

Organizational Strategies that Work for You – Renae Grubb Feb. 25, 2014

The ABC's & 123's of organizing your genealogy research

A: assess & analyze the type of system that will work best for you. What is your research goal?

- What type of information do you currently have? Papers, photos, heirlooms?
- What type of filing system will work best for the items you have?
- File folders? Binders? Photo albums? Computers? Combination?
- Colour coding is very useful
- Talk to other researchers and ask the pros and cons of their system
- I know when I first started I used file folders and photo albums; however as my research grew I've progressed to binders, more photo albums and computer. I guess when I saw two researchers' bookshelves lined in colour coded binders; I immediately thought that's what I would like!

B: basic information on researching:

- Know how to collect and record information from birth, marriage & death records
- Sourcing these records is equally important
- Stradonitz coding system: computer systems do all of this for you
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogical_numbering_systems
- <http://ancestoring.blogspot.ca/2012/11/question-about-numbering-systems.html>
- <http://www.genealogy.ro/cont/19.htm>
- Refer to ancestral & pedigree charts
- Best to use the word for each month March, rather than the numerical symbol 03
- Be consistent so that future generations know your system
- https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Research_Forms

C: collecting:

- Census records, charts, civil registrations, directories, indexes, military records, newspapers, passenger lists, etc.
- Archives, cemeteries, churches, family history centres, libraries, etc.

- Interview family members & ask what type of records to they have? Vital, personal, legal, school, religious, government & health records.
- Heirlooms and photos
- Keep an alphabetical index booklet or keep track on the computer
- Keep a journal with all your activities with date, time started & ended, & activity performed

D: don't:

- Don't Assume = need to back it up with facts
- Don't rely on stories for facts since most are often exaggerated or embellished = make note who the information is from
- Don't use abbreviations if possible = cuts down on confusion
- Don't do anything that is not reversible; avoid using pen, tape, glue & laminating

Time to put the ABC's into action:

1: Start with yourself, start with the known, and then focus on each branch

2: Organize & Record: pick a system that works for you

Tips of the internet of commonly used genealogical filing systems include:

- **By Surname** - All papers for an individual surname are filed together.
- **By Couple or Family** - All papers related to a husband and wife or family unit are filed together.
- **By Family Line** - All papers related to a specific family line are filed together. Many genealogists begin by starting with four such ancestral lines - one for each of their grandparents.
- **By Event** - All papers related to a specific event type (i.e. birth, marriage, census, etc.) are filed together.

Beginning with any of the four systems mentioned above, you could then further organize your papers into the following categories:

- **By Location** - Papers are first grouped by one of the four genealogy filing systems listed above, and then further broken down by country, state, county, or town to reflect your ancestor's migration. For example, if you chose the Surname Method, you would first group all CRISP ancestors together, and then further break the piles down into the England CRISPs, the North Carolina CRISPs, and the Tennessee CRISPs.
- **By Record Type** - Papers are first grouped by one of the four genealogy filing systems listed

above, and then further broken down by record type (i.e. birth records, census records, wills, etc.).

Ten Tips for Organizing Genealogy Research

1. Sheet Control – Use standard 8 ½ x 11-inch paper for all notes and printouts.
2. Stay Single – One surname, one locality per sheet for easy filing.
3. No Repeats – Avoid errors; write legibly the first time.
4. Dating Yourself – Always write the current date on your research notes.
5. Be Color Clever – Distinguish family lines with different colored folders, binders, tabs.
6. File First – File one research trip or effort before starting the next one.
7. Ask Directions – Write your own filing instructions; a big help when you take a long break.
8. Supply Closet – Keep a stash of folders, plastic sleeves, tabs, printer ink.
9. One File at a Time – Work through paper piles steadily; the mess didn't happen in one day.
10. KISS – Keep It Simple, Silly! Use an easy to set up, easy to maintain system.

3: Writing a Family History – presenting & preserving your family research

<http://www.cyndislist.com/cyndislistsearch/?cx=partner-pub-3865931076334159%3A8oekij-g1td&cof=FORID%3A10&ie=ISO-8859-1&q=Write+a+family+history&sa=Search>

Websites:

http://www.genealogy.com/27_smith.html

http://genealogy.about.com/cs/organization/a/filing_systems.htm

<http://genealogy.about.com/od/organization/>

<https://sites.google.com/site/genealogyvideos/organizing-genealogy-research> = you tube

<http://www.pinterest.com/familytreemag/organize-your-genealogy/> = various formats

<http://www.thefamilycurator.com/home/2010/7/18/four-tried-and-true-systems-for-organizing-genealogy-research.html#.UwqEU7CYa70>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1oCGZuRTMk>

<http://www.cyndislist.com/organizing/general/>

<http://www.fileyourpapers.com/index.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpPX4aMaT9g>