LEAVING A GENEALOGICAL LEGACY

A. *HOMETOWN LEGACY*
 1. <u>Always</u> leave a copy in the home town(s) and counties!
 2. Approach libraries and museums saying you have information on a local family. Do NOT emphasize that the information is genealogical in nature as the term intimidates many people. Simply ask if they have a vertical file or book collection and are willing to add your family's information.
 3. Special collections or items such as business records may require you to complete a Deed of Gift. This does not necessarily release copyright to the institution but does ensure they are not liable for charges of theft or misappropriation.
    a. Take time to correspond with the institution and find out more about their collections, collection development policies and holdings before making the gift.
    b. Ensure the institution has the facilities to properly maintain your gift.

B. *GENEALOGICAL DATA AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA*
 1. <u>Computer genealogical programs and digital data simply do not meet preservation standards.</u> In his article "Perils of Polyethylene for Posterity", Mark Howells includes a table on the useful lifetime of electronic media. The longest any of them is expected to last is 50 years, and that is only under perfect conditions.
    a. Consistent migration is a necessity, and you must also migrate the program the materials operate under.
    b. Programs are often not backward compatible.
    c. Migrated data must be tested at least every six months to ensure not only workability but also completeness and correctness.
 2. Will the program be usable in 10 years? This is not only a program question, but also an operating system question!
    a. Windows (DOS, 3x, 95, 98 NT, ME, XP & 2000) are already unsupported by Microsoft.
 3. Backwards compatibility is, at this point, only possible for programs using UNICODE. Few program developers seem to find this a problem.
 4. CD problems
    a. The photosensitive dye degrades naturally and is increased by heat and humidity.
    b. Inexpensive CD's are easily scratched and the scratches go all of the way through.
    c. Not all CD & DVD drives can read rewritable CD's.
    d. The best CDR's use a silver and gold reflective layer but this information almost never appears on the packaging or even on the manufacturer's website. How best to tell? Look at the underside color. Also, <DigitalFAQ.com> may help.

C. *MATERIALS FOR LIBRARIES*
 1. Before you give a library your genealogy, ask the following questions:
    a. How will the institution preserve your research?

b. Does it require permission to duplicate your data in order to preserve it?
c. What, if any, rights as the creator of your research results are you granting to the institution?
d. If the institution migrates your data between media formats, will you be able to obtain your own copy of the new format? Will you or the institution keep your original?
e. How will your relations and/or the general public obtain access to your data at the institution?

2. The Carnegie History Center, like most libraries, prefers materials to be on archival quality paper and/or microfilm. Archival paper lasts between 100 and 500 years.
a. Other than ensuring the materials have a left margin of at least 1.25" and an index, the format is up to you.
b. If you want people to use your donated materials, make them easy to understand, even for the beginner. The inclusion of family stories and/or photographs help to draw the user into your work.
c. Please omit information on living people, even if they granted permission for you to publish the information. Their families may not agree.
d. If your family tree includes "black sheep" please use discretion when including their information.
e. <u>Cite your sources</u>! The format you use is not important, but a complete citation is vital. Remember, not everyone using your work will have been doing family history for an extended period.
   (1.) When citing internet sources, please do not just give the internet address. Detail just how you found that particular site. The Digital Library of Virginia is an excellent example of a site for which many will need not only the address, but instructions on finding and using the site.

3. At the same time you produce a work for a library, also give copies of your materials to family members, organizations and friends. You may wish to include computer data with your printouts, but remember to keep all data copies updated.

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