

NARA's New Direction

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Adult Services Librarian
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November 19, 2005

Software Duel

Janet Hall, Carolyn Meeker and Beverly Smallwood
Moderated by Anne Jacobs

Learn the difference between three popular genealogy software programs — Personal Ancestral File (PAF), Family Tree Maker® (FTM) and The Master Genealogist® (TMG) — and see how each one handles common tasks.

Anne guides our trio of software demonstrators — Janet (PAF), Carolyn (FTM) and Bev (TMG) — through a series of common tasks to demonstrate the similarities and differences among the programs. This demonstration will cover a wide spectrum of features from data entry to reporting features. A common starting point GEDCOM file is used to facilitate understanding of the software rather than the data. Each software will be demonstrated separately. Questions will be welcome after the demonstration.



December 3, 2005

2006 Planning Session

All Are Welcome!

Meet with the club officers and committee chairs to plan events for the coming year.



January 21, 2006

Preparing Your Home Movies for Future Generations

Presented by Everett Butler

Learn the differences between our members' three most popular genealogy software packages. Each package is demonstrated by a member who uses that software.

NARA's New Direction

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Recently a handful of reference librarians from the western suburbs of Chicago took an eye-opening tour of the National Archives and Records Administration's Great Lakes Region Center in Chicago. The staff of the center, including Martin Tuohy, Peter Bunce, a couple of public service staff, and three of the archivists, rolled out the red carpet for us. They showed us through the massive facility, which includes a 900,000 square foot store-room for federal records. The view down the aisles was amazing. After the tour we sat down with the archivists for a conversation.

Much has changed at the Chicago facility since we had last visited the facility. The N.A.R.A. has a new public research center, with a new microfilm reading room and a new room for public viewing of records. Workers were still painting door trim as we toured. There also seemed to be a new emphasis on public service, as the staff has produced many finding aids and the center is starting an experiment with Saturday hours. The center will be open to the public on the first Saturday of each month. Call ahead before sending anyone to the facility. Needing an appointment has not changed; the staff want to verify that the archives has the needed records and to suggest preparations before visitors come.

We discussed at length the differences between libraries and archives. Martin said that while libraries catalog and organize their holdings by subject, archives organize their items according to source and date. All the records

from a government agency will be together regionally and chronologically. When a researcher goes to a catalog of the holdings of an archive, a keyword search will not work well. The searcher needs to understand the hierarchy of the records system and work from the general to the specific to find records. In the archive the records are kept by Record Group Numbers; the archivists know them by heart, just like librarians know our call numbers.

Martin listed the most common uses of the records at the archives:

- Family history
- Maritime history
- Community and family history of Native Americans
- Legal research for litigation
- Scholarly study of American history

The archives has much for the family history researcher, including census records, land records, selective service and military records, ship passenger lists, immigration and naturalization papers, and records from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Bankruptcy records are a great source, too, as they tell much about ancestors' possessions.

He urged all libraries to get the third edition of the *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States*. He said most of our libraries had the first or second editions, which are quite dated now. The N.A.R.A. also has a number of other useful publications for sale.

Martin showed us a display of books whose authors did their research at the National Archives in Chicago. All of them used federal court records, a major part of the archives collection. Peter said that he hoped to sometimes have an authors group meet regularly at the archives.

After being shown through the archive permanent collection, in which records are constantly being moved into acid-free boxes, the archivists showed us a display of historical items spread

across a large table. Among the papers, books, rubber dentures, photographs, and scary objects, was a legal brief written in the hand of Abraham Lincoln, which we all got to hold (inside a plastic sleeve, of course). The rubber dentures were items from a patent case involving a dentist named Goodyear. One big volume had the hand-written transcript of Aaron Burr's trial (an Ohio case). The photographs were from an early twentieth century obscenity case. The scary objects were the remains of a Molotov cocktail and hand weapons submitted in the Chicago Seven trial. Also on the table were petitions for naturalization for Bob Hope and Enrico Fermi. These items suggest the many items of interest in the collection.

We finished the tour with a very interesting conversation. Peter, Martin, and the archivists told us how public use of the National Archives across the country has fallen drastically in the past ten years. Most of the microfilm readers sit empty much of the time now. The staff is seeking ways to draw the public back to the center and sought our ideas. Two groups they particularly want to recapture are family history researchers and students. Peter said that the archives staff would much like to work with high school history teachers to draw students for their history projects. He mentioned the hope that he would get an education liaison for his staff to work with high schools and colleges. We agreed that this would be a good idea.

Librarians can help. Let your genealogists know that there are readily available appointments now at the archives on almost any week day. Put up posters. Get the most recent *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States* into your collections. Tell your high school teachers that the Archives is eager to work with them. Call Peter Bunce, 773-948-9009, and plan a tour. It is an amazing place.

President's Letter

2006 CAGGNI Officers

President	Open
Vice President	Harve Mankopf
Treasurer	Beverly Smallwood
Secretary	Open
Publicist	Frank McGovern
Promotion	Dan Wertz
Membership Coordinator	Carolyn Meeker
Fund Raising Coordinator	Anne Jacobs
Web Master	Open
Newsletter Editor	Jim Cottrell
Newsletter Distribution	Sandy Franklin
AV Tech Team	Gerry Czadowski
	Beverly Smallwood
	Everett Butler
Meeting Coordinator	Charlie Ori
Archivist	Open
Lending Library	Open
Refreshments Coordinator	Chris Herrman

The above is the slate of officers for 2006. As you can see we have some openings.

We will be discussing these open positions in the November meeting. So think about what skills you possess that could be utilized by CAGGNI and step up to the plate.

The December planning meeting is usually dedicated to creating the schedule for next year. But, we already have a full schedule of programs for 2006. What I would like to propose for the December planning meeting is that we take a look at the work done in support of CAGGNI and evaluate its effectiveness. We should look at whether we want to continue some of the tasks, which may have become outdated or redundant. Perhaps there are some new things we should be doing instead. Please try to attend the planning meeting on December 3.

Carolyn Meeker

FamilySearch Website Revamped

The FamilySearch website has been moved to new computers and the site has been made over. If you have problems getting though with www.familysearch.org, try <http://www.familysearch.net> or <http://www.familysearch.com>.

There are some problems they are still working on. For instance, diacritics are not working in the IGI or the catalog.

Your 2006 Dues are Due!



Officers

President	Carolyn Meeker cmeeker8844@wowway.com
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Swedish Research Online

by Beverly Levine Smallwood

Swedish parish registers are being put online by Genline on a subscription basis. They offer a variety of subscription plans, both short and long term. If you'd like to give it a try, the Arlington Heights Memorial Library started a 6 month trial subscription in October. Other libraries with subscriptions include the Cook Memorial Library in Libertyville, the Swedish American Museum and North Park University Archives both in Chicago, and the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center in Rock Island.*

Genline offers the same records you can view on microfilm through the Family History Library. You can go to a specific register or a specific page in a register, but there are no name indexes. Swedish research has not changed, just the access to the records.

To learn more about how to use those records, please consult:

Carl-Erik Johansson *Cradled In Sweden: A Practical Help to Genealogical Research In Swedish Records* (Everton, 1995) excellent research guide.

Per Clemensson & Kjell Andersson, *Your Swedish Roots – a step by step handbook*, (Provo, UT: Ancestry, 2004)

There are starting to be some finding aids to get you into the records. One such resource is Emibas a new CD containing emigration data taken from the church records. It is available for purchase at www.genlineshop.com for \$96. A search for your immigrant ancestor might yield: name, title/occupation, gender, birth date, birth parish, marital status, place of residence, date of emigration, and destination. The CD contains 1.1 million emigrants from more than 2300 parishes or approximately 75% of all Swedes who emigrated between 1845 and 1930.

[Figure 1] This screenshot shows: Lindsten Hammarström, Johanna

Sofia

4



Piga (unmarried woman)
b. 2/8/1844 in Linderås,
Jönköpings län (Småland)
Emigrated 4/29/1870
From Linderås Ödegård Lunden,
Linderås, Jönköpings län (Småland)
To Nordamerika
Source: Household Examination
Roll, p. 231

specific geographic order. Look at the beginning of the volume for the order.

This makes it very difficult to use. Lucky for us, some

of the counties have been inventoried with reference to the specific Genline GID (image) number. Unfortunately, these are online in the Swedish area of Genline. Here's how you can get them:

Log In, then click on "Svenska" to switch to the Swedish area. [Figure 2] Now click on "Medlemsiddan" (member pages). [Figure 3] Next, click on



Genline FamilyFinder

Emibas migration file ID: Linderås F 1870 015

Now, go to Genline, open available records from Linderås, Jönköpings län, and locate the Household Examination Rolls covering 4/29/1870. Open AI:15 Husförhör 1868-1871 and go to page 231 to locate her last entry in the Household Examination Roll. You now have what you need to move back through the registers. Next, open the birth registers (C:5 Födde, Död 1843-1861) and page through until you find her birth listed in 1844.

The next problem is birth, marriage, and death registers were only filmed/digitized up to 1860. From 1860 to 1920, these records are only currently available on the county level in the form of extracted entries submitted to the Statistical Central Bureau (SCB). The pages, one or more from each parish for each type of record, are filed by record type and then in a

Special Offers

"Ta del av dina medlemsförmåner" [Figure 4] and view the list of available indexes. [Figure 5]

Some of these are zipped pdf files and others are spreadsheets. Now look for the record type, year, and parish to get the GID number to open. This way you can go directly to the pages you want to view. Not a name index, but a huge shortcut.

Other online helpers can be found under the "Resources" tab on the main English page. [Figure 6] Here you'll find pdf Extraction Forms and Dictionary & Abbreviations.

Don't be afraid to start your Swedish research – either with a trail subscription or at a nearby library with a subscription.

* call North Park to set up an appointment to use Genline; The Swedish American Museum's Nordic Family Research Center is open



between noon and 3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. A volunteer is available to assist you. In addition to Genline, the museum also has Emibas CD, Passenger List CD, and the 1890 Census CD.

Medlemssidorna - Inloggad

Hej Beverly, välkommen till Genlines medlems avdelning.

Som **Medlem** kan du:

- [Beställa - Abonnemang och andra produkter](#)
- [Ändra dina uppgifter](#)
- [Ta del av dina medlemsförmåner](#)



Figure 4

Viktigt:

Kontrollera alltid om det material som du är intresserad av, finns med i Genlines Bildarkiv, innan du beställer ett abonnemang!

Medlemssidorna - Medlemsförmåner

Här finner du våra medlemsförmåner.

Ladda hem register över _sc Jönköping (SCB)	▲
_sc_jonkoping.zip	
Ladda hem register över _sc Kalmar (SCB)	▲
_sc_kalmar_register i .zip format	
Ladda hem register över _sc Stockholm (SCB)	▲
_sc_stockholm(SCB).xls	
Ladda hem register över __sc_Östergötland (SCB)	▲
_sc_ostergotland.zip	

Figure 5

[Ladda hem Excel Viewer](#)

[Ladda hem WinZip](#)

Resources

Articles

Here are some articles about *genline* and other genealogical topics.

Figure 6

[Books, Magazines, Radio, & CD-rom](#)

Here are some other media sources that will help you with your Genealogical research.

[Dictionary & Abbreviations](#)

Here is a Swedish-English Dictionary including abbreviations to assist you while doing your genealogical research with the Swedish Church Records archive.

[Extraction Forms](#)

Downloadable extraction forms in PDF format in order to help you document and organize your genealogical research.

[Find *genline* at...](#)

Libraries, organizations, archives and more... This is a list of the locations in Sweden where you can access *genline's* service.

[Partners](#)

Here are the partners in which *genline* collaborate with.

[Websites](#)

Here are some websites that will help you with your Genealogical research.

Other Group Events *compiled by Beverly Levine Smallwood*

17 Nov 2005 - ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

**Anne Shaughnessy - Genealogical Research
at the Mt. Prospect Library**

Northwest Suburban Council of Genealogists

<http://www.mtprospect.org/nsgs/>

17 Nov 2005 - ELGIN

BILL BLOHM

The Web Guide to Your Family History

Elgin Genealogical Society

<http://www.elginarea.org/egs/>

19 Nov 2005 - RICHMOND, IL

**Paul Milner - Effective Use of England's
National Archives**

BIGWILL

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~wiilbig/meet.htm>

20 Nov 2005 - SKOKIE

**Barry Finkel - Unusual Sources of Genea-
logical Information: Undiscovered Riches**

Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsi/index.htm>

21 Nov 2005 - BEACH PARK, IL

MAUREEN BRADY

Cook County Births, Marriages & Deaths

Zion Genealogical Society

[http://wkkhome.northstarnet.org/zion/
zgsmeeting.html](http://wkkhome.northstarnet.org/zion/zgsmeeting.html)

27 Nov 2005 - CHICAGO 1-3 P.M.

Irish American Heritage Center

Genealogy Committee Meeting

<http://www.irishamhc.com/programs.asp#history>

03 DEC 2005 - NEWBERRY LIBRARY

**Sharing your Chicago Traditions -
A Holiday Celebration**

Chicago Genealogical Society

<http://chgogs.org/calendar.html>

10 DEC 2005 - HAZEL CREST

JACKIE TORRANCE

Scottish Immigration Patterns

South Suburban Genealogical & Historical Society

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ssgsh/>

05 JAN 2006 - SKOKIE

Judy Frazin - Beginner's Workshop

Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsi/index.htm>

10 JAN 2006 - MUNDELEIN

Beverly Levine Smallwood

21st Century Census Tools

Lake County Genealogical Society

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~illcgs>

11 JAN 2006 - WINFIELD, IL

**Membership - How Do You Share
the Results of Your Research?**

DuPage County Genealogical Society

<http://www.dcgsg.org/>

14 JAN 2006 - HAZEL CREST

**You Show Me Yours, I'll Show You Mine -
Annual Show 'n Tell**

South Suburban Genealogical & Historical Society

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ssgsh/>

19 JAN 2006 - ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Genealogy Jeopardy

Northwest Suburban Council of Genealogists

<http://www.mtprospect.org/nsgs/>

21 JAN 2006 - RICHMOND, IL

Show 'N' Share Family History

BIGWILL

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~wiilbig/meet.htm>

22 JAN 2006 - CHICAGO

Judy Frazin - Beginner's Workshop

Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsi/index.htm>

26 JAN 2006 - CHICAGO 6 P.M.

GARY MOKOTOFF

What's New in Jewish Genealogy?

Newberry Library

[http://www.newberry.org/genealogy/
genealogyevents.html#mokotoff](http://www.newberry.org/genealogy/genealogyevents.html#mokotoff)

29 JAN 2006 - SKOKIE

Ask the Experts

Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois

<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgsi/index.htm>

Workshops & Conferences

09-13 JAN 2006 - SALT LAKE CITY

Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy

FEATURING JAY VERKLER & JOHN PHILIP COLLETTA, PH.D.

<http://www.infouga.org/slc.aspx>

Other Group Events

04 MAR 2006 - ST. CHARLES

31st Annual Conference

DuPage County Genealogical Society

FEATURING JOHN KONVALINKA, ELIZABETH KELLEY KERSTENS,
CRAIG PFANNKUCHE, & MIKE KARSEN

<http://www.dcgcs.org/>

01 APR 2006 - AUSTIN, IN

Indiana Genealogical Society Annual Conference

FEATURING DIANE VANSKIVER GAGEL, NAOMI SEXTON,
DOROTHY RICE & KANDIE ADKINSON

<http://www.indgensoc.org/conference.html>

21-22 APR 2006 - STEVENS POINT, WI

Gene-A-Rama - John Konvalinka

Wisconsin State Genealogical Society

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~wsgs/>

21-22 APR 2006 - SPRINGFIELD, IL

Illinois State Archives Tour and Death Certificate Assistance Program

Pre-register by April 15th

[http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilsgs/spwkshp/
06SPregistration.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilsgs/spwkshp/06SPregistration.html)

22 APR 2006 - QUAD CITIES

32nd Annual Quad Cities Genealogical Conference

JAMES L. HANSON, REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

Wisconsin Historical Society

[http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilbgsrim/news/
2006GenConference.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilbgsrim/news/2006GenConference.html)

07-10 JUN 2006 - CHICAGO!

CAGGNI is among the Consortia hosting the National Genealogical Society Conference

<http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/2006Chicago.cfm>

AUG 30-SEP 2, 2006 - BOSTON

Federation of Genealogical Societies and New England Historic Genealogical Society Conference

<http://www.fgs.org/2006conf/FGS-2006.htm>

AUG 15-18, 2007 - FORT WAYNE

Federation of Genealogical Societies and Allen County Public Library Conference

<http://www.fgs.org/2007conf/FGS-2007.htm>

Good Research Opportunity at NARA

The following was submitted for the newsletter by Judy and Weldon Johnson.

National Archives-Great Lakes Region Announces New Research Hours Every Month on First Saturday

History students, teachers, historians, local history buffs who can't take off from work, and genealogists throughout the Midwest have a new opportunity. The National Archives and Records Administration - Great Lakes Region, at 7358 South Pulaski Road in Chicago, will begin offering public research hours on the first Saturday of every month beginning Saturday, November 5, 2005. Researchers will be able to examine original historical documents of the United States Government and microfilm copies of commonly used federal records, such as the 1790-1930 census schedules, from 8:00 AM through 4:15 PM on the first Saturday of every month.

The National Archives, keeper of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, has 12 regional offices that preserve and make available for public viewing the historical documents created by the Federal courts and U.S. Government agencies. The National Archives and Records Administration's Great Lakes Region encompasses Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, and preserves historical records from Federal courts and agencies in those six states from 1800 through the 1990s. Historical records are open for public research use by persons age 14 and older. Students younger than 14 may also visit to conduct historical research with an adult accompanying them.

Public research hours on the first Saturday will be offered at least until May 2006, based upon researcher visitation on those first Saturdays during the next six months.

Bring a friend or neighbor with you and visit us - a national treasure within the local setting of Chicago! Our building is located one block west of Pulaski Road on 75th Street, just north of Richard J. Daley City College.

For more information, call Peter W. Bunce, Director of Archival Operations, at 773-948-9009, or contact him at chicago.archives@nara.gov.

National Archives and Records Administration-Great Lakes Region

7358 South Pulaski Road

Chicago, IL 60629-5898

(773) 948-9001

<mailto:chicago.archives@nara.gov>

Links Around the World by Frank McGovern & Dan Wertz

Illinois State Library. About SLIC. The Statewide Illinois Library Catalog, known as SLIC, is Illinois' first all inclusive state wide union catalog that investigates WorldCat and the Illinois Library Systems' local consortial OPACs, to provide both shelf status and interlibrary loan capabilities in a single searchable interface:

<http://findit.ilsos.net/OCLC>

Library Ireland is a completely FREE service, offering access to an ever expanding collection of out-of-print books and other Irish material, which will prove useful to the reader and the researcher alike.

<http://www.libraryireland.com>

Passenger lists and Emigrant ships from Norway Heritage. All you want to know about a ship or a ship company that brought emigrants from Norway to the new world.

<http://www.norwayheritage.com/ships>

The London Burial Grounds. Click on INTRODUCTION to this site. An interesting source of information.

<http://www.doubleo.fsnet.co.uk/bgpage1.htm>

Some message boards contain lots of annoying ad banners and pop-up ads. Cousinconnect.com does not allow any banners or pop-up ads. This gives you a more pleasant browsing experience. Search, submit and browse genealogy queries. Locate distant cousins, missing people and lost military buddies.

<http://www.cousinconnect.com>

eTips subscribers can choose from a wide variety of eTip topics in the following categories. Internet, computing and general interest subjects. Subscribe to their news letter and browse everyday computing.

A site for everyone.

<http://etips.dummies.com/optin.asp?sid=XWNVGQUHWF&id=28>

The Connecticut State Library has set up a database of Connecticut General Assembly Members from 1776 to present, it's available at

<http://www.cslib.org/connga.asp>

It also includes members of the 1902 and 1965 Constitutional Conventions. You may search the

database by last name or by town (must be full town name; Windsor does not find East Windsor). A search for Windsor finds a table of information sorted by last name, with name, chamber, town, party, years served, and date of death. (for most of the older records there is no data for the date of death.)

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission State Blog They call it an online news forum, but it looks like a blog complete with RSS feed. It's new so there's not a whole lot there yet. The new resource is called The Open Record and it is available at:

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/theopenrecord>

The Winona Newspaper Project — There's now a searchable archive for three old newspapers of Winona, Minnesota. The newspapers, available at

<http://www.winona.edu/library/databases/winonanewspaperproject.htm>

include the Winona Argus, the Winona Daily Republican and the Winona Republican Herald. The newspapers span 125,000 pages but it is hard to tell from the overview page if the archive is actually complete.

The papers may be browsed or searched. The software for reviewing the archive prefers Internet Explored but seems to work fine with Firefox.

Searched all publications for the word mining and got over 3900 results. Results include date, number of words in the article, and the location of the article in the paper.

Click on the headline and the article itself will pop up in a new window. Despite warnings about the paper quality, all articles were found and were easy to read.

We wish to thank Christine Clark and Anna Jacobs for contributing links to, Links Around the World. It is good to see that members are contributing.

We need more participation. Remember group participation makes every group grow.

Send your links to dan.wertz@comcast.net or mcgovern34@hotmail.com

The Internet and Critical Thinking

by Beverly Levine Smallwood

I read an interesting, and disturbing, article on Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter this week. It seems that a company is selling software to create bogus families that you can then put up on your website. Why, you ask, would someone be interested in posting fake family data? Well, the purpose is to fool search engines into listing your site, drive unsuspecting traffic to the site, and, hopefully, some of the visitors will click on the advertising you've posted there.

Even more illuminating were the

logical sequence and at logical ages? Check the sources yourself. Do they say what the compiler thinks they say? How many researchers are really good at reading the old handwriting? Are you? How careful was the researcher? Did they draw carefully reasoned conclusions or did they shoehorn together stuff they downloaded from other people? If you cannot answer these questions, you should not be adding them to your family.

In addition to the article reprint, I am including the *NGS Standards For Sound Genealogical Research* to

its purpose. After purchasing this software for \$75, you are advised to create a bogus genealogy site and put affiliate ads on it to defray the expenses. Then you upload fantasy family trees created by the FakeFamily.com software. As the web site says:

Fake Family will generate content that is 100% unique. The content created is seen by people as being REAL. There is no dispute about that. And, SO WILL THE SEARCH ENGINES.

The same web page also says:

Yeah, this is an unusual take on

content. But you need to THINK unusual to beat the engines. Let this soak in and you'll find that

Why, you ask, would someone be interested in posting fake family data?

comments made to the article. One of the people responsible for this product was defending his product. He claims to be an avid genealogist. The biggest problem I can see with this scheme is that it is creating false data that, if it seems to fit your interests, might lead you to waste time and money before you realize that it is wholly fake.

You can read the full article and the comments back and forth at http://eogn.typepad.com/eogn.typepad.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2005/11/generating_fake.html. The text of the article is reprinted below.

This should make clear to you that you cannot just take compiled "genealogies" and plug them into your database. Use anything you find of a secondary nature – indexes, genealogies, gedcoms, etc. – as a clue only. Follow up with solid research to verify the data and be sure it fits what you know about your family before adding them into your tree. I've seen too many people plug in stuff they found on the IGI or Ancestral File or any of the user submitted gedcom sites. You need to critically examine these findings. Are there sources? Are the dates and places credible? Did things take place in a

reinforce what you should be doing. If you follow these standards, you won't be fooled by these fake pedigrees or plain old mistakes found in legitimate pedigrees.

The following article is from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright 2005 by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com>.

Generating Fake Family Trees Automatically

A new scam is on the Internet: a piece of software that will create bogus family trees to be uploaded to your web site. Why would anyone want to do that? The complete answer is a bit convoluted, but the short answer is to boost your web site higher in the search engine ratings so that gullible people will see the ads on your site. In fact, the program's advertising boasts that you can "create unique, non-duplicate content that millions of people search for, AND that neither humans nor search engines can tell is 'real' or not."

FakeFamily.com is very open about

we're speaking the truth.

On another page, the web site states:

Fake Family creates gedcom files that fit the standard gedcom format. This is the file format that allows interfacing with any standard "gedcom to html" program. The thing about a family tree created with Fake Family is that the data all fits. For example, names are "era specific" - meaning, you will get more "Orville" and "Bertha" names in the 1880s than the 1980s. Infant mortality, marriage rates, migration data is also encoded (and more).

You import the GEDCOM file created by the FakeFamily software into almost any genealogy program and tell that program to create HTML files. You then upload those HTML files to your web site that contains advertisements. Google, Yahoo, and the other search engines will eventually discover the site and decide that it is unique content. The site's bogus content will be added to the search engines.

If someone in the future searches for "John Brown" and you have a person on your fake genealogy web site named John Brown, the search engine

The Internet and Critical Thinking (Cont)

will point the gullible searcher to your site, where he or she will see your ads. You then hope that they will click on an ad and buy something, and then you get paid. Not a bad scam: using fake data to entice people to buy something!

The owner of FakeFamily.com obviously feels no remorse and even brags:

Which is more important: Verifying that the “mesothelioma” information on your scraped page is “valid” or that some person is really your great great grandpa? Come on. I’ve NEVER seen anyone (certainly not “black hat”) have an issue with the validity of any other content.

When I first read the information on this web site, I thought it was someone’s idea of a practical joke. After re-reading several times, I have changed my mind. There seems to be no humor and no punch line. Apparently this fast buck artist really wants to flood the Internet with bogus genealogy material, all for the purpose of making easy money.

I tried to see who registered the domain name of FakeFamily.com but found it registered to Domains by Proxy, Inc., a company that specializes in registering domain names by proxy in order to hide the names and addresses of the true owner(s).

I normally take new programs and web sites for a “test drive” and use them myself before writing about them. However, I am not going to do that this time. I’ll save my \$75.00, the price to obtain the software that generates bogus family trees. If you decide to waste your money on this scheme, please let me know how you make out.

To get a feel for the purpose of this FakeFamily.com site, read this page first: <http://fakefamily.com/reply.htm>

Then read these pages:

<http://www.fakefamily.com/members/fake.php>

<http://www.fakefamily.com/members/familytree/index.htm>

<http://www.fakefamily.com/>

[members/](#)

So, let me ask a couple of questions:

1. Are you willing to be known as someone who places bogus information on the Internet?

2. Are you willing to be known as someone who is gullible enough to pay \$75 for this software?

Serious genealogists have always preached, “Verify your sources!” If this software gets loose on the Internet, the need to verify every piece of information will be more important than ever.

As always, let the buyer - and the genealogist - beware!

UPDATE: A few hours after posting this article on the daily newsletter web site, I was contacted by one of the developers of FakeFamily.com. As you might imagine, he was not happy with my article. He disputes several of my assumptions and is adamant that this program is no scam. I suggested that he post his explanation for all to read. After an exchange of e-mails, he has done so on his own web site.

There is a new and rather detailed explanation of the purpose of fakefamily.com available now at <http://www.FakeFamily.com>. I would invite you to read that information now before making any assumptions about this program.

He also pointed out that there is a larger reply written to someone else at: <http://www.fakefamily.com/reply2.htm>. I would invite you to read that page as well.

Please read both of those pages and then make up your own mind as to the intent of this program.

Thank you.

Posted by Dick Eastman on November 02, 2005

Standards For Sound Genealogical Research

Recommended by the National Genealogical Society

Remembering always that they are

engaged in a quest for truth, family history researchers consistently—

- Record the source for each item of information they collect.
- Test every hypothesis or theory against credible evidence, and reject those that are not supported by the evidence.

- Seek original records, or reproduced images of them when there is reasonable assurance they have not been altered, as the basis for their research conclusions.

- Use compilations, communications and published works, whether paper or electronic, primarily for their value as guides to locating the original records.

- State something as a fact only when it is supported by convincing evidence, and identify the evidence when communicating the fact to others.

- Limit with words like “probable” or “possible” any statement that is based on less than convincing evidence, and state the reasons for concluding that it is probable or possible.

- Avoid misleading other researchers by either intentionally or carelessly distributing or publishing inaccurate information.

- State carefully and honestly the results of their own research, and acknowledge all use of other researchers’ work.

- Recognize the collegial nature of genealogical research by making their work available to others through publication, or by placing copies in appropriate libraries or repositories, and by welcoming critical comment.

- Consider with open minds new evidence or the comments of others on their work and the conclusions they have reached.

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