CHAPTER 8

Organizing and Archiving Your Information

Suggested Activities

1. Get started organizing your information, family documents, photographs, and heirlooms. Purchase the supplies that you need to get organized.

2. Convert your photographs, slides, movies, documents, etc. to digital files for preservation and ease in sharing with others.

3. Explore new photo imaging technology that allows you to make prints of your family photographs without a negative, then share family photographs with other members of your family.

To succeed in family history, you need a simple, user-friendly system for organizing documents, notes, research aids, photographs, copies of family group records, pedigree charts, research logs, etc. And it needs to be in a readily-accessible form without digging through piles of papers. Staying organized makes your information more valuable to you, and allows you to use your limited family history time more efficiently.

You also need to learn about how to digitize and archive your precious photographs and documents to preserve them for posterity and share them with other family members. New technology can assist you and make it easier. This chapter provides tips and tools to help you get organized and archive your family treasures.

Organizing and Archiving Your Information

Computers work the best to help you organize your information into family group records and pedigree charts which can be searched by name, date, place, or relationship. They'll help keep tract of your ancestors and descendants. Computers offer an important advantage because you only have to type the information once, then you can use it repeatedly in many different charts and forms, and easily share the information with others. Family histories and correspondence can be written and then edited easily. Photographs and documents can be scanned and archived for safe-keeping, easy retrieval, and sharing with others.

Computers are wonderful to help you organize your information and save lots of time, but you may still want to print out some family group sheets and pedigree charts and keep them in folders. Try to keep yourself organized and your information readily accessible as your family tree grows.

It's usually better to choose a combination of computer files, filing cabinet folders and 3-ring binders.

Getting Started

For organizing paper copies of family records, first make sure you have the organizational supplies you will need, such as: file cabinet or boxes to store files in, file folders and index tabs, manila folders with assorted tabs, pre-printed forms to record data (you can print free forms from your computer family history program), and 3-ring binders with index dividers. Your investment in a good file cabinet will reap many rewards over the years in well-organized and preserved documents, and it's the easiest way to keep track of your family history papers.

Consider setting up an organizational system as early in your research as possible. If you stay on top of filing your documents as you receive them, it's much easier and less time consuming than if you have to go back through over-flowing files.

File Your Papers.com -
www.fileyourpapers.com

It doesn't take long once you have started your genealogy adventure to collect so much information that it

seems hard to handle. Dealing with information overload is handled by systematic organization of materials. If the organization of materials can be easily, quickly, and cheaply organized, and cross-referenced to other aspects of your files, it will free your mind. This will allow you much more time to devote your energy to the research itself and time to analyze your information more effectively. This website offers free online lessons for getting organized using different software programs: Ancestral Quest, Legacy Family Tree, My Trees online, and Personal Ancestral File. Sponsored by Genealogy Research Associates.

Organizing Your Family Records -
www.arkansasresearch.com > *Guide to Research*

Article describes a system to keep organized including family group sheets, family folders, pedigree charts, research notes, correspondence, and photographs.

Time For It Now -
http://timeforitnow.knotsindeed.com

Contains a guide entitled: *In a Pile or a File* by Rita Bartholomew to organizing your search and records, including a research folder, research log, and research and correspondence indexes.

Ancestry.com Learning Center -
www.ancestry.com/learn/start/surveying.htm

A series of articles on organizing your data.

Organizing Your Genealogy -
www.familysearch.org > *Search* > *Research Helps*

Excellent articles entitled: *Organizing Your Genealogy Using Computers* and *Organizing your Paper Files.* Click on *Search* > *Research Helps* > *Sorted by Title* > *"O"*.

Clooz.com Filing Cabinet - www.clooz.com $$$

Clooz is a database for systematically organizing and storing all of the clues to your ancestry that you have been collecting over the years. It's an electronic filing cabinet that assists you with search and retrieval of important facts you have found during your ancestor hunt, showing you a complete picture of what you have and what you lack. Once you import your information, you can assign documents to each person. Then, a report will show you all the birth and death certificates, wills, deeds, diary entries, or other documents that pertain to each individual. $39.95

Organize Folders
First by Surname

Start by grouping what information you have by **family surname** (last name). Start a separate index folder for each family. Print out family group sheets from your family history computer program. Print a complete set of your 5-generation family group sheets, or write the names of the parents of each family at the top (using the maiden name for women).