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SILICON VALLEY COMPUTER GENEALOGY GROUP

PastFinder

Database decision

Share globally, work locally

By Richard D. Rands

All the hype in recent years urging us to maintain our genealogical data at an online Web site reminds me of election time – lots of promises but little substance.

It is one thing to share a copy of our immediate, documented family tree on a well managed Web site. It is a different thing to rely entirely on a remote, browser-based application to hold the results of our hard work. Popular browser-based data management applications do a nice job of making a family tree look attractive, with pretty screen layouts and wide availability, but if you need to do anything more sophisticated, you are out of luck.

The theme of this article, regarding decisions you make in managing your genealogy data, is this: Share globally, but work locally. The most effective way to develop and manage your genealogy information is to use one of the popular database programs now available, including RootsMagic, Ancestral Quest, Family Tree Maker, Reunion, The Master Genealogist, and Personal Ancestral File. All of these programs run on your own computer, allowing you to work locally. Later, after you have reached the level where you wish to share your information on the Web, you can easily upload a portion of your database to share with others.

As I work with people who are just getting started with their family history, I typically see that they have a box of miscellaneous documents, letters, photographs, and perhaps a couple of albums. The principle concern is to organize the basic family history details as quickly and as easily as possible.

As we dig through the material from the top of the box to the bottom, it is extremely rare that the family history presents itself in neat, lineage-linked, chronological order. The best way to work systematically through a collection of inchoate items is to extract the genealogical details as you go, entering them into a database as independent records, connecting them as the links are revealed.

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After we have gathered everything we can, and have a better view of the overall picture of the family, we can finish organizing it into a more complete family tree. It is not easy to build an online family tree in the current browser-based applications when they require that we progress directly from one generation to the next in chronological order. Connections of some branches of the tree may not be clear from what information is available, but we should enter all the data in a database so we can readily see where our research should focus. Having everything we know about our family history clearly organized in a readily accessible, flexible format, with options to fix mistakes easily, we can use the database to organize the

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Outside and inside

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Share globally, work locally *(continued)*

information: Insert missing family members; add source documentation; print lists of possible errors; and see the holes, the dead-ends, and inconsistencies. This will significantly add to the pleasure of creating a well organized family history. As far as I can see, none of the browser-based applications provide these features.

The genealogy programs available for running on your local computer or a Family History Center computer have been around for as long as 30 years. Many have had multiple upgrades, and, more significantly, were developed by experienced genealogists.

This leads me to the next reason I feel strongly about working locally and sharing later. The software programs from which we can choose are all full of highly useful features that make it easy to maintain and polish our family information, help with our research, and produce great looking charts and reports to show off our work.

For example, suppose you discover you have used an inconsistent spelling of an oft-used place name. The locally run genealogy programs give you a find/replace feature similar to what you see in office software, which make it a breeze to quickly locate all of the incorrectly spelled place names and replace them with the correct name. The same is true for incorrect surnames. In an online database, you may have to find the incorrect records and make the corrections one record at a time.

Suppose you are planning a trip to the state where many of your ancestors came from, and you would like to get a listing of everyone in your database who was

Many families' histories are stuffed into suitcases and boxes.




born, married, or died in that state. The program on your local computer will make that process a simple matter. An online program typically won't do it at all.

What if you would like to give your grandparents a listing of every one of their descendants in your database, sorted by their birth dates, so that they will have a reminder of when to send out birthday cards to all their kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids. Not only will the genealogy program on your own computer do that, but it will even print a monthly calendar with the names printed on the appropriate days.

Other helpful reports you can usually get from a local software program include a list of your dead-end (end-of-line) individuals, unlinked records, duplicate individuals, citations linked to source records, and many more. You may be able to print out a pedigree chart and a family group chart from an online application, but you will not have the flexibility of reports available from a local program.

Some of the software programs have very powerful search features that can be combined with a flexible custom report generator. You can combine a relationship search with a data field search to select very specific subsets of your list of names. A simple search for an individual, or a family is a piece of cake if you are using a genealogy database on a local computer.

It is safe to say that if there is a useful feature that will facilitate managing your family history database, you probably will be able to find it in at least one of the programs you can run on a personal computer, whether you use a PC or a Mac.

Finally, the most important aspect of having your data on your own computer — you have 100% control and ownership of the data. No one else can or will change it, unless you allow them access to your computer. At any time, you can select all or a portion of your database to be uploaded to a Web site where others can look at it, but you will know that what you have on your machine is yours. 

A search for descendants (Part 1)

By Allin Kingsbury

Two of the best reasons to compile a genealogy of descendants of one of your ancestors are: First, you can find others who are actively working on descendants of these ancestors. You can help each other by exchanging information such as photos, stories, dates, and places.

The second reason is associated with publishing a family history. Descendants often will buy a family history about their family. A book about descendants of an ancestor may be more appealing than a book about ancestors of an individual.

Of course, a genealogist may want to find descendants just because they are there. I find it interesting to follow the migrations of families, to see how they coped with ever-changing circumstances. My ancestors went in all directions: they went to Australia to find gold. They went to the American West to homestead. They stayed where they were, and their descendants settled the area. Others went to Prince Edward Island and built ships from the abundant timber. Others came to work the slate mines of northern Pennsylvania. A few went to New Zealand, and some to Singapore.

Plan your strategy

I have been successful in tracing descendants of some of my ancestors. I was prompted to undertake my project several years ago by an article in *The Ensign* magazine about collecting the descendants of ancestors as a way to approach genealogical brick walls in the distant past. Starting with what I had, which for a few ancestors was a large amount of data that relatives had shared or I had found, I went to the Internet. I do not consider my efforts out-

standing, but I do consider myself successful, not so much because of my skills, but because so much information is available. I am sharing my experience here; you may want to undertake a similar project.

I started with my third-great-grandparents. I could pick up their children in the 1850 census. Many families living in rural areas at that time were farmers, and some had large families. Once I had information about the family, I looked for family trees online to take advantage of the research of others. Some information in online trees is erroneous. Information about people born after 1850 may come from family records. Errors may occur from inaccurate copying and from guesses as to names, dates, and places. These errors are detectable with further research.

Information from family trees must be verified. The census can be an excellent source of information to verify family trees. Later censuses locate the family, give an

Bray Joshua	3-1	Head	10	W	M	Aug. 1861	38
Francis	5-3	Wife		W	F	Oct. 1861	38

This ancestor is in the 1870, 1880, 1900 (pictured), 1920 and 1930 U.S. censuses.

approximate birth date and place of birth for each individual, and list occupations of those who worked. Some U.S. Census forms asked for immigration and naturalization dates. The 1900 census asked the number of children born to a woman and how many were living. If I find that I do not have the name, birthplace, or death information for a child who died, I create an entry to remind me to identify the child later.

By going from census to census, we can follow the descendants

down to the 1930 census (the last available federal census until the 1940 census is released in 2012). Ancestry.com can be an excellent tool for doing this, because multiple sources can be searched at once. The results list records about the individual of interest and about other individuals who could be confused with the person of interest. From 1880, the census listed the birthplaces of the parents of each individual. These places sometimes are incorrect, but they can help you determine if two individuals are actually the same person.

Filling in the missing data

Information from census records often is incomplete. Middle names and complete birth dates may be lacking. Places usually are limited to states or countries. You may need to search other sources to find missing information. For male ancestors, these other records might include enlistment records, draft registration cards for World

Wars I and II, and other military records. These records may have a middle name, full birth date, and birth place. Sources for both men and women include vital records, gravestone inscriptions, Social Security Death Index, passport applications, church registers, and more.

Finding living descendants

Because of the risk of identity theft, many records of living individuals are private. Nonetheless, the Web has considerable information about many living individuals.

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A search for descendants *(continued)*

Obituaries often name children and siblings, as well as their spouses. Sometimes grandchildren also are named. Numerous Web sites offer to find living individuals. These include sites that locate members of a school class, such as [Classmates.com](#), and social networking sites such as Facebook. Others use large databases of records to locate individuals, such as [Varomi.com](#), [Intelius.com](#), [whitepages.com](#), [MyLife.com](#), [Zabasearch.com](#), [USsearch.com](#), [PeopleFinders.com](#), [emailaddressespro.com](#), and [people-search-global.com](#).

To conduct a free search for an individual, you usually can enter the name, state of residence and age. You can also enter an address or phone number. The results include individuals who match the criteria, listed with their age, recent places of residence, and possible relatives. Seeing more information requires paying a fee. The basic information will get you started.

Searching a common surname can result in numerous matches unless you use additional criteria to narrow the search.

By searching for those listed as possible relatives, you will get the recent residences of individuals and possible relatives. Eventually you may see the whole family.

Because the relationship is not stated in the list of individuals in the household, you will be guessing at the family structure. Divorces and remarriages may not be reflected in the information. Finding another source, such as an obituary, gives you more information to define the family structure. Otherwise, you can make a note and hope to resolve the family rela-

tionships as more information becomes available on the Internet.

Sorting out the living

Living adults are a potential source of genealogical information. A person working on his or her own family history may be interested in exchanging information. When you locate a living person, you should try to contact the person.

Family trees may be the most efficient source for obtaining more information about a family. Many individuals born before 1930 are included in online family trees. I've found a few in a dozen or more trees. A few of the trees contain obvious copies of data from other trees, but some trees include independent research. For example, an individual may be in one tree that contains a compilation of his descendants, and he or she may also appear in a tree containing a spouse's family.

Some trees cite primary sources such as vital records and census records. Verifying the data is much faster if the links provided with the tree go directly to the source information. All information found in the trees must be verified for accuracy. Some trees connect individuals to the wrong family members, and some list children born before their parents' birth or after their parents' death. In another tree, the same individual may be linked correctly. Sometimes a tree that looks identical to another has correct or more complete information.


Many trees include photos and stories. Images might include old family photos, pictures of grave-stones, scanned documents, and photos of past residences. Images may also be on cemetery sites like [findagrave.com](#) or [interment.net](#).

You also can search Google Images or Bing Images. One family tree included a photo of my third-great-grandfather that was much better than what my family had.

Information about individuals

Web searches on different search engines yield different results. Surprising results I have found include these:

- The Web site of a fence company in Idaho that was owned by the same family for three generations included a photo of family members working for the company
- A photo of a house in Washington, on the National Register, was purchased by a distant cousin for his dentistry office and residence.
- I found the resume of a distant cousin who was a director for a maritime museum in Manhattan.
- The registration in a Target gift registry in Mississippi listed a distant cousin whose spouse had registered for a baby shower under her married and maiden names
- I located book about the family of my third-great-grandfather, written more than 100 years ago.
- I found obituaries through Web sites of local newspapers and funeral homes. Few were included in large online obituary collections.

I found all of these surprises by searching for the full name (using quotation marks around the name to narrow the search), sometimes adding birth and residence information. 

Part 2 will be published in the January 2011 *PastFinder*.



Ask the doctor

Combining databases, Windows 7

Q My wife and I have extensive family histories. We would now like to combine them. A few names are common to both—and how about record identification numbers (RINs)?

I am very pleased to advise you with this issue. I have long been an advocate of families combining their genealogies into a single database. You avoid duplicate effort and you often discover mutual ancestors. The answers to your questions are identical regardless of which program you use.

The process of combining two databases involves creating a GEDCOM file from one of the databases, using the EXPORT feature, and then importing that file into the other database. So that means one of the databases will become the master database, and the other will be obsolete. When the GEDCOM file is imported into the master database, all individuals from the obsolete database will be assigned new RIN and MRIN numbers.

There is nothing sacred about RINs, so you shouldn't be concerned about that. They are simply numbers used by the program for internal purposes only. The program will give you two options for how the new RIN numbers are assigned. One option will assign new numbers starting with the next highest RIN number in the master file. That has the benefit of making it easy to know which Individuals came from the master database and which came from the obsolete database. That will only be the case until you add new individuals after merging your database. The other option is to assign new RINs using the first available RIN number,

which may be a RIN from someone you have deleted. Neither option has significant long-term consequences.

The merging process obviously will result in duplicate individuals, especially if you have your wife in your database, and she has you in her database. Your children may be in both databases as well. You mentioned a few names in common. The GEDCOM import process does not have the intelligence to determine that you and your wife are husband and wife, so you will need to merge each duplicate.

Let's assume your database is the new master database and you are RIN 1 and your wife is RIN 2, and that she was RIN 1 in her database, where you are RIN 2. After her database has been merged with your database, she will have some high RIN, such as 9,562, and you will likely have a record with a RIN like 9,563. You will now need to merge your wife's record (RIN 2) with her duplicate record (RIN 9,562), and merge your own duplicate record (RIN 9,563) with RIN 1. When you merge the duplicate records, the duplicate is deleted. You may find it useful to always merge the higher number into the lower number. Although it doesn't matter which way you merge, it is my experience that your spouse will be happier as RIN 2 in the new master database rather than 9,562.

One difficulty you will run into is figuring out what the new RIN numbers are for the duplicate records. If you used the first option for assigning new RINs, as explained above, starting from the next highest RIN, it will be easy to determine what the new RIN numbers are, because they will have a number that is relative to what they

were in the obsolete database, offset by the highest number you had in your database before the merge.


Some programs, such as PAF, have an automatic match/manual merge that will scan through your database for duplicate individuals, and will allow you to merge them if they actually are duplicates, and skip them if they are not duplicates.

Q How do I move my PAF database from Windows XP to a new computer that runs Windows 7?

1. Copy your PAF database from the XP machine onto backup media such as a flash drive, a floppy disk, or a CD. Don't copy the PAF program, because you will need to re-install it on the Win7 machine. Copy any photos or source documents you may have linked to your database onto the media as well.

2. Download the PAF install program, PAF5EnglishSetup.exe. Copy this file onto your Win7 desktop, or into a downloads folder. Run the install program. Win7 will ask you if it is a 64-bit program, to which you should respond NO. It will install the program in a special folder for 32-bit programs.

3. Copy your PAF database from the media onto a folder on the Win7 machine. I recommend that you create the same folder name on the Win7 machine that you had for the PAF database on the XP machine. Also copy any other files you had linked to the PAF file.

4. Now you can run the PAF program in Win7 like you did on the XP machine. Let it search your machine for PAF files and it will find them for you. 

The near future and a few other things

By Margery Bell

Associate director

Oakland Regional Family History Center

So today I take keyboard in hand and try to put into a coherent essay some of the things we covered last time I was able to come to the SVCGG meeting. As I remember, we spoke a bit about three topics:

- FamilySearch.org and what on earth is happening to it;
- Tips for using the catalog of the Bay Area Family History Centers (FHC) found at www.oaklandfhc.org; and
- A little-known website called Germanroots.com that is very misnamed, because this Colonial New England researcher uses it for nearly every new genealogist that deigns to come under her influence.

So, last thing first. For a real treat, take a look at the site **www.germanroots.com**. Try clicking on *Search Online Genealogy Records-USA*. You will find some very interesting results in a user-friendly format. Try *Online Searchable Death Indexes (USA)*, for example. You get a state-by-state list of digitally available death indexes and death records. Many of them have images of the original death certificates at the click of a mouse. Play around with this site and find some wonderful things organized in an easy-to-use method.

Athena – the catalog of the Bay Area Family History Centers

Why wait to come to the Oakland Regional FHC to see if we have anything that can help you?

Why not plan your trip in the comfort of your own home? Did you know that the Livermore FHC has lots of New York Quaker records? Did you know that the Santa Clara FHC has some very interesting Colonial Dutch collections? With the resources of 14 family history centers now included in the online catalog, it pays to learn to use it.

The **first tip** starts with your selection from the main menu. If you plan to look at several FHCs, start with the *Entire Region (all catalogs)* selection. This offers the

With the resources of 14 Family History Centers, it pays to use the online catalog.

most freedom. On the advanced search option you are able to choose location and then search one FHC at a time. If instead you select a specific FHC from the main menu be aware that you cannot then change to another family history center within the program. You would need to return to our home page and make a different selection.

The **second tip** also relates to the *Entire Region* search. Know that the Regional FHC in Oakland does not have a copy of everything in that catalog. We had a patron come in from San Jose to the Oakland FHC with a printout from the catalog of a resource he wanted to use. Unfortunately, he had used the catalog of the entire region and had not looked at the Copies page to see where his record was located. He assumed we would have it; it was in the San Jose FHC. When using the Entire Region Catalog, always click on Copies to be sure

you are going to the correct FHC to see the record.

Third tip: The subject search is the best search for getting a specific type of record, but you cannot make up a subject. Computers cannot make things up. The subject search searches a specific line in the catalog, and to use it well, one must learn what a subject is to a cataloger. For instance, the words *wills*, *deeds* and *county* are never in a subject category, so putting *Cook County Wills* in the search box and hitting Subject will find nothing. Common subject words are *probate*, *land and property*, *vital records*, *church records* and *military records*.

Place names can be used in a subject, but not the words *county* or *country*. Abbreviations should never be used, since the catalog will not recognize them. For Cook County, Illinois, wills, one could do a search for *Illinois Cook probate* and get very specific results. Learning to use a subject search can help a researcher use a library catalog much more effectively.

Fourth tip: Finally, if you have found a record in the Library Catalog of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and you want to know if it can be found locally, copy the author or the subject line from the Library catalog at familysearch.org and paste it into the search line of the catalog at oaklandfhc.org. Then do an author or subject search. You used to be able to do a title search, but recently The Family History Library has changed many of the titles in their catalog, so the author or subject search is your best choice. The call number search in our catalog is too specific to be easy to learn. The

...and a few other things *(continued)*

title or subject approach works the best and is the one we in the cataloging department use.

The near future

Exciting things are happening at familysearch.org. In fact, they are happening so fast that what I reported a few months ago is already outdated and what I report today may be outdated tomorrow, so keep checking.

Familysearch.org as we see it today will soon have a whole new look. You can start now using the new version at this URL: beta.familysearch.org. In fact, they would love for you to start using the new design and contents and then send them feedback. They are really trying to get this program right, and I know that several of the suggestions I have made have already been implemented.


One change you will notice right off is the new layout and color. Personally, I wish they would use a darker and larger font. I think old eyes with bifocals need a bit more contrast. If you agree with

me, let them know. The more of us who speak up, the better the site will become. One little trick not immediately obvious is with the logo. The FamilySearch tree is a home button, so anywhere you are in the program, you can click on the tree and go home. What we have come to know as *Record Search Pilot* is now called *Historical Records* and is searched from the home page. They have been adding quite a few enhancements to the search engine, so play around with it a bit. Notice that when you are on the home page you can scroll to the bottom and still get the world map we got at Record Search Pilot. At this point, you can select a region of the world and still get a list of records that can be searched individually. Or you can go to Advanced Search and limit the search by putting in specific time periods and areas where your ancestor lived. This feature still needs some work but they are trying.

Another fun thing to try out is the Learn section. From the home

page, click on the Learn tab and explore it. Wiki.familysearch.org has now been consolidated into FamilySearch on this page. Put in some key words that describe your problem and see if an answer already exists. For instance, try *Cherokee genealogy*, *North Carolina tax records*, or *Ireland Quakers* and see how much information is available. If you have expertise that seems to be missing from wiki, add what you know and help someone else.

Another great find under Learn is *Research Courses*. I just counted 100 classes being offered, and more are showing up all the time. Each class is offered free online. You get a PowerPoint presentation, a teacher speaking to you, and a handout. There are classes on Cherokee Genealogy, Irish church records, Russian research, and GenealogyBank. One I took recently and loved is called Genealogy Tool Box. You can find it about halfway down the list.

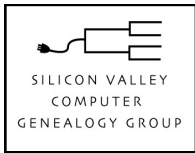
I am trying not to be prejudiced as I tell you that in the months and years to come, familysearch.org will be the premier genealogical research site in the world. Already it is one of the best and most frequently used sites. As the 2.8 million rolls of microfilm in Utah are digitized, indexed, and added to the site, as more records currently being found and digitized are added, as the search engine is improved, as genealogists all over the world add their expert knowledge to the wiki, and as the genealogies now at new.familysearch.org are added and opened to the world, the possibilities are beyond imagination. We live at an amazing time. What a thrill it is to be part of this technological explosion. 



OF - Regional FHC Catalog
SEARCH RESULTS
Viewing 1 - 7 of 157 for
GERMAN

Title	Author	Call #	Status
 The Atlantic bridge to Germany	Hall, Charles M.	943 D25hc V.1-5,7,9	In
 Namensannahmelisten der Juden 1809-1810.	Jüdische Gemeinde Mannheim	Film 1335359 Item 2	In
 Kirchenbuch. 1600-1876.	Evangelische Kirche Untergruppenbach (O.A. Heilbronn)	Film 1860469 Items 1 - 4	In
 Evangelische Kirchenbuchauszüge. 1558-1808.	Cramer, Max	Film 566024 Item 14	In
 Address book for Germanic genealogy.	Thode, Ernest	943 E4t 1994	In
 Kirchenbuch. 1604-1914.	Katholische Kirche Großkissendorf (BA, Günzburg)	Film 844308 - 844309	In
 Kirchenbuch. 1650-1963.	Evangelische Kirche Mittelschefflenz (A, Mosbach)	Film 1189228 Items 2 - 11	In

Search results showing German-related holdings of the Los Altos FHC, located through the Athena online catalog, managed by the Oakland Regional FHC..



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Electronic contribution of articles is welcome. The editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit articles.

Upcoming SVCGG meetings, events

The group meets monthly except December, on the second Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 a.m. at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, California (see map at right).

November 13 meeting


These are the November classes (tentative listing, may change):

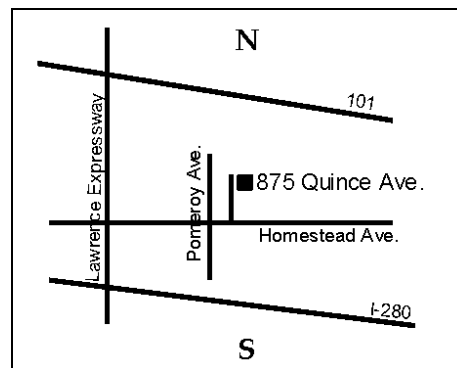
- Finding descendants and collaterals
- Organizing your hard-drive for genealogy
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- Beginning genealogy

No December meeting

January meeting

See current information at www.svcgg.org.

- Research skills (not finalized)
- Reunion for the Mac
- Getting started with Reunion
- PAF/PCs for beginners. 



See www.svcgg.org/directions.html

About the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

SVCGG is the former Silicon Valley PAF Users Group, a nonprofit group of some 600 genealogy enthusiasts. The group is based in Silicon Valley in the Bay Area of northern California, but members live all over the world.

PastFinder is the official publication of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. Published monthly except December, *PastFinder* is distributed at meetings to

members in attendance and mailed to others after the meetings. Members can receive the newsletter by e-mail containing a download link.

SVCGG offers research tools and materials through its Web site, www.svcgg.org.

Membership dues are US\$15 per household per year, US\$20 for Canada, and US\$25 for other international locations. 