Tech with Thomas

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Heading

Should I get a SSD drive?: Why SSD drive technology is superior and the best for portable data!

I'm hoping you have a solid backup program or routine for your genealogy data. For years I've own a 4TB external portable hard drive but I recently switched to Solid State Drive (SSD) technology. Why? Well, SSDs do not fail as frequently as traditional hard drives and they are much FASTER when copying data. Plus, the size is incredibly SMALL! A 2TB SSD is the size of a credit card and almost as light! Totally portable and most SSDs support PC and Mac.

Upgrading to Windows 10: I am still on Windows XP! What are my options for upgrading to Windows 10? [Guilty]

Well I don't like being the bearer of bad news. Well, somewhat bad news. The free offer to upgrade to Windows 10 from an older operating system has expired. PLUS if your computer is older, you won't be able to install Windows 10 anyway. Your best bet is to look into purchasing a new computer. Recommendation: working off the SSD issue above, go for a "micro" computer! They are small (about 6 inches x 6 Inches), use SSD technology, and super fast! Store data in the Cloud or on the SSD … technology has changed and so have desktop computers!

What is a USB hub?: Most new computers have a limited number of USB ports – what can I do about it?

Working off of the micro computer concept above, most newer desktop and laptop computers don't have enough USB ports for today's genealogists. Why? In order to keep the price down and to maintain a small size, newer PCs and laptops don't have many USB ports. Consider purchasing a USB hub … they cost about $30 USD and provide up to 10 extra USB ports, both 2.0 (older technology and slower) and 3.0 (newer technology and faster).

Should I start a genealogy blog?: Is it worth it to post my genealogy research to a blog? Is it a lot of work?

Starting a genealogy blog was one of my best decisions and led me on a journey of family history discovery … as well as self-discovery. A blog can be private (did you know that?) and you can invite family and friends to read your posts. I started my genealogy blog in 2006 when my mother's early-onset Alzheimer's Disease at age 59 was rapidly progressing. So I interviewed her for family stories, recipes, and more. And share them on the blog with my family. **Blogger** is a free blogging platform that is easy to use and you can get started in less than five minutes!

Is there any easy way to create source citations for my genealogy research?

Creating source citations for your genealogy research can be daunting. One option is to use the **EasyBib** website (free) which covers 54 different types of sources (website, blog, article, book, video, audio, and more!). In addition, EasyBib can create a bibliography listing of all your source citations and you can save it in Microsoft Word or a variety of other formats.

Should I backup my genealogy files to a cloud program like Dropbox?

YES! Remember that I always advocate one backup of your genealogy data in "The Cloud." Why? What good is backing up your data to the SSD drive mentioned above, and then you leave it right next to your computer which gets flooded or involved in a fire? So you lose both your computer AND your backup! Always have at least ONE BACKUP in the Cloud and **Dropbox** is a great option!

How can I use Evernote for my genealogy research?

Evernote is a "virtual assitant" program that can clip articles and blog posts, save images, create to-do lists and more. Evernote has a freemium version and many genealogists use the program as they are researching their ancestors. BONUS: you can earn a free FULL ACCOUNT by referring others to Evernote!

Is Google Drive safe to use for genealogy? How does it work?

Google Drive is similar to Microsoft Office, complete with programs for creating documents, spreadsheets, slides, and even forms. And it is FREE! You'll even find that many of the commands you use in Microsoft Word will work in the Google Documents component. **BONUS:** it is easy to share files in Google Drive, plus you can design forms such as a Family Group Sheet or a sign up form for your next family reunion!

I want to create a map with all the places my ancestors lived. Can Google Maps do that?

Google Maps is more than just driving directions. Using the **MyMaps** feature, you can create a customized map with different color pins to show where your ancestors lived, worked and worshipped. Don't forget you can also add images and source citations! **BONUS:** you can "embed" your customized map on your genealogy blog or website!

How can Internet Archive help me with my genealogy research? What about the Wayback Machine?

Many genealogists don't realize that Internet Archive has original microfilm scans from NARA (census and more) PLUS items from the Allen County Public Library, one of the largest genealogy libraries in the world! **BONUS:** the Wayback Machine "archives" websites and if you encounter a "404 page not found" error for a genealogy site, enter the URL in the Wayback Machine … often you can get what you need!

I hate Facebook, but feel I'm missing out on genealogy stuff. Any suggestions?

I have a love/hate relationship with **Facebook**, but I've been successful in using it for my genealogy for over 10 years now. I put "blinders" on when I on Facebook. I am very focused …. only genealogy and family history. No politics, no religion, etc. And my family has to put up with my genealogy stuff. And NO GAMES! I've told friends and family that if they invite me to play Farmville, I will burn down their crops! Take advantage of the various genealogy groups on Facebook and don't forget the SEARCH function to locate surnames, ancestral lands, and more!

I keep searching Google every week for new genealogy stuff. Is there a better way?

It isn't easy to keep up with the overload of genealogy information available online. Instead of you remembering to do a genealogy-related search each week or month, why not make Google WORK FOR YOU using Google Alerts? Set up an e-mail alert using Google and you can specify the search terms, the frequency of alerts and more! So spend more time researching genealogy and let Google notify you of new ancestors and more!

I need to search for a genealogy term in German. How do I get started?

I use Google Translate almost every day when I am researching my Hennebergs in Germany. I often need to know the German word for widow (Witwe) or baptism (Taufe). Google Translate is FREE and can translate to and from over 75 different languages. **NOTE:** Google Translate is NOT a good substitute for translating documents or letters. Always connect with a NATIVE SPEAKER since Google Translate cannot handle slange and colloquialisms encountered in everyday conversation and writing.

Does Twitter have any valuable genealogy information?

Like Facebook, I had a love/hate relationship with Twitter. When it first came out I thought it was silly. Until 2010 when I connected with a long-lost cousin all because I posted one of my surnames! **BONUS:** you DO NOT need a Twitter account to search Twitter! Search for surnames, ancestral lands, and the #genealogy hashtag!

How can I calculate the historical value of money or determine the nickname for an ancestor?

I have several letters and diaries from ancestors and when I see that they spent $1 USD for something in 1910, I'm always curious about what the value would be in 2021 money. I use **Wolfram|Alpha** which is a computational database, not a search engine. You can find the historical value of money, the nicknames for a given name, and more!

How can I find out more about the house where my ancestors lived?

Ever wondered what the inside of a house looked like, especially if your ancestor lived there? Well here's my trick: I use real estate listing sites like **Zillow** and enter my ancestor's address. Not only can I find basic information about the structure (when it was built, etc.) but also if it is available for sale, there are interior photos!

Resource List

- **Blogger**
  https://www.blogger.com

- **Dropbox**
  https://www.dropbox.com

- **EasyBib**
  https://www.easybib.com/

- **Evernote**
  https://www.evernote.com

- **Facebook**
  https://www.facebook.com

- **Feedly**
  https://www.feedly.com

- **Google Alerts**
  https://www.google.com/alerts

- **Google Drive**
  http://drive.google.com

- **Google Maps**
  https://maps.google.com

- **Google Translate**
  https://translate.google.com

- **Internet Archive**
  http://archive.org/index.php

- **Twitter**
  https://twitter.com

- **Wolfram Alpha**
  https://wolframalpha.com

- **Zillow**
  https://zillow.com