seven years ago. Several times I have asked the speaker to repeat that talk and was turned down every time.

The speaker is Ruth Roeder, who has agreed to talk on the subject of "Migration, Immigration, and Emigration." This is a most knowledgeable person on the subject. When you consider we can only hear her once every seven years, whatever you do, don't miss it.

Our next meeting is on May 12th

Legacy: another major player in the genealogy software competition.

We watched Ultimate Family Tree be retired. The Master genealogist rushed to grab the unhappy losers. During the same time period, Family Tree Maker, Family Origins, Generations and Legacy were not standing still. Legacy has now offered their 3.0. version free They also have an outstanding video showing how to use their product . You can also purchase their Tree Draw to go with the program.

Glen and Don will be demonstrating this program on the June 9th meeting. We will also be showing the video. Just because you are satisfied with your present program, you will find the benefits of other software educational.

Thoughts to Ponder

The Ellis Island site has become the busiest genealogy site since LDS introduced familyseach/org. I received the following E-mail.

Dear fellow genealogical society,

My name is Edward Rosenbaum, and I am the president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Bergen County, New Jersey. As you may know, the Ellis Island Database went live last week at http://www.ellisislandrecords.org/. This database is supposed to contain everyone who passed through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1924.

This is a great resource to all genealogists. However, the web site has been so popular that it is often hard to get onto it. Also, the names are often misspelled. The Mormon Church did a great job in providing us this information, but as anyone who has ever looked at ship manifests knows, they can be very hard to read.

To make using the Ellis Island Database faster, and hopefully handle the spelling errors, I have written a program. If you go to http://members.bellatlantic.net/~elr228/eidb.htm, you can read about and download the program. Below is some information about it...

-Edward Rosenbaum
President, JGS of Bergen County, New Jersey (http://www.crosswinds.net/~erosenbaum/jgsbc)
email: erosenbaum@yahoo.com

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

The two columns on the right were in the April newsletter. They are repeated here because so few members bothered to download that newsletter. This may have been my fault as I was late in getting it to Glen.

What Difference Will it Make Fifty Years From Now?

By the year 2051, we will be gone from here. We will not be here to answer our grandchildren's questions. The questions that we wish we had asked from our parents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles. Oh, yes, there will be gravestones and our obituaries, but what will they reveal to future generations. Will they find a number of photographs with no names in the attic? Will your notes that you spent so much time researching also be there? Can they understand them? Are they correct? Did you show the source or the evidence to prove the validity?

Fifty years from now our floppy disks will be as outdated as the tintype photos of the Civil War era. Remember the eight track tapes that were so popular less then fifty years ago? What would you play them on today?

Where are the results of your years of researching effort?

Is your data on a web site?

Did you send hard copies to the local libraries, history groups or county genealogy societies?

When a individual dies, a whole library is lost.
anonymous

What will you leave behind?

Do we need to exist?

I have asked this question many times. We have a loyal group of attendees who are present for most meetings. However, when you ask them to accept some of the workload for maintaining this organization, they are reluctant to accept any responsibility.

Peggy Greer has accepted the position of company treasurer, which Frank Dartez has done from the beginning of the organization eight or nine years ago. We are indebted to Frank for doing such an outstanding job for so long. We are also indebted to Peggy for volunteering to take on the job. Glen has done an outstanding job of giving us visibility on the web. At this time, he is irreplaceable, as we do not have another member with his unique talents. For a number of years, Wilma reminded us when to attend the next meeting, by sending us a timely newsletter. When she felt she had served her time, not one member in our organization was willing to spend the time and effort to produce a newsletter. It makes me wonder if I'm wasting my time developing a newsletter.

Marilyn keeps up with the badges that allow us to remember each other's name. Charley hauls the library in to each meeting.

Over the years, I have gained knowledge from our association. I think most of our regular attendees would agree they have learned from our meetings.

If you think this organization should continue, is there something you can contribute to lighten the load of arranging programs, writing a newsletter or leading the organization?

The May Epitaph

Famous People

Emily Dickinson, buried in the
West Cemetery, Amherst, Massachusetts

Her Gravestone:

CALLED BACK

Quote of the Month

"Never mistake knowledge for wisdom.
One helps you make a living;
the other
helps you make a life"

Sandra Carey

Organize Your Internet Experience with a Portal

- Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, CGRS

What's a "portal," you might ask? I have to admit, I wasn't sure what a portal was, in reference to the Internet, until I looked up the definition in my dictionary: the approach or entrance to a bridge or tunnel. A portal, as used on the Internet, is an entryway to an Internet experience. For example, whenever you're allowed to set up a personal page as, perhaps, part of your ISP's offering, you're setting up a portal. Portals typically include news, sports, weather, stock info, and shopping. I've just recently become acquainted with a portal I think I'm going to keep around for a while. It's called Yodlee, and it's pretty cool! Yodlee allows you to set up your personal page using various accounts or to custom items you select. There are eight tabs near the top: All Categories, Finance, Communication, General, News, Shopping, Travel, Mobile.

When you click on a tab, you'll be able to see the accounts or Web sites you have added to that page. When you first register with Yodlee (a free registration that doesn't ask for a lot of personal information), you are taken to a screen where you can add accounts. Yodlee has obviously been working with a lot of businesses to provide access to personal accounts, because I was able to add a number of the accounts I access on the Internet with no problem. For instance, if you bank on the Internet, it's quite possible that your bank is listed with Yodlee. I was quite surprised and pleased that my main bank, Navy Federal Credit Union, was listed. I entered my account number and password, and Yodlee then provided a secure link to my banking information. You can also add credit cards, such as American Express, which allows customers to check their balances online. Under General, I created custom links o my own Wetb pages, Cyndi's List, and a couple other sites I access quite frequently. Under Shopping, I created custom links to the comparison-shopping sites I visit, including MySimon.com and ComputerShopper.com. Under Travel, I was able to add my Delta Skymiles account and Expedia, both of which I was already registered for on the Internet.

The display for the banking information is wonderful. When I open my Yodlee page and click on Finance, I can instantly see the balance the credit union says I have in my checking account. If I want to visit the site, I just click on the link, and since I'm already logged in, I don't have to log in again. The display for the travel information shows me how many frequent flyer miles I have with Delta, as well as any outstanding travel itineraries I have with Expedia. I have now made Yodlee the default my browser points to when I access the Internet. This will save me time and frustration when I'm trying to log on to an account whose password or username I can't remember or forgot to write down. Some of the custom links I added are already in my Bookmarks, but I know the sites I visit most frequently, and now I don't have to look for them on the list.

There are other portal sites out there that vary in items that can be added and in "customizability." Two others I am aware of that deserve a look are Octopus and OnePage. Octopus is a program you download for free that allows you to customize your page. OnePage is also free, doesn't require a download, and has tabs like Yodlee. However, OnePage did not appear as customizable as Yodlee.

If you're looking for a way to unclutter your Internet experience, I recommend trying a portal such as Yodlee. It's secure, it's free, and it's organized. Update on ItsMyCD.com. Last week I wrote about a new service called ItsMyCD.com. I received numerous e-mails after the article ran for a variety of reasons. Some people didn't know how to find the site (click on hyperlink above). Some people weren't able to access the site. I experienced this problem as well and have been in contact with one of the owners of Actuate Internet Services, discussing the situation. Apparently, the company's servers were overwhelmed with the hits they received after the article ran in the Ancestry Daily News, so the servers went down. This took the site offline for a while, but it's back up and running—at least partly. The owner assured me that the site was working fine and that the company had posted a new privacy policy, in which it promises to destroy submitted information as soon as the CD is burned. However, in trying to access the privacy policy, I receive an HTTP Error 404 Not Found. I've notified the company, and I hope they'll get the site working so those interested can try the service.

There's a lot of interest out there in preserving photos digitally. I will be exploring some ideas in future columns, based on reader input. Thanks for writing!

Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, CGRS, is the managing editor of Genealogical Computing (GC), editor of the Board for Certification of Genealogists' newsletter OnBoard, the creator of Clooz—the electronic filing cabinet for genealogical records, and a frequent contributor to Ancestry Magazine. She can be reached via e-mail at liz@ancestordetective.com or at gceditor@ancestry.com.