Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2017
Education Zone Saturday 8th April 15:15

Publishing your research on the web. Six tips to help and some potential pitfalls to avoid

A website for your local or family history research is a great method to share findings and have others come to you, perhaps even distant relatives. This short talk gives some guidance on how to set up a website and connecting it with social media outlets to maximise visibility on the Internet.

Why share your research online?

- To provide access for our friends and family
- To provide an outlet for our hard work
- To find relatives and those researching the same ancestors

1. Setting up a website

- Gives you a good platform on which to lay out your content
- While there's many options, for a beginner I recommend **wordpress.com**. Why?
  - It's free (with chargeable upgrades)
  - Straightforward to use
  - No real technical knowledge required
  - Easily upgradeable – Wordpress is used by a lot of professional web designers for quite substantial projects
  - Lots of optional extras

2. Writing content & blogging

So you have a website. Now what?
It's now time to add content, to describe your research:
  - the people and places
  - their relationships
  - images
  - photographs
  - maps

- Blog! You don't have to write long essays, it can be short stories, just relevant to your research. Wordpress.com is a blog platform so it's easy to incorporate a blog with your website.
- Just make your clear, interesting and keyword rich. Keywords are the words and phrases you enter into a search engine to find websites.

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3. Sharing : how much is enough?

I am often asked about how to protect data, or often genealogists say, "I don't want to give my research away".

The key is you don't have to. By using public v private (protected via password) pages (another Wordpress.com feature), you can determine what exactly you share.

So what to do you share?
Keywords – what will people search for?
- surnames,
- first names,
- maybe places of birth or places lived
- regiments served

This information in isolation does not "give away" all your research but it gives information people would want to search for. *If this information is public then it will be available for searchers to find.*

Think hard about whether it's in your benefit to restrict access. The more you share the more you open yourself up to being approached from other interested parties.

4. Promoting via social media

I sometimes get groans when I suggest social media but the fact is Twitter / Facebook etc. are some of the largest websites in the world so having your content on them can only be a good thing.

Find your audience – who are they? Where are they?
- Groups, societies, perhaps Facebook
- Genealogists love Twitter – strong community on there
- Lots of photographs – perhaps you'd like to use Flickr or Instagram or Pinterest

Use social media to create inbound links to your website. By linking to your content or blog posts, you will be using social media as a way to get attention for your research. Make it work for you and pay no attention to the negative press social media sometimes receives.

5. Being found by Google (and other search engines)

As an Internet user, you will be familiar with searching for things via Google. (We say Google as it has by far the biggest market share but this equally applies to Bing, Yahoo and the lesser search engines).

Genealogists will often search for their ancestors' names or villages they lived in.

So if you have followed the previous tips and provided lots of content, you will be enabling Google to index your research and enabling people to find you.

The key is relevance. Relevant content describing your research.

How can my website be found?
A wordpress.com site should get indexed automatically. Using social media will help. So will inbound links. Which brings us to our last tip…

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6. Collaboration & link building

A good way of promoting your website is collaborating with relevant parties, such as other researchers, family history societies or local history societies. Ask them to place a link to your website and offer one in return.

Relevant inbound links are a good source of gaining traffic either directing from the website or via the boost your website will get in the search engine results.

Note: you get no technical benefit from linking to others, only the collaborative benefit of mutual link sharing.

Conclusion

This is a big subject and I've only scratched the surface in this short talk. The message I want you to take away is it does not have to be difficult to get your research online. By using wordpress.com, much of the setup is done for you, leaving you to concentrate on presenting your research.

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