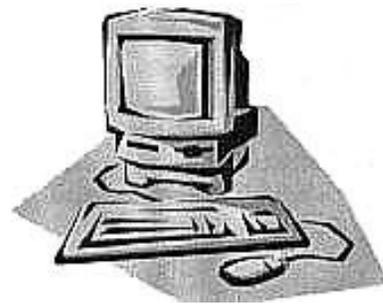


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Generating Genealogy Gifts

By Mike Blackledge.com



Last year at this time, we ran a column on Genealogy Gifts in which several AGS members shared their ideas and success stories with creating and presenting unique gifts incorporating their family research. The season of gift giving is back, and this column will explore the techniques and technology that could be employed to help bring about some of those gifts. The reader is encouraged to review the wide selection of ideas in last November's column (Nov 2013: Vol 38, Issue #3).

MyCanvas side note: Recall that AGS member **Vicki Hontas** created several of her unique gifts using Ancestry.com's on-line resource, MyCanvas. Vicki went through a slight panic earlier this year when Ancestry announced it was dropping ("retiring") several "non-core" products, to include MyFamily, MyCanvas, Genealogy.com, and the Y-DNA and mtDNA tests. Customers like Vicki raised a ruckus, and Ancestry has now found an alternative, at least for MyCanvas: **Alexander's**, a Utah based printing company that has been the long-time printer of MyCanvas products, will be the new home for the service. View the details at ancestry.mycanvas.com

Calendars: One of Vicki's many popular products from MyCanvas was a family calendar featuring photos and birthdays of the members. **Shutterfly.com** can do that for you as well, and has a 2-minute video on-line demonstrating how easy it is. Costco now has a calendar program for as low as \$10 per calendar – a bargain, and you can try it out very quickly at costcophotocenter.com under Photo Gifts. You can drag and drop a photo of an individual onto a (birth) date, and the program will fill the available space with your photo. Additionally, you can add the monthly "large" photos of family interest. These companies keep your photos and your work in your account so each year you don't have to start from scratch.

Block of ISBNs: For the genealogist who has everything, get her a block of ISBNs! ISBNs are International Standard Book Numbers as represented by those 13-digit numbers and accompanying bar codes you see on every book in the bookstore or library. ISBNs are not a requirement for publishing or even for getting a book into the Library of Congress, but they are a universally accepted identification device. You may not be going in this direction for your family history, but you should know that most retailers do require ISBNs to track their inventory. Each geographical region in the world has its own distributor for ISBNs, and **Bowker** is the official U.S. ISBN agency. Each 13-digit ISBN starts with 978 if the book was published in the US.

Digits 6-9 of each ISBN identify the publisher. To purchase a block of numbers, you must be a publisher – so become a publisher! E.g., for Marianne, she could register as Marianne's Books, or Eaton Publishing – not a problem! I created "Blackledge Books" this way. Just enter the info on-line at **Bowker.com**. More folks are publishing, according to **Bowker**, who tracked nearly 20 percent growth in the number of self-published works about families in 2013 versus 2012. Each version of a book requires an ISBN, so hard copy would have a different ISBN than a paperback (or a CD) of the same content. Buying a block of 10 ISBNs is probably enough for a lifetime! It may also be a cost-effective option since buying a single ISBN costs \$125, while a block of ten is \$275. Once you buy them, they are yours forever.

Creating DVDs: Ken Burns has taught America that old black-and-white photographs can be manipulated to present an intriguing story. His earlier productions feature photos almost exclusively. Tools are now available to the layperson to create “the Ken Burns effect.” Here is how wife Bonnie’s cousin Pat Gulley (located in Prescott, AZ) learned to tell a digital story:

I have been volunteering for the past four years for a non-profit. I became a Naturalist for them in 2011 and I lead Nature Walks on Wednesdays at various trails on the Prescott National Forest. Last Spring the Highlands Center director asked me if I would attend a workshop at Prescott College and create a digital story that they could use on their web site. I almost said no because it sounded a bit intimidating for a non-techie like myself, but then I thought what the heck, if I do a terrible job what are they going to do? Fire a Volunteer? So with a lot of work and a lot of help I created my story called “Transitions”. It is on their web site: www.highlandscenter.org

When you visit the site just click on “**See our YouTube Channel!**” and I am the only video there: **Transitions**. How did I do it? Well, the Media Lab at Prescott College had software called “Final Cut Pro”. It is an Apple product and the lab has all Mac Computers. We first wrote our story or message and revised that until our facilitator thought it would be around 4 minutes long. Then they set the program to record and I read my story into a microphone and tried to get it all in one take. You could see the audio pattern of your voice on the screen and if there was a mistake they could cut that out and piece the audio together or you could just redo the whole thing. You could have two “voice overs” on the screen and switch between them if you wanted.

After the voice over I started working on gathering photos by finding some on Web sites they gave us where the photos would be free. That is where I got the Nebraska farm and weather shots. Meanwhile I went out and took more photos and loaded those plus pictures from my home computer onto a thumb drive. My friend loaded some of his Landscape scenes onto a thumb drive for me. Once I got all pictures on the lab computer in the *Final Cut* program I would wear a headset and listen to my story and watch the audio of my voice and drag the photos into the spot I wanted them. We could have added music but I did not because I thought my voice was not strong enough to have music at the same time.

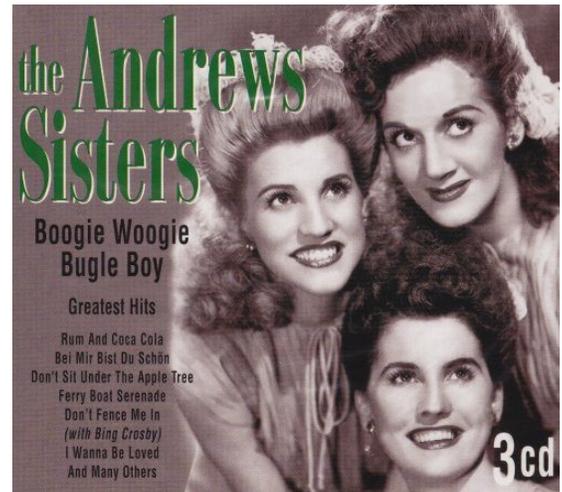
Now I wish I had at least added music to the credits. And unfortunately I don’t know how to put the music in. I know the people that had music used some of their own CDs or found music on line. We could do special effects where the pictures come together and the students in the lab helped us with those. My favorite is “the Ken Burns” effect.

I have made photo books in iPhoto on my Mac at home and have enjoyed that. I have iMovie on my Mac and have looked at movies of our grandson’s basketball games and edited out excess footage but have never tried to make a “real movie” with music or voice narration. That is one of my goals!”

Software Tools: You probably don’t have a college media lab available to you as Pat did, but you can easily create a DVD. You will need a software package to compile and ‘burn’ (write info to the DVD that can be played on a DVD player) your family history DVD. As demonstrated in Pat’s story above, if you have a Macintosh, you have several excellent options available to you. (picture **Lynda Katonak** smiling here!). One version of what Pat used, **Final Cut Pro**, can be obtained for \$40, and is a well-known and respected package that will do a great job. For us PC users, there are many choices with no clear-cut favorite.

For wife Bonnie's cousins, I used their family photos to create a DVD of just under 30 minutes in length, and we gave a copy to each first cousin at the reunion. In this family, the grandparents married in Nebraska and had 10 children, all born in Nebraska in the early years of the 20th Century. My DVD had 11 'chapters' to highlight the grandparents and each of the 10 children, only one of whom is still living. From the internet I downloaded some dramatic but simple photos of Nebraska wheat fields with wooden fences, and used them to create a title slide for each individual with the wheat field as background, adding text presenting their full name, family nickname, birth and death dates, and a representative photo.

The next few slides were photos of the individual in their youth (sometimes with a few siblings), then a marriage title slide giving where they married and to whom, then a few marriage photos, some children info, and high school graduation photos of each of the offspring. I added text to each slide to identify each individual. During the slide show, my DVD played a song from the era for each chapter, e.g., The Andrew Sisters singing "*Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree.*" I ended the DVD with chapters showing scenes from various reunions such as ours over the years, and ended with an Albuquerque reunion chapter featuring only a scary photo of Walter White and the music and final theme from "Breaking Bad": "All Bad things must come to an end." Final credits mentioned everyone who had contributed photos. It was a huge hit. Sure, it was quite a bit of work, but like most of our genealogy efforts, it was a true Labor of Love. Besides, what better activity to work on when you wake up at 2 am?



Here are the requirements you want your package to handle: You want software that will bring in photos, say in JPEG format, and video (if you have it), and display it in a slide-show fashion. You would like to be able to add sound such as music, say in MP3 format, and your own recorded voice, which could also be an MP3 file. You want to be able to preview easily what you put together, and finally, you want to burn the final product onto a DVD. Let's take a look at what you will need in addition to your photo collection and genealogy knowledge.

DVDs: You want to use DVD-R (DVD recordable), which means burn once, read many times DVD's. You don't need to pay the extra money for DVD-RW that allow you to re-write, or change the content on the DVD. Data on a DVD-R cannot be changed, whereas a DVD-RW, re-writable DVD can be rewritten multiple (1000+) times. Watch the ads for vendors such as Office Max and you can purchase 100 DVD-Rs for \$25 – this will be more than a lifetime supply, especially since there are DVD duplication services to inexpensively make your copies, once you are happy with your 'master' DVD.

Music: The Library of Congress has a site where you can download for free music recordings that are in the public domain, thus no copyright concerns. In general, if you desire old music ("old" means anything that sounds good, e.g., The Andrews Sisters, Bing Crosby, classical music), you can find free recordings on-line and download copies onto your hard drive. You will want to save them as MP3 format songs which any of the DVD software packages can handle. If the chapter is long, the software will repeat the music selected.

Narration: The one way to get exactly the words you want to accompany your story is to write them and record them yourself. This is not as hard as you might think – some folks have this capability on their smart phones. Most smart phone microphones are located on the back of the phone, near the bottom of

the handset. Some phones come with a voice recording app pre-installed. For the rest of us, consider the purchase of a small digital voice recorder from Best Buy or Radio Shack for about \$40. Be sure that it has a USB feature (thus compatible with both Mac and PCs), as you want to record your narration, then transfer/upload it to your computer in an MP3 format so your software program will treat you just like Bing Crosby.

Background for titles: You can download relevant images (e.g., Nebraska wheat fields) from the Internet – those on Wikimedia are public domain, but since you are not producing a DVD for retail, and it is really just for family, it is highly unlikely anyone is going to come after you for copyright infringement. (I am not a lawyer, but my sister once dated a guy that took the bar exam.) Photo editor software will allow you to add text to a copy of an image and save the resulting Title Slide or Text Slide as one of your JPEG files.



DVD Software Package: For the PC, many choices. I will just mention the one I am most familiar with: Wondershare DVD Creator (also available for the Mac). That is what I used to create Bonnie’s Reunion DVD and it worked fine. About \$40 and it provides most of the features outlined above (not the Ken Burns effect, however!).

DVD Duplication: You can take your ‘master’ DVD, once you are happy with it, to a duplication service. There are several such services within Albuquerque which will only charge you about \$3 for each DVD copy, in a jewel case, with your desired photo and text printed onto the surface of the DVD to create a professional look. One such company is **Roadrunner Duplications**.

Summary: If you don’t have last year’s Quarterly, see the Computer Corner column for Nov 2013 online at ABQGen.org (“**From the Quarterly**”) for many gift ideas. Most households today can play a DVD, and a family history DVD is a dramatic gift to present to family members. Most people would not know what to put on a DVD other than “My Summer Vacation.” You as a genealogist, however, are not most people – you have resources beyond mortal men. You can use these powers to generate and present something unique for your family members or even for organizations. If you feel intimidated about doing this, try a few steps in the privacy of your own home - you don’t have to tell folks what you are attempting, just try it out! It’s fun to see your results!