You Use WHAT For Your Genealogy?
Wonderful Uses for Unusual Tools

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One of the advantages of collaborating with other genealogists – either in-person at society meetings and conferences or online via social media – is you get to see how others work and do their genealogy research. You learn about new tools, new platforms and new methodologies. Here is an overview of some of the best tools currently in use:.

Need Drives Discovery: Why Genealogists Seek New Tools

The process of genealogy research has remained constant over the past 25 years, although thankfully there is more of a focus on citing sources, proving hypotheses and becoming more educated about record sets and resources.

With a general agreement as to the "how" of genealogy research, it makes sense that new tools would be developed to not only make some of the processes easier – such as those that automatically generate a source citation – but also tools that allow you to share your finds in different ways.

Our ancestors were constantly on the lookout for new ways of doing things: thus the inventive and entrepreneurial spirit which fueled economic and technological development in America. While you as a genealogist don't necessarily need to have that "vision" to look at genealogy research in new ways, or to even use some of the new tools, you should be aware of these tools and how others are using them.

Review: Creative Uses for Basic Apps and Websites

Many of the sites and tools below may be familiar to you and here is how genealogists are using them each and every day to improve their research results:

- **Blogger** (https://www.blogger.com) can be used to create a public site where you post your research finds. Why? Two words: **cousin bait**. Once you post about your research, others can find your information on Google. Bonus: create a private blog to share information with family members or to organize a family reunion.

- **EasyBib** (https://www.easybib.com/) helps you create a bibliography using links to books or ISBN numbers and also assists in citing sources.

- **Evernote** (https://www.evernote.com) is a note taking application that allows you to "clip" articles from websites and to even take photos of documents at libraries and repositories. Bonus: you can synchronize your notes from the Evernote website to your home computer or smartphone.

- **Dropbox** (https://www.dropbox.com) provides 2GB of free online storage so you can back up all your genealogy data. Bonus: post large items and then share the item or folder with other researchers so you can collaborate on genealogy.

- **Google Drive** (https://drive.google.com) is similar to Microsoft Office and is a "productivity suite" of applications including document creation, spread sheets and more. Use the spread sheet feature to create a research log; use the document feature to write a genealogy report or the biography of an ancestor.

- **Google Maps** (https://maps.google.com) can be used for more than just driving directions! Create a customize map of where your ancestors lived to get a bird's eye view of migration patterns and more. The key to collateral research and being able to plot out the information and look for patterns. Bonus: click on the Street View link of a location to see what it looks like now!

- **Internet Archive** (https://archive.org/index.php) is a site with over 20 million digitized texts and books including Federal and state census books. Always look on Internet Archive for a book before making a purchase! Bonus: use **The Wayback Machine** to view those web pages that no longer exist.

- **MyHeritage Knowledge Base** (https://education.myheritage.com/) is a completely free, easy-to-use wealth of knowledge on genealogy and DNA. PLUS you can access the articles in 10 different languages!

Taking it Up a Notch: Leveraging the Not-So-Obvious Tools

While their uses might not seem obvious to you, once you see how some genealogists are using these tools, you'll be amazed and wonder why you aren't using them!

- **Facebook** (https://www.facebook.com) is more than just socializing; use the **Search** function to locate living relatives with the same surname. Also search for surname groups and other genealogy research groups.

- **Google Alerts** (https://www.google.com/alerts) makes Google work for you instead of you having to search for the same thing each week or month. Let Google notify you via email of new items matching your search criteria.

- **Google Translate** (https://translate.google.com) will translate English into over 50 languages and vice versa. Create a list of common genealogy terms (baptism, death certificate, marriage, etc.) in the language of your ancestors and then use them as search terms on Google or other search engines.

- **The Copyright Genie** (http://librarycopyright.net/resources/genie/) lets you know whether or not you can use an item as part of your research. Walk through the step-by-step program to see if an item is covered by copyright and how you can use it.

- **Twitter** (https://twitter.com) is more than just text messages with a 140 character limit. Use it to post queries about ancestors and surnames. Always add the "#genealogy" tag so others know you are talking about genealogy.

- **Wolfram Alpha** (https://wolframalpha.com) is a computational search engine that can tell you what day of the week a date occurred or determine a person's birth date based on the death age on a tombstone. Bonus: enter a relationship such as "my great-grandmother's niece" and it will determine your relationship to that person.

- **Zillow** (https://zillow.com) is a real estate listing search engine that can often provide current photos of an address, perhaps one where your ancestor lived. While Google Maps street view and offer images as well, if the property has been up for sale, you may get interior photos as well as additional information. A great resource for doing a house history! A similar site is **RedFin** (https://redfin.com).

Genealogy Tool Curators and How To Think Like One

I'm often asked, "How did you figure that out?" or "How did you find that?" and the answer is: by doing my research. Just like finding ancestors, I make sure I review many sources of information to stay on top of the latest technology for genealogy. Here are some sites to add to your bookmarks or favorites or subscribe to in Google Reader:

- **DearMYRTLE** (https://dearmyrtle.com) has lots of tips and tricks for using technology and provides free webinars and Google Hangouts each week.

- **Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter** (https://blog.eogn.com/) always has the latest news, if not exclusive scoops, on new technology for genealogists.

- **Abundant Genealogy** (https://abundantgenealogy.com) offers amazing genealogy and family history resources for FREE from educator and author Thomas MacEntee.

Sharing Your Finds

So what fun is it if you find new genealogy tools or new ways of using old tools if you can't share them with other researchers and even figure how more ways to use them? Sharing and collaborating has been a hallmark of the genealogy community and there are various ways you can spread the work and get input on a new tool:

- Join the **Technology for Genealogy** group on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/groups/techgen/) and then either post your find or post a query and ask for help in understanding the tool.

- Write a brief article for your genealogy society's newsletter and share information on what the tool does and how it works.

- If you have a blog, do a review of the new tool and describe how it works, step-by-step, keeping in mind that it might be new to your readers. Also, don't be afraid to do a review of tools that don't work well for genealogists or didn't live up to the "hype."

- Comfortable with public speaking? Create a presentation on the new tool for your next society meeting. Or, create an online video or slide show that can be posted to your society's website.

Links

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