

Organising your Family History Research



Trafford Local Studies Centre Collection, cat. ref. TL9911

Researching your family history can be very rewarding, but the process can leave you with a huge amount of paperwork: from certificates, census reports and photographs to newspaper articles. Unless these materials are kept safe, you could spend hours looking for that elusive piece of paper – or suffering from information overload.

There are many ways you can organise your family history research and every person will develop their own system over time. Some people prefer to have paper copies of their findings, whilst others like to be paper-free and keep all their research in digital folders. Many others prefer to keep both paper and digital records.

Ideally, once you have settled on a system that works for you, you should be able to:

- Create a biography of your ancestors(s), using the information you've collected through research
- Know what biological information is missing for each ancestor
- Know what resources you have used (websites, archives, etc.)
- Know who you have contacted/interviewed, and any responses received

The following websites provide useful tips and advice for organizing both paper-based and digital genealogy research:

<https://www.familytreeresources.com/recording-family-history.html>

<http://blog.foldermarker.com/2020/how-to-use-color-coding-in-genealogical-research/>

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/charts-and-forms>

Photographs



Trafford Local Studies Centre Collection, cat. ref. TL4665



Trafford Local Studies Centre Collection, cat. ref. TL7782

Family photo collections are often regarded as precious, not only for sentimental reasons, but also for family history research. It is therefore essential that they are stored, preserved, and handled with care.

It can be a challenge to organise family photos (especially large collections), and the project often takes time. For this reason we do recommend beginning with the safe storage of your photographs. Storing images in archive-quality wrappings – such as boxes, individual photograph sleeves, or albums – is an excellent way to protect the materials from the damage caused by dust, insects and mould.

The following websites offer useful tips and guidance on how to look after your family photographs:

<https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives>

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2015/fall/handling-photos.html>

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/help/30-tips-for-analysing-old-photos-genealogy-deciphering-clues>