

7 Things to Know about Publishing Your Family History

Notes from a talk given to AGS meeting, 12 July 2017, by M. Blackledge, AGS Member

Background: Why is your Family History important? *“In the end, people don't view their life as merely the average of all its moments—which, after all, is mostly nothing much plus some sleep. For human beings, life is meaningful because it is a story. A story has a sense of a whole, and its arc is determined by the significant moments, the ones where something happens.”* — Atul Gawande, **Being Mortal**

Basics: Life Cycle of a Family History: **research** (*primary sources, census records, etc*) > **collect** (*written notes, computer files, scanned images*) > **compile** (*genealogy program*) > **publish**

1. Publishing is the most important action you will take in your Research.

One of the more challenging comments I've heard all year: “Why should I publish? Everything I have is on the Internet!” - AGS member, 2017

I would say, if I were cynical, here is my counter-statement:

Herman Melville: “Why should I write this novel? Every word I would write is available in the dictionary!” - Herman Melville, 1850

Yes, Melville wrote a novel, we don't want to write a novel. We need to discuss creation vs compilation. We don't want anyone creating Family History – if they do, it is creating fiction. We want to compile our research from many sources, perhaps the Internet. Here is the definition of “compile”

com·pile - verb

Produce (something, especially a list, report, or book) by assembling information collected from other sources.

"The local authority must compile a list of taxpayers"

synonyms: [assemble](#), put together, make up, [collect](#), [compose](#), [organize](#), [arrange](#);
[gather](#), [collect](#)

“he compiles a dossier of patients with tropical diseases”

Implicit: You are the author of your own Life. You are the compiler of your own genealogical research. And you, yes, YOU will be your own publisher.

Publishing is the activity of making information available to the general public.

Why don't people publish their family histories? You need to know the primary reasons:

- a. “it's not ready yet”
- b. inertia – a tendency to do nothing or to remain unchanged.

Example: "the bureaucratic inertia of government"

- c. pride of ownership – “This is mine, dang it – I'm not sharing with some Johnny-come-lately! I worked hard for this!”

2. Yo Mama Don't Love You No More

aka: Your Family Doesn't Care About Your Research

2. Thus: Know Your Audience

Who is the audience for you publishing your research? It ain't your family! They don't care!

Quote here: Marianne's history with her daughter, two sons: "That's a lot of paper!"

So who is your audience? Look to your left; look to your right; look to your Internet! In the Mirror!

3. You may have already published and not realized it!

...and it didn't cost you **NOTHIN!**

Classically, traditionally, publishing is the distribution of printed works such as books. Today, the scope of publishing has expanded to include electronic resources such as the electronic versions of books and periodicals, as well as micropublishing, websites, and blogs. Examples: The *Quarterly*, FindAGrave.com, Wikipedia, Eight RoadsTo Montana ...

The Perishable Press vs In Perpetuity - Consider the spectrum of perishability of publications

Given that the day will come when the species no longer exists and all memory is dust:

From nanoseconds to millions of years in the spectrum:

From Graffiti to writing in the Cloud ...

4. Libraries are the Keeper of the Flame

You want your family history publication placed in a library.

Libraries don't want your CDs or flash drives. But genealogical societies might.

Posing the question to a genealogy dept in a library:

The Question: What if you were to receive a printed Family History, let's say about 200 pages (100 sheets of paper), comb binding, clear plastic cover (not hard bound). How would you handle such a donation?

Response #1: Albuquerque Genealogy Center - Main Library

Lisa Kindrick, Genealogy Librarian

The Public Library

501 Copper Avenue NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

Yes, we'd be happy to add a family history to our collection even if it had a comb binding. If it's thick enough we would put it with the family history books -- 929.2 Surname

If it's small and would get lost on the shelf then we would put it in a vertical file (file folder) for that family name in the filing cabinets by the windows on the northeast side of the Genealogy Center.

We would add an access point in the catalog so that if someone searches, for example, Blackledge family, they will see that the book is in the vertical file or a book in the family history section.

5. Riddle: When are Second Editions worth more than First Editions?

Answer: when the Editions are your family history.

Timing is ... well, not really that important

“Perfect research” is the enemy of publishing.

Photo pages: Second editions are where you publish all the photos you didn't have time to get into the First Edition.

6. You already own more sophisticated publishing tools than anyone since Gutenberg!

You probably have access to a Word Processor, e.g., Word. Plus, in your genealogy software, under Reports, you have “the Magic Button” – have you pushed it yet?

- a. the magic of RTF files
- b. the magic of relational databases
- c. the magic of a generated index

7. You will die. And your research will die with you.

[Source: Sansa Stark, “The Game of Thrones”]

8. [Added Bonus] AGS SIG on Writing/Publishing. There is an internal Special Interest Group just for you.

Publishing is the **dissemination** of **literature**, **music**, or **information** — the activity of making information available to the general public. In some cases, authors may be their own publishers, meaning originators and developers of **content** also provide **media** to deliver and display the content for the same. Also, the word publisher can refer to the individual who leads a publishing company or an imprint or to a person who owns/heads a magazine.

Traditionally, the term refers to the distribution of printed works such as books (the “book trade”) and **newspapers**. With the advent of digital information systems and the **Internet**, the scope of publishing has expanded to include electronic resources such as the electronic versions of books and periodicals, as well as **micropublishing**, **website**, **blogs**, video game publishers, and the like.

Publishing includes the following stages of development: acquisition, **copy editing**, production, printing (and its **electronic equivalents**), and **marketing** and **distribution**.

You want your family history publication placed in a library.