THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC. **Expand Your Genealogy Horizon** Through Education KEEP EDUCATING YOURSELF

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Why Name our Journal Stirpes? Pronounced "STÛR'PEZ," it perfectly describes the core understanding of our passion in researching ancestry and family history: The phrase "... to my heirs, per stirpes" means that the legal heirs share their inheritance based on their relationship to the deceased. (See full story in Stirpes, 2016, Volume 55, Number 3-4.)

From the

Editors' Pen

olving genealogy problems requires a multi-pronged approach of seeking out new records, understanding the context of those records, and analyzing the information collected to illuminate new connections. As we move through those steps—seeking, understanding, and analyzing—we often discover that we need to learn better skills and develop deeper insights to solve the research challenge we're facing. Fortunately, genealogy education is often just a click away. This issue of *Stirpes* addresses genealogy education, presenting numerous virtual or in-person options that are free or fee based.

Melody Hooper Woods lays the groundwork for learning in "Maximize Your Genealogy Education in Three Steps," showing how to assess your educational needs, learn using educational resources that match your needs, personality, and preferences, and act on your new knowledge. "Sharpening the Saw," by Jim Thornhill, discusses how enhancing basic skills—researching, reading, and writing—can help solve family history mysteries. Pat Gordon introduces an unusual source of education that's at most genealogists' fingertips in "Learning from Footnotes, Endnotes, and Bibliographies."

The most used source for genealogical records, the internet, is also a great venue for genealogical education. Nancy Gilbride Casey highlights webinars and where to find them in "Ten Webinar Resources for Every Genealogical Topic." "Learning through Listening: Enter the World of Podcasts," by Emily Coffman Richardson, shows how busy researchers can incorporate education in their spare minutes and describes ten genealogy-based podcasts for readers to consider.

Want to find more virtual and inperson educational opportunities? In "ConferenceKeeper.org: So Much More Than Conferences!", Tami Osmer Mize discusses how genealogists can use this resource to keep abreast of what's available and when. Susan Kaufman reminds us that not all records are found online and shows how to learn more about researching in person in "Navigating the World of Genealogy: A Guide to Utilizing Libraries and Archives for Family History Research."

Study groups are a growing medium for learning through studying a publication and interacting with others. "Let's Talk About It: Genealogy Study Groups for All Levels," by Nancy Gilbride Casey, highlights the benefits of learning with others and how study groups work. "Stirpes Study Group: TxSGS Announces New Program for Partner Societies," introduces a Stirpes-based program available in May for use by TxSGS Partner Societies. In "Grow and Practice Your Research & Writing in a ProGen Study Group," Jan Joyce provides insight into this intensive approach to the book, Professional Genealogy, edited by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

Institutes, academies, and study courses are key settings for intensive learning by genealogists of all levels. "Unlocking Ancestral Mysteries: The Benefits of Attending Genealogy Educational Institutes" examines advantages to institutes and highlights five popular programs. In "Expanding Horizons: An Educational Journey with Family History Academy," Cathie Sherwood discusses the process of choosing classes and instructors for Family History Academy and how this program can extend skills and knowledge. Patricia Reed covers educational resources available at the National Genealogical Society in "The National Genealogical Society: Leaders in Genealogical Education for 120 Years."

Stirpes polled our readership for their thoughts on genealogy education in "Exploring the Impact of Genealogical Education," gleaning interesting



perspectives and insights. In his book review, Bill Buckner covered an excellent learning tool, *Breaking Through Walls:* Proven Methods and Sources to Break Down Genealogical Brick Walls, by Leslie Watson Tomlinson.

"Digitizing Photos? Don't Forget to Preserve the Stories Too," by Laura Hedgecock, discusses educational offerings at Vivid-Pix for incorporating family stories into your photo digitization process while giving tips for tackling that mountain of photos.

Diverging from our education theme, "School Marm to Family Tree: Tracing Miss Aurora Archer's Roots," by Russell A. Rahn, takes an early 1900s school photo and builds a tree for the teacher while giving tips for dealing with conflicting census enumerations.

This issue also includes articles on TxSGS programs including "From Roots to Recognition: TxSGS Awards Program Encourages Writing and More," which describes award categories and submission guidelines. As we're focusing on all things educational, the Volunteer Spotlight honors Emily Richardson, visionary behind the *Lone Star Family Trails* podcast. Be sure to read the "Partner Society Roundup" for genealogical society news from TxSGS's Partner Societies across Texas. You might find an interesting and educational event of interest in your area!

Our next issue focuses on the challenges we face in finding our female ancestors. Do you have an interesting story about a woman in your family or an insightful look at researching female ancestors? We invite you to share your story with *Stirpes*! Email stirpes@txsgs.org for more information. The deadline for the June 2024 issue is May 7.

—Stirpes Editors

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Volunteer Spotlight Emily Richardson

In this issue, *Stirpes* shines the volunteer spotlight on TxSGS
Director at Large Emily Richardson, the visionary behind the

Lone Star Family Trails podcast. Launched in April 2022, the
podcast has become an important aspect of TxSGS's outreach
and educational efforts. It serves as a bridge connecting TxSGS
listeners to the resources, records, and historical context that

Texas offers. Each episode is crafted to highlight specific
elements that enrich the genealogical knowledge of those researching
their Texas ancestors.

Under Emily's leadership, the podcast has adopted a format that not only educates but also engages its audience. A typical episode features a host interviewing an expert guest, providing listeners with insights into various genealogical resources available in Texas. From state-wide facilities like those at the Texas General Land Office to local treasures such as the Franklin County Genealogical Society library, the

podcast covers a broad spectrum of topics. This approach ensures that whether one is a seasoned genealogist or a newcomer to the field, there is always something new to learn from each episode.

Moreover, the *Lone Star Family Trails* podcast serves as a conduit for keeping the genealogical community informed about the latest happenings within TxSGS. This aspect of the podcast underscores our commitment

to fostering a connected and informed community of genealogists.

The popularity of the podcast speaks volumes about its impact. The more than 15 episodes in the podcast library have not only garnered over 1,000 listens but have also seen a steady increase in interest month after month. This achievement is a testament to Emily's vision, hard work, and dedication to the genealogical community.

Emily's contribution to TxSGS and the broader genealogical community through the Lone Star Family Trails podcast is invaluable. As the podcast continues to grow and evolve under her guidance, it connects and inspires all those seeking their Texas roots.



TxSGS Lone Star Family Trails Podcast

New episodes available monthly

STIRPES

Catch up on episodes in our podcast library at https://www.txsgs.org/lone-star-family-trails-podcast-library/

march 2024

Expanding Horizons:

An Educational Journey with Family History Academy

by Cathie Sherwood

ow it began: I am a teacher, and I love genealogy. Combining those two passions seems like a no-brainer, doesn't it?

I began my working life as an elementary school teacher, moving on to teaching English as a Second Language, and finally to university teaching. I taught pre-service and in-service teachers about integrating technology into their classrooms, followed by tenure in an information and communication faculty, developing new degree programs in emerging technologies. When I retired, I turned my focus to my family history research, teaching classes, and writing.

In 2021, during the height of the pandemic, I took a virtual institute course in which Thomas W. Jones taught a module. One of the attendees made a throwaway remark about how good it would be to have Tom offer a class on getting the most out of Microsoft Word for genealogical writing. I thought, "I can organize that!" I approached Tom, he agreed to teach the class, and so Family History Academy (FHA) was born. From its inception, FHA was designed as a virtual platform and will remain as one.

Bridging the gap

I recognized that what the genealogy community needed was not just more information but a new way to engage with learning—a model that was accessible and focused. So, the concept for Family

History Academy emerged: an online platform providing targeted courses and workshops aimed at filling the educational space between webinars and week-long institutes, all at an affordable price point.

I want to ensure that learners gain knowledge and understand how to apply it directly to their research—skill building for family historians. My own teaching and learning experiences inspired this approach because I know that information is more likely to be retained when it can be applied immediately. By encouraging interaction and practical exercises, I hope to transform passive learning into an active, engaging process.

Finding the right courses and instructors for you

Family History Academy is now in its fourth year and still going strong. I am privileged to have highly respected educators worldwide teach courses focused on essential skills, best practices, and DNA methodology. We also actively seek out up-and-coming talent in genealogy, identifying passionate educators who bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to our online classes. This blend of established experts and new voices ensures attendees a dynamic and comprehensive learning experience.



So, what is my process?

1. I listen.

When you tell me what courses you would like, mention educational gaps on social media, and suggest a much-needed topic in a session, I file those requests and queries and find suitable educators who could teach those classes.

2. The class is scheduled and taught.

Once instructors and class dates are established, courses for the first half of the year are added to the Family History Academy website. While the year is usually planned by February, new topics such as artificial intelligence are added to the curriculum as soon as possible because courses need to be up-to-date and relevant. Some classes are offered over six months with a monthly two-hour session. Others are shorter, between three and nine hours, weekly, or every other week.

3. Courses are promoted and taught.

Over the years, I have developed a mailing list, using this as my main avenue for course promotion. A newsletter goes out at the beginning of the month, and a mid-month email usually features a single course or workshop. Upcoming classes are also promoted on Family

Maximize Your Genealogy Education in Three Steps

by Melody Hooper Woods

Whether you are a budding genealogist just starting your family tree, an expert professional, or somewhere in between, the variety of educational materials and activities available can feel overwhelming. Where should we focus our time and attention? How can we actively learn the content in these resources? And how can we use new knowledge to improve our competency?

ASSESS

LEARN

LEARN

ACT

Take action with appropriate educational resources. genealogist.

Take action with new knowledge and S.M.A.R.T. goals.

By following three steps, you can center your focus, maximize learning, and level up your genealogy skills.

Step 1: Assess what you need to learn to increase your competency.

Step 2: Learn using the educational resources that match your needs, personality, and preferences.

Step 3: Act on your new knowledge and set S.M.A.R.T. goals to advance as a genealogist.

Step 1: Assess what you need to learn or do to increase your competency as a genealogist.

How can you move past your current competency level? First, assess your knowledge, skills, and habits. Ask, "What do I need to do to advance as a genealogist?" Connect this to your current research question. If you do not have a research question, write one. Then, write down both what you know and the knowledge gaps that are holding you back.

• Do you need to learn how to use land records because you are in the habit of using only familiar census and vital records?

- Do you struggle to read old handwriting?
- Are your files an unorganized mess?
- Are you lazy about keeping a research log or writing source citations?
- Have you procrastinated learning how to use your DNA test results?

After you have thought it through and made a list, it is time to choose educational resources that are relevant to your research question and will keep you engaged and focused.

Step 2: Learn using the educational resources that match your needs, personality, and preferences.

The Genealogical Proof Standard, found in the book *Genealogy Standards*, *Second Edition*, outlines ninety standards for personal and professional genealogical research and conclusions. Two standards, "Standard 89. Development goals" and "Standard 90. Regular engagement," highlight the need for

genealogists to continue their education.² "Standard 90. Regular engagement" recommends that genealogists use both formal and informal educational activities. You can choose interactive or solitary versions of these activities, depending on your personality and learning preferences.

Interactive Educational Activities

Interactive educational activities offer a range of in-person and virtual options. They may be as formal as a class where you learn from a prominent professional or as informal as partnering with another genealogist to critique each other's work. Below is a list of interactive activities with tips on how to actively learn. See the sidebar for TxSGS educational opportunities in many of these categories.

Conferences, Institutes, Seminars, and Workshops

- Make use of presenters' notes.
- Ask questions during questionand-answer sessions.

Ten Webinar Resources for Every Genealogical Topic

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

Who doesn't love "bunny-slipper genealogy"? Grab a cup of coffee while still in your jammies, settle into your recliner with your laptop, and log in to get some research done.



Well, no need to slip out of your bathrobe or sweatpants to work on your genealogy education—not when there are webinars.

Webinars have become the goto way to educate family history researchers today, and if you have a topic in mind, some repository or group has thought of a presentation for it. Each year, hundreds of educational genealogy webinars are scheduled by libraries, archives, and genealogical societies nationwide.

Most webinars are free of charge; those sites that charge a fee are worth the investment to access the sheer number of titles available. Sales and discounts are periodically offered for these sites, so be sure to sign up for newsletters to be informed of discounts.

Start yourself on a great path to education—check out this sampling of ten great webinar sites:

Legacy Family Tree Webinars offers a stunning array of webinars on every conceivable topic. Register for free and watch the webinars live or for free for seven days after the event. Paid subscriptions give you access to over 2,100 webinars in their library on everything from finding African Americans in the Military to Jewish Genealogy in Canada to tech tools, and so much more.

Houston Public Library's Family
History Research Center at the
Clayton Library Campus lists their
upcoming online webinars on their
Events Page. Be sure to filter your
search for "online events" unless
you are local and can attend inperson. Upcoming webinars include
"Preservation 101," "Scrapbook
Preservation," and "Using Vertical
Files."

The Allen County Public Library
Genealogy Center hosts a wide
variety of new topics each month.
"How to Tap into Tax Records to
Enrich Your Genealogy," "Question
Everything: Breaking Through the
Brick Walls We've Built," and "Guide
to Custom Passenger Lists: 1820 - ca.
1891" are just a few of the upcoming
events scheduled by one of the most
respected genealogy libraries in the
country. Registration is free but
required to receive the Zoom meeting
link.

Texas State Library and
Archives's Research Webinar Series
is available on its website. Recent
offerings include titles such as
"Newspaper Resources at TSLAC,"
"Native American Research
Resources at TSLAC," and "Republic
of Texas Resources," to name a few.
Webinars are on-demand and free to
all with no registration required.

BYU Library Family History
Channel on YouTube offers over
900+ family history webinars, virtual classes, and other instructional videos.
Topics include methodology, records, resources, tools, and other information to help you with your family history.
Curated playlists help you target your learning.

American Ancestors, the website of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, offers many family history webinars on its website. Recent additions include titles such as, "Records and Resources at Library and Archives Canada: Online and Onsite," "Family History Roundtable: Traveling for Your Research," and "Finding Enslaved African American Ancestors in New England." All videos are free to view.

Research Like a Pro Webinar Series, hosted by the motherdaughter team from Family Locket and Research Like a Pro, presents a 12-month paid subscription webinar series. Learn from monthly case studies presented by researchers using the Research Like a Pro and Research Like a Pro with DNA process. Each webinar features the Research Like a Pro steps and how they were applied to a particular case study. Presented via Zoom and recorded for those who cannot attend live, registering for this webinar series provides lifetime access to the recordings.

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Learning through Listening:

Enter the World of Podcasts

by Emily Coffman Richardson

o you lead a super busy life—one where it is difficult to add anything into an already packed schedule? Or are you someone who spends enough time researching online that the thought of sitting and watching a webinar or Zoom learning event strikes you as "no more?" In either case, podcasts may be your entry into learning more about genealogy.

Designed to be informative, entertaining, and educational, podcasts are digital audio files made available on the internet for downloading to a computer or mobile device. They are typically available as a series in which new installments can be received by subscribers automatically. Moreover, podcasts are often free to the listener.

Many enjoy podcasts while commuting—whether that is driving in a car or using mass transit. Others listen to podcasts while exercising or cooking. Some listen to podcasts on their tablet or laptop. My favorite podcasts are playing in my ears as I walk in the pool while using my smartphone paired with earplugs.

Regardless of how or when you are listening, there are many genealogy podcasts you should add to your listening list. Most have a landing page where transcripts or notes from their podcast may be posted. Here are ten to consider.

1. Lone Star Family Trails

https://www.txsgs.org/lone-star-family-trails-podcast/
Texas State Genealogical Society began their podcast in 2022 and now has 16 episodes posted. The

podcast currently focuses on repositories across the state of Texas that hold key resources for finding the history of our Texas ancestors. Museums, libraries, and archives, plus digital and inperson research are discussed and are part of each podcast.

2. The Genealogy Guys Podcast https://genealogyguys.com/ Hosted by George G. Morgan and Drew Smith, this podcast began in September 2005. Each episode includes the latest news from genealogical companies and

from genealogical companies and organizations, listener email, plus book reviews, interviews, more.

3. Extreme Genes, "America's Family History Radio Show"

https://www.extremegenes.com/ Scott Fisher, Extreme Genes' host, shares his mission: "I teach ordinary people how to make extraordinary finds in genealogy and family history research, using strategies that make genealogy fun and exciting." Scott Fisher has retired; this podcast's last new episode was aired on December 18, 2023. There are a few "new" episodes, but they are replays.



4. The Research Like A Pro Genealogy Podcast

https://familylocket.com/the-research-like-a-pro-genealogy-podcast/

Hosted by mother/daughter team Diana Elder, AG, and Nicole Dyer, you will learn about the "Research Like A Pro" method of genealogy research. With nearly 300 podcasts, you can start from the beginning or just join in at their current podcast.

5. Genealogy Happy Hour

https://genealogyhappyhour.com
The Two Blondes (Amy Crabill
Lay and Penny Burke Bonzwitz)
work to help individuals get on
the "right track and that means
DOCUMENTATION." Nearing
100 episodes, many enjoy their
banter and the wine that is key to
their podcasts.

6. Amy Johnson Crow's Generations Café

https://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com/announcing-generations-cafe-genealogy-podcast/

A new addition to genealogy podcasts, Amy Johnson Crow keeps her podcasts to between 15 to 30

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Get Involved!

The Texas State Genealogical Society is an all-volunteer organization, and we'd love to have you join us. There are a number of volunteer opportunities, from active involvement to just a few hours at the annual conference.

Think about what you have to offer – expertise, skills, talents, interests, and more.

Do you enjoy editing or proofreading; creating brochures, forms, or templates; or working with electronic databases and other software? Are you the "meet-and-greet" type who thrives on event planning, publicity, and hospitality? Maybe you're active on social media or some other forum for promoting genealogy.



Whatever your skill, consider volunteering to help with the 2024 TxSGS Family History Conference, 2025 Texas Institute of Genealogical Research (TIGR), or other programs and events. Volunteering is open to those planning to attend as well as those who just want to help get ready for the event.

Volunteering is a great way to get to know TxSGS and its leaders as well as network with fellow genealogists. In addition to the conference and TIGR, TxSGS has several committees and ongoing programs; new projects will be launched in 2024. Listed below are just a few volunteer opportunities. To learn more about each of these, email volunteers@txsgs.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

- Abstractors, indexers, data entry help build a database of heritage certificate lineages for publication in books or on the TxSGS website.
- Communications/Publicity using a newsletter, Mailchimp, and social media, engage TxSGS members and friends with information about events, programs, Partner Societies, and more.
- DNA Committee work with the Early Texans DNA Project and database to review processes, web content, and future plans.
- District Representatives serve as the TxSGS Partner Society liaison in a designated district and promote TxSGS and its events to genealogists in that district. Residence in the designated district is not required.
- Stirpes Admin provide administrative support such as coordinating with authors and advertisers on deadlines and required materials.
- Volunteer Coordinator identify persons interested in volunteering for TxSGS.

Would you like to use your skills to help, but nothing on this list intrigues you? Contact <u>volunteers@txsgs.org</u> to start a conversation about where you can make a difference.

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Exploring the Impact of **Genealogical Education**

by Susan E. Ball

As genealogy enthusiasts dive into the depths of their family's past, education plays a pivotal role in enhancing research skills and methodologies. *Stirpes* reached out to TxSGS members and friends to share their thoughts about genealogical education. Their responses highlight the diverse ways in which learning and community support can enrich the journey of uncovering one's heritage.

Asked about their engagement with genealogical education over the past year, respondents showed a pronounced preference for virtual learning, likely attributed to its greater availability and ease of access compared to in-person events. The data, shown in figure 1, reveals that a substantial 36 percent of respondents devoted over 20 hours to virtual

education, with smaller numbers investing 10 to 20 hours (11 percent) and 0 to 10 hours (9 percent) in online formats. In comparison, in-person education attracted fewer genealogists, with 17 percent spending over 20 hours, 10 percent dedicating 10 to 20 hours, and 11 percent engaging for 0 to 10 hours. The survey also noted a minimal engagement in other

educational formats (3 percent) and a slight percentage not participating in any form of genealogical education (2 percent). This trend underscores the significant impact of virtual learning's accessibility on genealogists' educational pursuits, reflecting a broader shift towards online platforms for educational content delivery.

An estimate for the number of hours spent in genealogical education over the past year as reported by survey respondents revealed a compelling trend towards virtual learning, as shown by figure 2. According to the results, a substantial 64 percent of the educational hours were dedicated to virtual formats, overshadowing the 36 percent of hours spent in traditional in-person settings. This pivot towards digital

HOURS SPENT IN GENEALOGY EDUCATION IN THE PAST YEAR

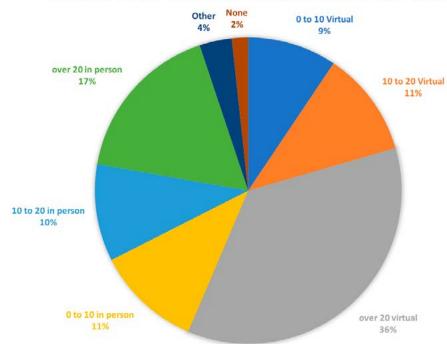


Figure 1: The percentage of respondents for each category of time spent in genealogy education for the past year and the format in which that education took place: 0 to 10 hours, 10 to 20 hours, and over 20 hours in a virtual or in-person format.

IN-PERSON / VIRTUAL

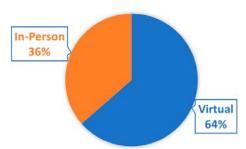


Figure 2: Total hours estimated for in-person and virtual genealogical education for the responses gathered from the survey.

Learning from Footnotes, Endnotes, and Bibliographies

by Pat Gordon

o you know what a counterpane is, or what the expression "to see the lions" means? Had I guessed at the meaning in the book I was reading, I would have been completely wrong. I would have guessed counterpane had something to do with a window, such as a curtain. As far as "to see the lions," obviously that had to be a zoo. Right? Again, not even close.

Fortunately, the author used endnotes which included definitions for her terms.¹

This is only a sampling of what I have learned from footnotes and endnotes. What I like best about footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies is all three increase my knowledge about what I am reading. Not only do I learn things I had no idea I wanted to know, but I also gain some valuable resources that help with my own genealogy research.

A footnote is located at the bottom of the same page where the superscript number is located. Endnotes are located at the end of each chapter or at the end of the book by chapter. Footnotes tend to be shorter notations whereas endnotes often have long explanations.

We all know we should cite our sources when writing a family history or an article for publication. These citations tell a reader additional information not included in the main body of the written work. By including additional information in a footnote, the main text is more readable.

Read on for some reasons to include footnotes or endnotes in your genealogy education.

Learn Source of Information

It is important as a reader to learn whether the source is original, derivative, or authored and if it includes information that is primary, secondary, or undetermined.2 The Evidence Analysis Flowchart (page 30) created by Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG, shows how sources can be categorized as original, derivative, or authored. The information in those sources can be primary, secondary, or undetermined. That information yields evidence that can be regarded as direct, indirect, or negative. To learn more about evidence analysis, see Genealogy Standards by the Board for Certification of Genealogists or "Fundamentals of Evidence Analysis," pages 15-38, in Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

Primary information is created by someone who participated in or witnessed the event and knows the facts firsthand. Just because your great-greataunt wrote a letter saying the family originally came from France doesn't mean it is true. What other sources does the writer have to support this claim?

Since documents are sources, the

reader should be interested in the informant who created the documents and when. Land deed records and marriage licenses are good examples of usually reliable sources because the informant typically had first-hand knowledge of the event. If the source is a derivative such as an abstract or translation of an original document, the question becomes, "How credible is the abstractor or translator?"

Some other common sources used in footnotes are books, magazine articles, newspaper stories, family stories, and the list goes on and on. If you have some reason to doubt the information contained in the source, then attempt to view the original for yourself.

Learn Definitions of Words

What a word means today may be entirely different from what it meant in earlier times and in other cultures. While reading *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, I would have assumed that seminary referred to a religious school, but since it had a footnote, I decided to check. In this case, the Cherokee used seminary to refer to a public high school on the tribal land.³

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Navigating the World of Genealogy:

A Guide to Utilizing Libraries and Archives for Family History Research

by Susan Kaufman

Genealogy research is a journey of discovery that often leads enthusiasts to various educational resources such as institutes, conferences, workshops, webinars, and specialized websites. Once you gather all these ideas from your educational pursuits, it's time to put that knowledge into action.

Eventually, you'll discover that to untangle a particularly difficult research question or scale that intractable brick wall, you need to get out into the world and pursue a research question on site at a library or archive.

Finding and using archives and libraries are part of a genealogist's continuing education. It's important to recognize that no two libraries or archives are the same. From differing classification systems to unique record groupings, each institution has its own way of organizing and accessing materials. You might think all use the Dewey Decimal System. They don't. You might think all the books will be in the same place in every library. They aren't. The record group system isn't the same in every archive.

This diversity means that researchers must be adaptable and open to exploring various avenues to find the information they need. Local and state government archives, university libraries, and public libraries with special collections are all potential gold mines of information, each with its own set of research policies, hours, and access requirements.

You may be intimidated by the thought of researching on-site

in libraries, archives, or repositories. Remember, the information specialists at these institutions are there to help patrons access the information held in those repositories. Learning how to prepare in advance for a research trip and interact with these informational specialists at these institutions will make your research efforts more efficient and likely more successful.

Formulating Research Questions

A good first step is developing a well-defined research question. By understanding what you're looking for and the types of resources that may contain relevant information, you can better communicate your needs to library and archive staff. This preparation enables the staff to suggest materials that may not be immediately apparent or accessible, including those in special collections or behind-the-scenes archives.

Having a prepared research question also keeps you focused on your



research objective. When interacting with the staff, share with them your research question, not your entire genealogy. The information specialist will be able to address what you really want to find instead of having to tease out your research focus from a five-minute monologue on your family history.

Doing Your Homework Online

Before visiting a library or archive in person, it's important to conduct preliminary research online. Not sure what libraries and archives are in your area of research? Use LibWeb (https://www.lib-web.org/), a worldwide directory of libraries and online catalogs. Search by type of library (public, academic, etc.), and narrow the results using words such as "special collections," "manuscripts," "digital archives," or use the "ask a librarian/ archivist" link at each site. Of course, googling your location and the word "library" also identifies libraries near your location, but a LibWeb search may

Let's Talk About It: Genealogy Study Groups for All Levels

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

ave you ever thought about joining a genealogy study group? Are you wondering what they are and how they work? And why you might want to consider joining one?

If you are unfamiliar with how genealogical study groups work, here are two examples of such programs—one local initiative and one national program.

- The **Connections** program, sponsored by the Denton Public Library (DPL) is a free local discussion group begun in 2023. The group meets in person once a month at the library to discuss an article published in *Stirpes*, *The Journal of the Texas State Genealogical Society* (TxSGS). Participants are provided with questions and article themes to consider before each meeting, as well as a resource sheet.
- On the other end of the spectrum are NGSQ Study Groups, which focus on a specific article from the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*—or the *Q*—a journal published by the National Genealogical Society (NGS). Articles are chosen in advance for each year's study.

There are currently six free NGSQ Study Groups actively meeting on various platforms such as Zoom, Basecamp, and Google Meet. Registration is ongoing throughout the year.

GenealogyPants sponsors NGSQ Study Groups moderated by wellknown presenters Cyndi Ingle and Cari Taplin. Four sold-out classes are currently underway for 2024. Registration is open at the end of each year for the following year, and a fee is charged. A waiting list is currently open for the 2025 classes.

Both Connections and the NGSQ Study Groups are aimed squarely at helping participants hone their skills and understanding of genealogical concepts, research methodologies, records collections, and more. The similarities and differences between these two programs are described below.

Connections

Connections was the brainchild of DPL's Special Collections Librarian Laura Douglas. The idea came from a similar project "The Q Review" hosted by the Genealogical Forum of Oregon (GFO) Research Library, which meets monthly to discuss a *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* article.

"Coincidently, the Denton County Genealogical Society's programming committee had been discussing ways to publicize the value of *Stirpes*," Douglas says. "It just clicked; I really liked the article discussion concept but instead of using the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* we could use articles from *Stirpes*." Douglas contacted TxSGS to collaborate, and they readily agreed to support the program.



Attendees can connect to:

- new concepts, resources, or research methods
- books or online sources offered by the Denton Public Library, listed in each month's accompanying Resources List
- benefits offered by joining a regional or state genealogical society such as TxSGS
- other discussion group participants.

Kathy Lawrence, Connections volunteer and co-moderator with Douglas, says the program is "...a fantastic way to promote genealogy writers and their work, while assisting fellow genealogists to increase their knowledge and skillsets AND get to know each other! It's a winner all the way around!"

Lawrence lends her skills to Connections by helping Douglas choose the *Stirpes* articles to be read. Kathy explained her approach: "The articles I initially chose were focused on the writer's research into their own family trees. These articles were easy to read and relate to and covered research methods/sources that genealogists at any skill level could find helpful."

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From Roots to Recognition: TxSGS Awards Program Encourages Writing and More

Serving as a showcase for writers to share their family history, the Texas State Genealogical Society's Writing Awards program annually celebrates the tireless efforts of genealogists, historians, and storytellers who bring the past to life through the written word.

The Awards Program, rooted in the spirit of healthy competition, serves multiple purposes within the TxSGS community by:

- Encouraging members to embrace the art of storytelling and to share their unique family narratives with a wider audience
- Acknowledging and commending the diligent research and professional writing that underpin genealogy
- Underscoring the profound value of recording and preserving historical information for future generations

In a world increasingly focused on technology and data, the awards program recognizes and honors those who are actively preserving memories for their descendants, ensuring that future generations will have a deep and meaningful connection to their roots and heritage.

The TxSGS Awards Program presents awards in the categories of books, manuscripts, periodicals, websites, student projects, and the newest category, blogs. Several categories have subcategories for entries by individuals or Partner Societies. See a list of 2023 award recipients at https://www.txsgs.org/2023-award-recipients/. You will find a link to a video of the 2023 Awards Ceremony there as well.

Submissions for this year's awards should be received by the judges by September 15, 2024. Details about the categories and submission requirements can be found on the TxSGS website: https://www.txsgs.org/programs/awards-grants/writing-awards.



Writing Awards

TxSGS Writing Awards are presented in a variety of categories:

- Category I: Books by Non-Professionals. These books should be written, compiled, or edited by an individual who is not a professional genealogist, as defined in category II below.
 - Family Histories include family lineages or memories in a narrative form.
 - References includes county or community histories; cemetery or census transcriptions; extracts and abstracts of newspapers or records of local and county agencies and courts; and other references of genealogical value.
- Category II: Books by a Professional. This category includes books written or compiled by someone who derives all or part of their income from a genealogy-related business or library. Professional individuals include, but are not limited to, those who are a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, an accredited genealogist (AG) by the International Commission for Accreditation of Professional Genealogists (ICAPGen), or a Certified Genealogist (CG) recognized by the Board for Certification of Genealogists.
- Category III: Manuscripts. These entries include short articles written or compiled by an individual and published in quarterlies or magazines. Manuscripts may have been prepared as part of a certification or accreditation portfolio, but this is not required.

School Marm to Family Tree:

Tracing Miss Aurora Archer's Roots

by Russell A. Rahn

Acaptivating photo of a teacher reveals a moment in time at Union Valley School near Itasca, Hill County, Texas.¹ The picture, shown below, features Miss Aurora Archer surrounded by over two dozen other people who appear to be her students. Their ages vary greatly. The setting suggests a one-room schoolhouse, a common sight in the rural expanses of the country in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Intrigued by this photo and curious about Aurora's family history, I began to wonder: Who were her family, how long had they lived in Texas, where did her family originate in the U.S.? Determining the answers to these questions formed the basis of this research project.

After formulating a research question, it helps to create a plan to guide the process of finding the answer(s). ¹A key concern when working on a family tree is making sure that no one has been overlooked and that all children of a given generation find their way onto the tree. The research plan can address this concern, listing the records that are helpful in getting started and for revealing family members likely to be overlooked: the U.S. census enumerations, Find a Grave, and online family trees. Once the initial structure of the family is identified, additional records should be included in the research plan to further define the family and provide context for their lives.

The U.S. census records are the best starting point for research. After 1850, census enumerations list household members by name and after 1880, relation to the head of household is included for each person enumerated. When striving for a complete family



The reverse of this photo is labeled "Union Valley School / Miss Aurora Archer, Teacher / Itasca, Hill Co., Texas. The handwriting is elegant; spelling and punctuation are perfect.

Image used by permission of author.

structure with all children listed, the obvious problem is that census enumerations occur every 10 years. A census could be taken before the family was complete. Thus, a listing for 1860 would include those family members alive on the enumeration date, but if more children came later, the list is not complete. In a similar way, a census could be beyond the date of family growth, when the older children are married and therefore no longer part of the enumerated household. Finally,

with the high rate of infant mortality in generations past, it is entirely possible that a child who lived for a very short time could never find his way onto the census record at all.

Another source for identifying family members is Find a Grave. Quite often, some kind soul has placed a listing of family members on a deceased person's Find a Grave webpage that includes the names of the parents, spouse(s), siblings, and children of the deceased. While

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Episode #115

East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University Host: Susan Kaufman; Guest: Linda Reynolds,

Director, East Texas Research Center

Episode #114

West Waco-McLennan Genealogy Center Host: Sue Kaufman; Guest: Bill Buckner, Genealogy Supervisor of the Genealogy Center

Episode #113

Texas Heritage Museum at Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas

Host: Ron Barnett; Guest: John R Verslius, Dean of the Texas Heritage Museum at Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas

Episode #112

Dallas Public Library – Genealogy & History Division

Host: Tony Hanson; Guest: Ari Wilkins, Public Service Specialist

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Houston Public Library, African American History Research Center, At the Gregory School

Host: Sue Kaufman; Guest: Miguell Ceasar, Manager

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Texas Institute of Genealogical Research (TIGR)

Host: Émily Richardson; Guest: Kelvin L. Meyers, TIGR Director

Episode #108

Texas General Land Office Host: Sue Kaufman; Guest: James Harkins, Director of Public Services for the Texas General Land Office Archives and Records Program

Episode #107

The Houston Public Library Family History Center at The Clayton Center Host: Randy Whited; Guest: Sue Kaufman, Senior Manager

Episode #106

Texas Archive of the Moving Image (TAMI)

Host: Sue Kaufman; Guest: Elizabeth Hansen, Managing Director Episode #105

Texas Baptist Collection
Host: Ron Barnett; Guest: Alan
LeFever, Director of the Texas Baptist Historical
Collection in Waco. Texas

Episode #104

The Portal to Texas History Host: Randy Whited; Guest: Jake Magnum, UNT Program Development Librarian at University of North Texas in Denton

Episode #103

The Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University Host: Ron Barnett; Guest: Dr. Monte L. Monroe, archivist for the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University in Lubbock and State Historian for Texas

Episode #102

The San Antonio Genealogical and Historical Society Library
Host: Sue Kaufman; Guest: Barbara Froebel,
President and Historian of the San Antonio
Genealogical and Historical Society

Episode #101

The Texas Collection and Archives at Baylor University
Host: Ron Barnett; Guest: Amie Oliver, Interim Director of the Texas Collection and an assistant librarian

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