

Brainstorming DCAGS Activities

On May 14 we held the first Brainstorm Session on the future needs of our society, as we have reached our 10th year of serving the Dane County community of genealogy enthusiasts. A small group of members met at the Sequoia Library in Madison to discuss various ideas about how to serve DCAGS membership in the future.

The meeting was facilitated by our DCAGS President, who started the session with a few questions to help start the conversation, "How do we increase interest in our activities?", "How can we improve the quality of the activities we offer to membership?", and "Who are our future members?".

Following are some key points that resulted from the discussion:

- Develop an outreach capability to Dane County grade schools that provide programs to school age children interested in family history. Members could offer their time and expertise to children who are becoming interested in genealogy, for example, provide informal lessons on how to collect family history, conduct family interviews and develop family trees. This could also create a way for parents to be involved and to have younger adults

become part of our membership.

- Provide services, for example, members could document cemetery records and church records in the area.
- Work more closely with the State Historical Society and the Dane County Historical Society to coordinate activities for the general public.
- Post flyers in libraries and community centers in the Dane County area to advertise DCAGS activities and programs.
- Contact small community newspapers in Dane County and provide information about our society. This may help diversify membership.
- Lastly the group discussed how our website is a valuable tool and what updates are needed to make the website more noticeable to members of the public in Dane County who are passionate about genealogy.

Overall those present thought that this effort was worth the time and shall help the future of DCAGS. In the near future we will offer another Brainstorm Session to add to and refine what was started.

Sharing Records No Longer a Felony in WI

This spring the Wisconsin legislature has enacted 2 laws of interest to genealogists in Wisconsin. Previously, the electronic sharing of copies of vital records for events in Wisconsin prior to 1907 was considered a Class 1 Felony—you read that correctly, a felony. That meant that if you emailed a copy of Great Grandma's birth certificate or posted it to your tree, you could be prosecuted as a felon. Thanks to AB297, that is no longer the case, as it allows for the electronic sharing of uncertified copies of vital records of events taking place before 1907.

A related bill (AB633) makes it possible to access vital records available from the state at your local registrar, rather than having to go to Madison or the county of origin. Note that this only applies to those records already available at the state level. In some cases, you may still want to check at the local county level to see if they have records that are not part of the state system.

*by Lisa Christopherson
April 20, 2016
Milwaukee County
Genealogical Society*

July 2016 Outing

Our July outing will be on Saturday, July 9, 2016 at the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), 816 State Street, Madison, WI at 9:00 a.m. Participants will meet in WHS's lobby. If you are attending this event, send an email to eberle@merr.com. WHS staff will provide a 60-90 minute treasures tour of WHS's collections in the Library and Archives. Participants will be able to research following the tour. WHS's world-class collections contain an extraordinary range of artifacts and information about American history.

German-American Genealogical Partnership

A growing international Germanic genealogy organization has set the date for the first of what is to become a biennial international conference offering Germanic family researchers unique opportunities to connect with people from other countries.

The conference, organized by the German-American Genealogical Partnership, is set for July 28 and 29, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minn.

"For anyone involved in researching Germanic ancestors, this is a rare opportunity to make personal connections with people from the United States, Germany and other countries. We especially encourage members and leaders of societies in the Partnership to join us in this inaugural international conference," said Kent Cutkomp, one of the key founders of the Partnership and a past president of the Minnesota-based Germanic Genealogy Society, host of the 2017 conference.

The conference—"CONNECTIONS: International. Cultural. Personal."—will offer more than 30 presentations by Germanic genealogy experts worldwide. Attendees will be invited to be part of a conference surname and locality database to match up with others attending, Cutkomp said. Study rooms with computers and expert personal assistance will offer

help with German script, language and research. The conference also will feature impromptu gatherings by region or special interest and a large field of vendors and exhibitors.

The conference is scheduled at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest Hotel, in Brooklyn Park, a Minneapolis suburb. Attendees may book room reservations at the hotel beginning in August. Registration for the conference opens in January 2017.

The Partnership, founded in 2015, joins Germanic societies across America, Germany, Canada, England and other European countries, and continues to draw new societies worldwide. Partnership members include the more than 60 societies belonging to the Germany-based Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Genealogischer Verbände, whose leadership helped in founding the Partnership.

"Our purpose in creating the Partnership is to expand cooperation among societies nationally and internationally for the benefit of their individual members," Cutkomp said. "We are undertaking a number of major initiatives, one of those being the 2017 international conference."

Sponsor a Free Guest Membership for a Year

DCAGS is offering an opportunity for members to sponsor a guest with a one year free membership. Here's how it would work:

1. Current members could sponsor a free one-time guest membership for a new guest and/or family with emailed newsletters and other electronic correspondence, no directories and no printed materials will be sent.
2. Thereafter, the guest may join as a regular member with full member benefits (newsletters, directory, emails, mailings and events). The year for inclusion runs for the membership period—April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.
3. Members who wish to sponsor a free guest member would send an email to the DCAGS email address, www.widcags@gmail.com with the following information:
 - sponsor's name,
 - guest's name,
 - guest's address,
 - guest's phone number and
 - guest's email address.

This is an excellent opportunity to increase the visibility of DCAGS and promote membership. So, send the name of a guest.

Of Interest...

Milwaukee County Genealogical Society's 2016 trip to Salt Lake City. Access this event at: <http://www.milwaukeegenealogy.org/cpage.php?pt=81>

After You're Gone: Future Proofing Your Genealogy Research

Try as we might, we really have little control over what will happen to our possessions, even our bodies, after we die. Yes, we can draw up legal documents, we can express our wishes to family members and more; however, there are no guarantees when it comes to these matters. The best we can do is prepare, plan and communicate now.

When it comes to your years of genealogy research and material, what plans have you made to ensure that it doesn't die with you? Here is some advice on creating a realistic plan to get your "genealogy affairs" in order so that the next generation of researchers can benefit from your years of hard work.

The Perils of Inaction: Lost Genealogy

To gain some insight as to what could possibly happen to all your genealogy stuff, simply read the haunting story *Cleaning Mother's House* (<http://www.rootdig.com/adn/motherhouseprint.html>) by genealogist Michael John Neill. As you hear the words, just imagine one of your children or grandchildren being in the same situation and not knowing the importance of your genealogy research.

You have a responsibility to safe guard your research and to make sure it gets passed on properly. *If you don't act*

now, someone else will act on your behalf.

Basic Planning and Data Successorship

How can you create a plan for the future of your genealogy research without knowing what you have? The first step is to create an inventory of ALL of your items.

Hard Copy Items

Use a special notebook, a document on your computer, or a spreadsheet. Just get it down in writing and also realize that you should update it periodically. Items to include:

- Genealogy research binders, folders and stack of paper
- Genealogy books and magazines purchased over the years
- Photos, slides, negatives, videos, CD-ROMs
- Technology items such as scanners, software programs, flash drives
- Miscellaneous items such as audio recordings, gadgets, etc.

Make sure you label each item or include a note; remember that the person cleaning out your possessions may not be a genealogist.

Digital Items

And what about your genealogy data? You may not realize how much information you have and where it is stored. The easiest way to organize all your digital assets is to cre

ate two backups: one in the cloud and one on an external drive or CD-ROM.

- Genealogy database files
- Scanned photographs and documents
- Digital books, magazines and guides
- Digital writings such as PDFs and blog posts you've written
- Emails from family and other researchers as well as emails that you've sent
- Any other items you believe are important including social media posts

Online Profiles

Increasingly, genealogists are leveraging online websites, apps and social media for research purposes and to connect with others. While you may not have valuable information stored at these sites, at a minimum you should allow family members to disable or shut down accounts. This way your followers are informed and also it avoids having these accounts hacked or mis-used.

Create a list of website names, their URLs (addresses) and login credentials. Keep the list in a safe place; print out and keep with estate planning papers or store online with a master password to access the list; make sure your executor knows the password.

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After You're Gone, continued

Working with Societies, Libraries and Archives

There are many “myths” about being able to donate your genealogy to organizations:

- “You can donate any and all of your genealogy stuff to the National Archives.” **False:** The National Archives is the archivist of record for the United States government; it does not typically archive personal items.
- “You can donate your genealogy to the Library of Congress.” **Partially true:** The Library of Congress does accept published genealogies and other items of importance.

If you plan on donating anything related to your genealogy to an archive, a library or a genealogy society, here is a plan you should follow:

- Contact the organization. Always check a repository’s policies before making a donation or directing your executor to make a donation.
- Inform family members. Let your family or friends know what your plans are involving the organization.
- Include a monetary donation. It costs money to process donated materials no matter how well organized those items may be. If possible, make sure you include a financial donation to the institution. Another option is to direct your executor to sell off specific items to raise money for preservation of the collection.

Finally, realize that you can always donate items NOW rather

than after your passing. By donating now you have more power to direct how the items will be used and which organizations can benefit from those items.

Technology to the Rescue

As with other industries and even hobbies, genealogy has moved into the digital realm, for better or for worse. Advantages include the ability to preserve fragile items through scanning and digitization as well as the ability to share items with other researchers. Disadvantages include the ability to easily delete items with the touch of a key or failing to update technology like moving from floppy discs to flash drives. And there is also the fear of having your digital items stolen or “hacked.”

Another idea is to utilize one or more websites that offer a virtual “lock box” for digital items including photos and documents such as Protect Their Memories. Or create your own using DropBox or Google Drive since online services can and do go out of business from time to time (remember MyFamily.com?).

For a complete list see The Digital Beyond-Online Services List at: <http://www.thedigitalbeyond.com/online-services-list/>

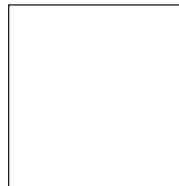
Best Practices for Genealogy Future Proofing

In summary, here are some tips of future proofing your genealogy research and making sure it is preserved for others to use for generations to come:

- Take inventory. Determine what you have including hard copies as well as digital assets and online sites.
- Include in estate planning. Create a codicil to your will or make sure there are some form of instructions concerning your genealogy research.
- Backup your data. Backing up your genealogy data is a good habit for the living and it will keep all your info in one place for your executor.
- Future proof your technology. CD-ROM discs degrade over time. Negatives and movie film can fade and fall apart. Transfer items to digital ASAP.
- Have that conversation with family. Be very clear about where your genealogy research is located, why it is important, and what you want done with it.
- Contact organizations. Determine which libraries, societies and archives will accept all or part of your collection. Donate items you don’t need NOW.
- Post items online. Consider starting a blog, even a private one, to preserve your family stories. Do the same with a family tree on Ancestry or one of the popular genealogy sites.
- Do stuff NOW. Tell your own stories NOW. Write that genealogy book NOW. Interview family members NOW.

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