



April 2009

Checklist for the organizationally challenged

Well, the time has come! It is our FOURTH month of organization checklists. Is it an editorial comment on our current performance that today's list just happens to appear on APRIL FOOL'S DAY? I have already heard great tales of lamentations from several of you who are organizationally "challenged" shall we say? Well, fear not! You can learn to become organized. You can do it! This month's program provides opportunities to venture out to research libraries, continue that dreaded filing, and to begin working more closely with distant family members.

WEEK ONE: 1-4 APRIL 2009



- Learn to use online versions of library catalogs.** Since this is a short week, Ol' Myrt will give you a break in your assignments. Use World Cat www.worldcat.org to view the online catalog of over 10,000 libraries.



Most genealogical materials are in the reference section of a library, and as a result do not normally circulate the books, maps, microfilm and microfiche in their genealogy departments. At least you'll now know where to find a book during an upcoming research trip. Sometimes, if you are lucky, the distant library may allow ILL Interlibrary loan.

WHAT IS ILL?

Interlibrary Loan is a method for borrowing a book you find in a distant library's online catalog. First make a note of the title, author, call number and library contact info. Then stop by the reference desk at your local public library and process your request in person. Some libraries charge a small handling fee, but most provide the ILL service for free. Some materials are restricted and may only be viewed in your local library once they arrive from that distant library. Other materials may be checked out as you would normally do with other books from your local library.

Some genealogy libraries are private, and may even charge a fee for you to do research there. Whatever the case, you can find out more by visiting the website of the library in question.

- Create research folders for each library you plan to visit.** Yes, Ol' Myrt here realizes that she said FOLDERS and not BINDERS. Keep these in a drawer or divider close to your printer. Then, as you come across an entry for a resource you wish to view at a library, make a print out, quickly note your research goal, and file the page in the appropriate library's folder.



Believe me, this works well even if you don't think you'll get to the library for a year or so. When I lived in Florida, I kept one for the Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City, and when the printouts hit about 50-60, I decided it was time to go visit the FHL again. Even now that I live here in Salt Lake, I use the same old folder to hold printouts so I can remember what I want to look at the next time I plan to visit the FHL.

This folder system worked well for Ol' Myrt when my friend Audrey invited me on the spur of the moment to go to Pennsylvania for her Rittenhouse family reunion. I could easily grab my file folder for the PA State Library at Harrisburg, with the printouts for about 18 books that did not circulate through interlibrary loan. Being so "organized" gave me more time to finish laundry and pack for the trip.



BRIGHT IDEA Consider much wealth is buried in a library's vertical files. Treasures are to be found in the vertical files in the genealogy department of the libraries you plan to visit. They usually contain unpublished items and are typically filed in surname folders in filing cabinets next to the book stacks.

On that Rittenhouse family reunion trip to Pennsylvania (in the late 1990s), Ol' Myrt here barely made it to the bookshelves at the Pennsylvania State Library, because I spent so much time in the vertical files. I found hand-written family group sheets and pedigree charts for most of my early Pennsylvania Welsh Quaker families submitted by a man from Alabama in the late 1960s. Using these as worksheets, I was better able to navigate the challenges of the patronymic naming system used by my ancestors in the late 1600s when locating original documents to prove the lineage assumptions. The researcher in 1960 only made sweeping statements about sources such as "US Federal Census Records" without specifying the year and page number.

Although the researcher in Alabama was no longer living at the address listed on the cover pages of his library submissions, you can believe Ol' Myrt sent up prayers on his behalf, as thanks for the help that dear man gave me 30 years after he submitted his work to the library.



At the Orlando Public Library, a short 2-hour jaunt from my old home in Bradenton, Florida, the vertical files include photocopies of marriage records, old diaries, letters of request for information about an ancestor and all sorts of items.

At the Library of Congress Local History and Genealogy Reading Room in the mid 1980s, Ol' Myrt inquired of the librarian about her Hans Joist HITE ancestry. The librarian pulled papers from the vertical files behind her desk submitted by Hank Z. Jones prior to his publishing a [variety of books](#) on the early Palatine migrations to

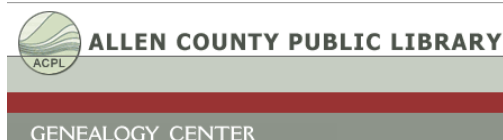
America. This was my first clue that there were challenges to the family tradition that HITE came from France on his own ships "filled with gold." In fact, Jones discovered HITE came from Germany, in the first wave of Palatines as did my Conrad WEISER.

You simply won't know what's in genealogy vertical files until you look.

SOME USEFUL GENEALOGY COLLECTIONS are found at the following libraries in the United States see also: www.gwest.org/gen_libs.htm, last updated 2 April 2009.

Allen County Public Library

www.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/index.html



Brigham Young University – Harold B. Lee Library www.lib.byu.edu

California State Library – Sutro

www.library.ca.gov/collections/#sutro



DAR Library www.dar.org

Dallas Public Library www.dallaslibrary.org



Family History Library www.FamilySearch.org

Godfrey Memorial Library www.godfrey.org

Library of Congress – Local History & Genealogy Reading Room www.loc.gov

Mid-Continent www.mcpl.lib.mo.us

Newberry Library www.newberry.org



New England Historic Genealogical Society Library
www.newenglandancestors.org

New York Public Library www.nypl.org

WEEK TWO: 5-11 APRIL 2009



- Continue to list all source documents for each named individual in your computer's genealogy program, working through your 3-ring binders M-R. Procrastinators: That's M through R inclusive!!! For the organizationally challenged, go back and complete the previously unfinished binders. In other words, make a big push to get the filing work done.

WEEK THREE: 12-18 APRIL 2009



- Begin writing to other family members for additional input. Now that a great deal of your own paperwork is beginning to get organized, it is time to involve family members. Our goals here are many, but can best be summarized as follows:
- Firm up family ties by establishing and improving communication.
 - Obtain pertinent information about births, marriages and deaths as they occur among distant relatives.
 - Obtain copies of old photos, bible entries, photos of family heirlooms and accompanying stories.

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Check for long lost relatives and friends of the family using the telephone book search engines at places like:

- www.yahoo.com (Click on "People Search.") You can specify an area of the country, or do an all inclusive search. This is also a great place to find people

for military or class reunions.

Share treasured family photos by using www.SmileBox.com. It has a free component, and you'll love the design templates that make it as easy as "drag and drop" to place photos in beautiful pages, add music and share with others.

OBTAIN PERTINENT INFORMATION

My good friend Leland Meitzler, editor of Everton's *Genealogical Helper Magazine* has long suggested that the best way to get someone to respond to your request for information is to incorrectly state the wife's birth date. He predicts you'll get a quick response.

Ol' Myrt here suggests you DO NOT send a family group sheet, as it is confusing to non-genealogists and looks mighty intimidating. After all, we're hoping to improve communications and obtain pertinent information, so let's make it easy. Copy and paste the following into email, and that should get the ball rolling.

Your full name:

Your birth date:

Your birth place:

Something you remember from your childhood:

Educational background:

Your occupation:

Marriage date:

Marriage place:

Your Spouse's Full Name:

Your Spouse's birth date:

Your Spouse's birth place:

Something fun you remember from your courtship or early marriage:



BRIGHT IDEA Remember, we get more with honey than we do with lemons, so be very positive and appreciative in all communications. Maybe you've got the goal of compiling information and family group photos for each sibling and first cousin to publish and distribute at the family reunion this summer.

That is a worthwhile goal, and places a deadline (two weeks before the reunion) that is external to your conversation. That reunion deadline is pretty much fixed in stone, but replies to your email alone might not be enough impetus for a prompt reply without that approaching deadline. No one wants to feel left out.

From that family group photo, you can crop individual pics for family members and include that in your genealogy management program. That is a lot easier than asking for individual photos of each person in the family.

OBTAIN COPIES OF OLD PHOTOS, BIBLE ENTRIES AND HEIRLOOMS FROM LIVING RELATIVES



This is going to be a tough task, as it involves more than a reply to your fill-in-the-blank email request. So Ol' Myrt recommends pushing for this type of "additional effort" information once you've established a better rapport with those sometimes less-than-cooperative distant relatives. This is something that cannot be scheduled. Trust your intuition, and figure out creative ways to motivate your cousins to scan the old bible or take a digital photo of great-grandmother's quilt.

Your best bet is to begin sharing your own digital copies of ancestor portraits and source documents like a military discharge paper and marriage certificates.

WEEK FOUR: 19-25 APRIL 2009



- Finish organizing all those documents for surnames **Q-Z**. The past few months you've been putting these in top leading sheet protectors, and placing them in the folders or three-ring binders with the correct family group sheets! If you have been following along, you will ACTUALLY be caught up in your filing, provided you *never* do any more genealogy research ever again! (Not!)



BRIGHT IDEA File info for a particular ancestor in chronological order in the appropriate surname binder.

Several have written and inquired what to do if you have multiple marriages for an individual. SO follow that rule – chronological order. Fortunately for all but one ancestor, I've descended through the first wife. In the case of my Union Civil War veteran William Gist FROMAN, we descend through the second wife, as he was divorced from his first wife. So what did Ol' Myrt do?

Ol' Myrt here used those individual stick-on tabs to clearly label the first and second marriages. Consider:

- Redi-Tag 39020 Printable Laser Index Tabs, self-stick plastic (color)
- Redi-Tag 39017 Printable Laser Index Tabs, self-stick plastic (white)
- Avery Dennison Self-Adhesive Write-On Index Tabs



WEEK FIVE: 26-30 APRIL 2009



ward compatible, I'll never know. But I digress.)

Learn to use your scanner, or make plans to purchase one within a month or so. Since this is a short week, it is perfect time to devote to a quick, but necessary element of organizing your office equipment. Many of us have old, lower-resolution scanners than don't really do the job. Maybe you never got it working after you purchased the new computer with the Vista operating system. (Why Microsoft didn't make the drivers backward compatible, I'll never know. But I digress.)

The bottom line is – get your scanner working. Better yet, get a new one.

Ol' Myrt used to hate the thought of an all-in-one printer that also scans, copies and faxes. The fear was that if one part broke down, I'd be stuck. But the practice of using an HP Office Jet 7310 All-in-One for years has taught me otherwise. Excellent service with HP all-in-ones has been the norm for Ol' Myrt here, and everyone I've discussed this with has had the same quality service. So check things out at www.hp.com, then, find the best price at a local store to save shipping costs.

SUMMARY – APRIL 2009



This month, we've accomplished typing the information from 1/4 of your source documents into your genealogy management program, and filing the balance of your source documents. BRAVO!

We've also begun improving communications with our distant relatives. This is an ongoing process, and one that is surely mutually beneficial. Readers have reported that after years of communication, a cousin finally mentioned, "You know, I've got this old family bible on the Anderson side. Maybe you'd like to take a look at it."

THAT is just the sort of sharing genealogists hope to accomplish!