

From Granny's Attic to My PC and Beyond

OR

How to Convert Your Giant Box of STUFF Into Digital ORDER and Move Forward

This method will work if:

You are visiting Granny (or any other relative)

You have inherited Granny's box of stuff

You have been collecting for thirty years and done nothing with all that stuff except put it in a big box

Come Prepared with:

A laptop, a flatbed scanner, a digital camera, paper and pencil.

Also perhaps a tape recorder or digital recorder.

Make sure you have fresh batteries and all the cables needed before leaving home.

A pedigree chart and family group sheets of your family will help also as you begin sorting documents, letters, diaries, etc.

At Granny's set up your equipment in a good easy to access location before you open the box.

Organize the contents of the box

Take everything out of the box.

Inventory the items on a sheet of paper or your computer:

Identify which family or family line it belongs to

Note: You do not need to read the whole item to identify which family it belongs to.

If this is your box (not Granny's) make piles of the contents grouped into family lines, then place each pile into large manila envelopes. Label each envelope with the family name and approximate time period.

If you don't know what to do with a document – set it aside for later.

What if there isn't a box?

What if the items are scattered around the house?

Place an empty box on a counter *where it is in the way* and as you find documents, photos, etc. around the house, place them in the box.

What will you do with the envelopes?

First start a database on your PC if you have not already done so.

Select one envelope at a time, one item at a time.

Take the information from each document and add the dates, places and other information to the individual in your database. (PAF, Family Tree Maker, Legacy)

Scan the document, name it and save it. You can take pictures of other items with a digital camera, then save the image (dresses, jewelry, medals, etc.).

Choose a naming convention for your document.

It should be personal and consistent

One that you will recognize easily.

It could be family name, type of document, year, etc.

An example would be: "1870 cnss MI Newaygo ED 119 pg 5 Thomas Clark".

Use standard abbreviations whenever possible.

If you are working with your own box (not Granny's or Aunt Suzie's).....

Organize and File the paper copies.

Use binders, folders, alphabetic, families by color, etc. Not the scope of this class...

Filing electronic copy

Minimal Requirements:

1. Computer
2. USB memory storage device or other external storage device
backups, backups, backups... If your hard drive fails -
Do you really want to start over ???
3. Family History Program such as PAF, Legacy, Family Tree Maker, Roots Magic
4. Scanner
5. Photo program optional, but good to have

ORGANIZE your computer files (and save the electronic copies in the files)

FAMILY HISTORY

E-mails

Databases

PAF

Ged Com

General Info

Books

Research by Location

My Kith and Kin

Ambrose

Chrysler

Photos

July 1988 Trip to Montana

Old negatives (Yes old negatives can be scanned also)

Working

Feb 28 2009 FHC research

Ohio Death Certificates

Organization – Keep organized so you can find your files!

My experience is that each hour of research in the Family History Center, or visiting a relative equates to 2-3 hours of organizing, inputting and internalizing within your own mind all that new information at home. Upon returning home the **FIRST** thing you do is copy all new information from your “working” folder to your hard drive so you now have two copies!

This is a hard discipline to learn, but it will save you HOURS of work.

Save all your research electronically – URLs, databases, books, photos, documents, etc... and then file appropriately. If you do not take the time at home, you will end up with another box from Granny’s Attic either on your desk, or in your computer.

Backups, Backups, Backups

I cannot say this enough. **Backups, Backups, backups**

Share your backups with family members in other locations. Paper, computers and external drives are fragile. In the case of a catastrophic event (like a fire), they may not survive. It is wise to keep this information elsewhere.

CD and DVD backups can be made in a few minutes.

Keep a CD, DVD or jump drive in an off site location (such as a safety deposit box, relative’s home, fire safe box, etc).

Update quarterly, semi-annually or annually, whichever works best for you. If you don’t your backup will not be current.

Saving Internet Research Documentation

Use Microsoft Word if possible. This program allows you to copy and paste the “Address” or URL from the top bar of your browser. When you then hit the “Enter” key, the link will be complete and take you back to the exact page you were viewing.

Copy and paste EVERYTHING you think may be of value into your word document as Internet sites can and do change overnight! If you are copying many pages from the same website, copy the URL several times into your document. If you change websites but keep the same word document, note it and save the new URL.

Note: Some books I save this way because they are text documents, not images. It depends on the website how you will save it.

GedCom Files

A GED.com is a file format that most Family History programs will recognize. When you find someone else’s research you are interested in and it is downloadable as a ged.com, download it, but ... **DO NOT** import it into your own work.

Save it as a separate file.

To do this:

1. Download the GED.com
2. Create a new file in your program. In your database, I always identify the individual whose GED.com I am downloading as the person who created the file.
3. Import the Ged.com into the newly created file.

NOTE: Remember This is SOMEONE ELSE’s research and is only as good as the person’s own skills and personal dedication to accuracy!!!

It is not necessarily correct! Use it only as a roadmap.

Census Records and other Vital Records research

Census records are readily available at Ancestry.com, Heritage Quest and FamilySearch (within their records search pilot site).

FamilySearch has some US census records and State census records.

Some people MUST have a paper copy (whether they can read it or not). This is fine **but be sure to also save copies of the images** to your computer or portable storage device.

Copy and Save all transcription information pertaining to the document image you saved as text.

Document information thoroughly, noting:

The site you obtained it,

The date you obtained it,

The original source of the information.

This way you can go back and find it again if necessary or go to the original source when possible.

Research other than internet research How can you save information from books, microfilms, maps, etc to your computer?

Scanners!

If you have a paper copy of a document, book, or certificate, you can scan it (just as I told you to at Granny's) and save it to your computer. Some Family History Centers and Libraries now also have Digital Microfilm Copiers. These will save the image directly to you USB storage device.

Digital Cameras!

Some people tell me digital cameras also work well to save digital images of documents. You can save them to your computer.

**You have now Converted
your Giant Box of STUFF into Digital ORDER
If you need more help
COME SEE US
in the
FAMILY HISTORY CENTER**