



February 2009

Organization Checklist

As my DearMYRTLE's Salt Lake Study Group members observed when they visited my new home last month for our regular meeting, Ol' Myrt here still has about 15 unopened packing boxes chock full of genealogy files to be put away. Gosh I've lived in this house since the end of October, you'd think I COULD get around to it.

Many have written to share their experiences. January's checklist challenged us to do some of the things we've been putting off for a rainy day. Some of you stuck in the heavy snows this winter, have written to say that you've apparently had more time than the rest of us to organize your computer desk and get papers filed! CONGRATS to all on the progress you've made!

Committed Reader (Maybe we should all be committed??)

From: Colleen

DearMYRTLE,

I just wanted to drop a note to thank you for posting your checklist for getting organized! I'm bound and determined to get my entire house organized by the end of this weekend, so that I can focus the rest of the month on revamping my genealogy stuff. I've already done the cabinets under the sinks last weekend, and cleaned the garage, took down the Christmas stuff and got everything into storage boxes (except the one candle that I overlooked until after it was all packed and put away...there's always ONE stray item!) I cleaned out the computer desk drawer (which gets piled high when I get tired of it covering up the desk!) and will file it all away when I sort through the filing cabinet). I only have the hall closet, computer room closet, and two kitchen junk drawers to go through and I'm done. **THEN I can start on your**

wonderful checklist. It sounds like the binder system I currently use is similar to yours, and I will tweak it a bit with the oversized tabs and replacing the filing pockets with archival sheet protectors (I have but one original document and only a few copies of original documents which are in archival protectors already, so the rest is just stuff printed from the Web). I agreed with your "Not Proven" tactic too, as each surname section has a tab marked "Speculations" with info not proven.

Filing Correspondence

From: Sherry

DearMYRTLE,

How do you file correspondence? Those that fall under specific families are easy, but what about the ones that cover several families or generations?

DearSHERRY,

Certainly the letters in question could be scanned and attached to each person mentioned using the multi-media option of your genealogy management program. But when it comes to filing, Ol' Myrt here says HOW can you NOT make copies, and place them in all applicable family notebooks? If you were looking at the Smith Family Notebook, but the letter about the both the Smith and the Player side of the family wasn't copied and placed there, you wouldn't really have ALL the info for reviewing the Smith family, would you?

Ol' Myrt here does not think this is too much photocopying. Remember, you want each notebook to read like a coffee table book, without your reader having to run to all distant parts of your home office looking for additional info. Otherwise, they simply will miss the boat.

Everything?

From: Debbie

DearMYRTLE,

I am reading your January Organization [Checklist]. (OK, I am getting started a little late, but like to believe there is hope to catch up.) I have always been intrigued by the "binder method", liking the way it would keep things together, and dreaming of having my work in a shape that others could enjoy it, but I have been overwhelmed by the number of binders it might take. Do you put ALL your notes, documents, and

materials into the binders? Meaning, if I currently have 12 file drawers of information I would convert that all into bookshelf space? I am sure as you do I have not only census records, birth and death certificates, obituaries, and the like – I also have 10 pages copied from a published family history, a copy of a 30 page cemetery transcription, printed emails and letters from other researchers, notes from my aunt who researched for 25 years, and so on. One of my primary surnames takes half a file drawer. Does this all go (organized of course) into a binder???. And EVERY page does into an archival sleeve? Or, do you pick and choose – putting only the most important evidence and documents into the binders. (Let's face it – NO ONE, even my interested and beloved sister, wants to read thousands of pages regarding the Marvel family.)

DearDEBBIE,

Yes, I have changed from file drawers to notebooks & sheet protectors, so that the papers won't fall out and get disorganized. Consider also, that if a notebook gets separated from the pack, all information pertinent to a family will be in that notebook. I should remind you that I too, have gathered quite a bit on some surnames, including published books. In those cases the surname extends over several notebooks, including two that comprise more than one entire shelf. Ol' Myrt here is also careful to place the related published surname books and autobiographies on the shelf interfiled with the appropriate notebooks.

Clear-view Binders: Using Charts as Table of Contents

From: Virginia

DearMYRTLE,

I enjoyed the [Jan 2009 checklist] article, and picked up some fresh ideas for my own binder system. Since you mention using the cover of a clear-view binder for a table of contents, you will be interested in the photo of similar binder covers with charts as tables of contents in the Wholly Genes Visual Chartform forum . This thread is part of an ongoing discussion on making one-page charts, including Mike Talbot's very popular thread (close to 10,000 views) with his delightful creative-composite charts."

Siblings

From: Christina

DearMYRTLE,

What do you do when you collect information on the siblings of your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents including their children and grandchildren? How are these things filed in your notebook system?

DearCHRISTINA,

The information, including scanned images of source documents is kept in my genealogy management program. Ol' Myrt here files the information on the siblings (but not their children and grandchildren) in the appropriate surname notebook, behind a tab labeled "collateral lines" in birth order.

While my genealogy program tracks the information on the siblings' children and grandchildren, my notebooks do not include that information, as they are strictly for ancestral connections. It could be argued that this is a weakness of my notebook system, since some of the best genealogy breakthroughs have come through those who descend through a common ancestor. Well, my genealogy program manages that, but my "coffee table" genealogy notebooks work just fine for my children and grandchildren mentioned therein.

WEEK ONE: 1-7 February 2009



If you already have a genealogy program, you can REST UP this week! Or better yet, buy that new one you've been dreaming about and transfer your data using the GEDCOM option.

Decide on a genealogy management program, if you don't have one already. Check out all the features of your new program.

Please do not try to reinvent the wheel using Word or Excel to track your ancestry. Use a genealogy program, designed by genealogists who know how you must not only type in data about each ancestor, but print out a variety of reports in paper or electronic format to share with family members. Most programs have free downloadable demos.

GEDCOM is the universal file format for genealogy programs.

This means you'll save yourself a lot of typing since the program is intelligent enough to import GEDCOM (generic genealogy data) files of your distant cousin's data. You'll also be able to upload GEDCOM file to share with cousins directly or through major GEDCOM databases on in the Internet such as:

☞ Ancestry World Tree
www.ancestry.com

☞ Family Tree Maker's World Family Tree
www.familytree.com

☞ Pedigree Resource File
www.familysearch.org

☞ RootsWeb's WorldConnect
www.rootsweb.com

For a fairly comprehensive list of software see [Cyndi's List - Software](#) .

Some likely candidates include:

☞ Ancestral Quest www.ancquest.com This bridges perfectly with new.FamilySearch.org.

☞ Brother's Keeper (shareware)
www.bkwin.org

☞ DoroTree (Jewish) www.dorotree.com
☞ Family Tree Maker
www.familytreemaker.com Includes source citations matching 67 of Elizabeth Shown Mill's *Evidence Explained* recommendations.

☞ Legacy Family Tree
www.legacyfamilytree.com Has over 1,000 citation templates consisted with Evidence Explained. Also works with new.FamilySearch.org

☞ LifeLines (Unix)
<http://lifelines.sourceforge.net>

☞ PAF Personal Ancestral File (free download) www.familysearch.org Does not work with new.FamilySearch.org. You must use [FamilyInsight](#) or transfer to a full-featured genealogy management software program that can do the bridging.

☞ Reunion (Mac OS) www.leisterpro.com

☞ RootsMagic www.rootsmagic.com Can bridge to new.FamilySearch.org

☞ The Master Genealogist
www.whollygenes.com

**BRIGHT IDEA**

Two bits of advice about choosing software:

1. Find out which program the majority of people in your local community are using. That way you have a better chance of finding help if you get in a pinch.
2. Be sure that the program you select is GEDCOM capable.

WEEK TWO: 8-14 February 2009

This week we'll get back to organizing those notebooks and coordinating the information there with your genealogy management program.

- Take the surname folders or notebooks A thru F** that you created last month, and check to be SURE that each name is in your genealogy software program. Ol' Myrt here uses a sticky note to remind here where she "left off" on a page when she was called to answer the

phone or have a visit with one of her precious grandchildren. That little note reminds me where to begin in my transcription process.

- Remember all of last month's project -- the infamous filing of genealogy papers?** Well, this is the time to verify that everything you have on paper is typed into the notes for each individual mentioned on a document. Be very specific, citing at the very least as follows:

Name: _____ *Date of Document:* _____

Type of Document: _____

Number of Document: _____

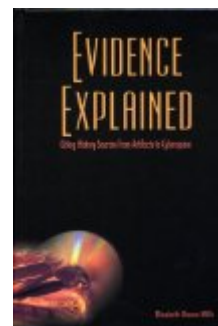
Licensing Office: _____

Complete text of document:

Microfilm or Library Call Number: _____

Name/Address of Archive/Library: _____ *Date viewed:* _____

The leading reference work with citation examples is Elizabeth Shown Mills' [*Evidence: Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian*](#). 2007, reprinted 2008. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company. ISBN-13: 978-0806317816.



WEEK THREE: 15-21 February 2009



This is the week we begin to tackle those old family photos. If they are in a photo album, do not remove them, because sometimes conclusions can be drawn about the people in the photo based on how they are placed in the photo album.

Take that huge pile of photos you've been pulling together since last month and begin to sort them into generations such as:

- ☞ Mother as a child
- ☞ Dad's parents
- ☞ Our children
- ☞ Vacations we took
- ☞ Unknown relations from great-grandma's trunk

Put these stacks of photos into huge manila envelopes which have been clearly labeled with the words: "DO NOT THROW OUT - PRECIOUS FAMILY PHOTOS" and whatever category you select. You need to go through this overview process, in order to determine how much work you'll be doing in later months' assignments. As you add newly printed photos, be sure that they end up in the correct manila envelopes. You'll find stray sets of prints and negatives all over the house, even months later. Just get them together, and in the right manila envelope!

Deal with those digital photos on your computer with innocuous names put there by your digital camera software. This is the week to decide to right click on each one and give it a name that means something. I always put the last name in caps, then the given name and end it with a date something like:

PLAYERGlenSatQueenAnneHS2006.jpg

PLAYERfamilyOrcasReunion2007.jpg

If there are multiple photos, you can do as follows:

PLAYERFamilyOrcasReunion2007JonesIsland1.jpg

PLAYERFamilyOrcasReunion2007JonesIsland2.jpg

PLAYERFamilyOrcasReunion2007JonesIsland3.jpg

PLAYERFamilyOrcasReunion2007Boat1.jpg

PLAYERFamilyOrcasReunion2007Boat2.jpg

PLAYERFamilyOrcasReunion2007Boat3.jpg

In this manner, all of the photos from our Player Family Orcas Island reunion will end up next to each other on my hard drive. It will make things a lot easier if I want to create a slide show of the event.



BRIGHT IDEA

Over achievers will want to look into getting their scanners hooked up and working properly. It will make things go faster later this year when scanning photos and documents will be assigned.

WEEK FOUR: 22-28 February 2009



This week we'll spend reaching out through the Internet to network with other genealogy researchers, first in blogs and secondly in mailing lists.

- Subscribe to genealogy newsletters via RSS feeds**, so you can hear about what's happening in the world of genealogy. RSS means "really simple syndication" and it is useful because you don't have to depend on an email service or waste time going to individual websites to see if

a new article has been posted. We call these genea-blogs.

Ol' Myrt here recommends using Google Reader to subscribe to the genealogy blogs of choice. The only exception is the "plus edition" of Dick Eastman's newsletter, available by paid subscription through his website www.eogn.com. Here's how you set up your Google Reader for everything else:

1. Be sure you have a [Gmail account](#), so you can log in. Gmail is free, and allows you access to all sorts of cool tools at Google.com, including photo storage, but I digress.
2. Go to www.Google.com/reader and click "Add a subscription".
3. Specify the name URL or RSS feed and click the "add" button. In this example, Ol' Myrt demonstrates how to subscribe to Schelly Talalay Dardashti *Tracing the Tribe* genealogy blog, hosted at Blogspot.com

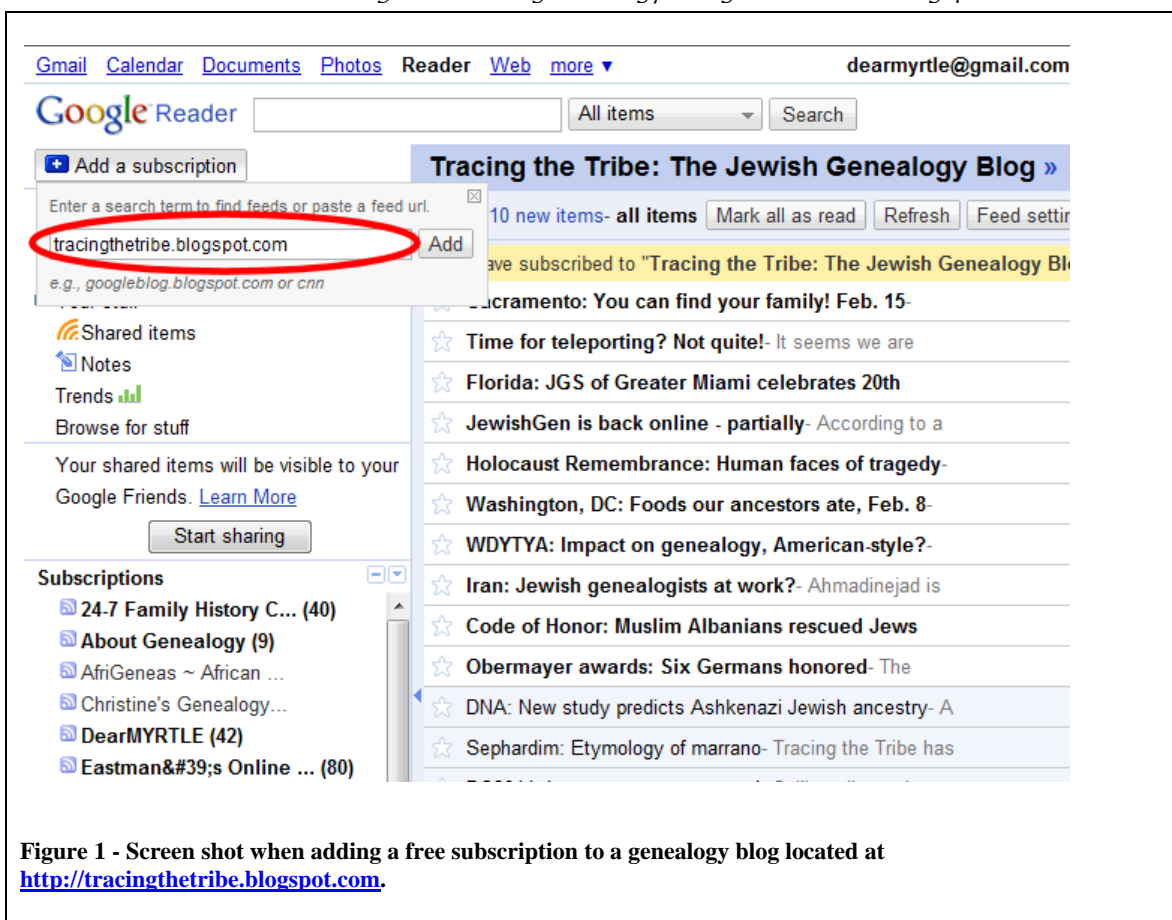


Figure 1 - Screen shot when adding a free subscription to a genealogy blog located at <http://tracingthetribе.blogspot.com>.

When you click on a specific subscription (lower left as illustrated above) the titles will appear on the right portion of the Google Reader screen.

Here are some suggested genealogy blogs to follow. The RSS feed code is listed below each title. These are not URLs, but RSS feed codes to insert into your Google Reader to subscribe.

☞ 24/7 Family History Circle edited by Juliana Szucs Smith (free)
feed://http://blogs.ancestry.com/circle/?feed=rss2

☞ Ancestry Insider
http://ancestryinsider.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default

☞ DearMYRTLE's Genealogy Column (free)
http://blog.dearmyrtle.com/feeds/posts/default

☞ Dick Eastman (free version) (Paid version via email)
http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/atom.xml

☞ Genea-Musings by Randy Seaver (free)
http://feeds.feedburner.com/Genea-musings

☞ Genealogy Insider by Diane Haddad (free)
http://feeds.feedburner.com/GenealogyInsider

☞ The Genealogue by Chris Denham (free)
http://feeds.genealogue.com/TheGenealogue

☞ Think Genealogy by Mark Tucker (free)
http://www.thinkgenealogy.com/feed



BRIGHT IDEA

Since there are over 300 known genealogy blogs, you could try Google using search terms like "genealogy blog" or "Irish genealogy +blog" (without the quote marks.) An alternative would be to check out the genealogy blogs listed at <http://blogfinder.genealogue.com>.



Join a genealogy-related mailing list for your surname or the locality where your ancestors once lived. What are mailing lists? They are email “groups” maintained by a computer (list-serve) and hosted by a volunteer member of that group. The lists at [RootsWeb](#) are numerous, though there are some good genealogy mailing lists at Yahoo.com as well.

Usually, you may elect to subscribe in either of two modes:

LIST – single message in each email

DIGEST – compiled set of full messages in each email

Ol’ Myrt here recommends “lurking” as they call it. That means to hang out and just read the postings for a week or two, before jumping in and emailing a query to the list. That way you’ll gain an understanding of the acceptable postings for your new mailing list. Some like the Mayflower-L are very strict. Others allow postings of family recipes and such. For ideas, see:

☞ Cyndi’s List – Newsgroups & Mailing Lists www.cyndislist.com/mailing.htm

☞ Genealogy Resources on the Internet by John Fuller & Chris Guant
www.rootsweb.com/~jfuller/internet.html

When you do finally post a query on one of these genealogy mailing lists, make sure you show you’ve done your genealogy homework before asking for help. No one should expect a response to a query that states: “Give me everything you have on the Smiths of Henry County, Georgia”.

No one should expect things handed to them on a silver platter, and that goes double for genealogists. Be sure to indicate:

☞ Full name and alias

☞ Name of spouse & children

☞ Known dates

☞ Known places

☞ Description of records already checked

Which of the following subject lines for your email will generate the most interest?

☞ Subject: My Froman Ancestor

☞ Subject: Paul Froman

☞ Subject: Paul FROMAN / Eliz HITE Shenandoah, VA 1700s

If you picked the last subject line, you win! Obviously the more info you can provide in the subject line the greater your chances for having a reader relate to your query, and hopefully give you some research advice in a lengthy response.



Figure 2 - One exhausted reader, after completing the February 2009 Organization Checklist.

SUMMARY – February 2009



Now, February's list wasn't all that bad, was it? Indeed, you did the worst part of "finally getting organized" last month. Yes, Ol' Myrt here will continue to hone the organization schedule for the remainder of the year. You can bet I've come up with some dillies.