

The USGenWeb Project

NEWS

Volume 1, Number 8 October 2004

NEWSLETTER NEWS

Sharon Rhodes Editor

As you can see, our newsletter has been updated to match our new website design. You also might want to bookmark our new newsletter archives home <http://www.usgenweb.org/newsletter/>. We will be moving in next week with the help of Mike Jarvis.

ELECTION COMMITTEE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Ellen Pack Election Committee

The USGenWeb Election Committee is looking for six volunteers who would like to serve on the committee.

The "job" includes developing a working relationship with Project members, SCs, and/or Archives personnel to maintain current Project Membership and Registration Lists, and to assist in all polls and elections, especially during the months of June and July when the EC hosts the USGenWeb Project's Annual Election.

Any member of the USGW Project who is eligible to register to vote is eligible for membership in the EC, the exception being that no Advisory Board member may serve as a working member of the EC. Members do not have to be registered to serve.

The EC is looking for team players who will check and respond to mail daily, and recognize the confidentiality aspects of the work. This is a busy but harmonious committee, and the work is very rewarding!

If you are interested in volunteering, please send a note to: Ellen Pack e.j.pack@natchezbelle.org with the subject line, "Volunteer EC".

Please include a brief description of your current USGW participation, including URLs of any sites you maintain, plus any other information you would like the EC to have.

Selected volunteers will be included on a slate that is presented to the Advisory Board for confirmation. The process can take awhile, so please be patient. :-)

More information about the EC is available at: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgwelections/>

REPRESENTATIVE AT LARGE POLL

Ellen Pack Election Committee

Voting in the RAL (Representative At Large) Poll will begin October 1, 2004 12:01 am CST and will end October 8, 2004 11:59 pm CST.

Please contact the EC immediately if you have not received a password by October 2, 2004.

FROM THE WEBMASTERS

Julie McGrew-Ayers and Mike Jarvis

We would like to let our fellow volunteers know that we have a page on the web site for news and announcements. This is for new information that may be important or interesting to other volunteers within the project. If you have something that you believe is newsworthy or informative please send the information directly to Julie or Mike. This is not meant to replace the monthly newsletter.

See the following link: <http://www.usgenweb.org/volunteers/notice.shtml>

We would also like to let everyone know that we will begin highlighting a different county within the project each week. These counties will be selected by the Webmasters and a link to these will be placed on our research page and perhaps the homepage as well. We welcome anyone from within or outside the project to make suggestions or submissions of some of your favorite counties for our review. We have been impressed and inspired by county sites that we have visited and would like to share our discoveries! <http://www.usgenweb.org/about/webmasters.shtml>

EVALUATING GENEALOGY WEB PAGES (PART 1)

Greta Thompson Copy Editor

We've probably all heard warnings about the information on the Internet. Sure, there's good stuff, but there's bad stuff too, including information that's out-of-date, biased, disorganized, incomplete, erroneous, plagiarized, misinterpreted, miscopied, and deliberately misleading. How do we know which is which?

The answer to that question concerns us when we're deciding whether to add some data to our web pages and when we're trying to decide whether Great Grandma Esther's birth date and place according to the census is right or whether the date and place in the letter that Great Grandpa wrote to Uncle Robert is the correct one. As information seekers and information providers we need to be skeptical and cautious.

Fortunately, a lot of resources are available to help us separate the good and the bad.

As information providers

Some of the help available to us as volunteer coordinators comes in the form of requirements: the USGenWeb page requirements for counties and for state coordinators and the additional requirements that states make, e.g., California, Iowa, Maryland, and Florida. Sometimes those requirements seem like a nuisance, interfering with our imaginative page designs and freedom of expression; but in fact they tell visitors that they'll find a baseline of useful information on these sites. That promise is symbolized by the logos we display, logos that give our individual work some authority and legitimacy. We gain more than we lose by meeting the requirements.

Other help is available in the online tutorials that tell us how to design good web sites. Two of the best are Cyndi's Genealogy Home Page Construction Kit and the Guidelines for Publishing Genealogy Pages on the Net by the National Genealogy Society. One of my favorite tips from Cyndi's Construction Kit, by the way, is "Always spell the word "genealogy" correctly," and it's mortifying to notice how many people hosting pages don't.

There are also guidelines for special topics. For example, according to Jakob Nielsen, writing for the web is not the same as writing for a print publication. Take a look at "How Users Read on the Web," which begins with the sentence, "They don't." <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>. This often-referenced article is one of Nielson's "Alertbox: Current Issues in Web Usability" columns. To browse others, go to <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>.

Cyndi's Construction Kit lists many other sites on special topics, as well as her own lists of Dos and Don'ts; and a simple Google search will often turn up more. Don't forget that one of the best tools is browsing other county web pages. I'm always amazed at the wonderful ideas and methods for presentation of data that I find when I go site-hopping.

A book to read on designing good web sites is Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability by Steve Krug. It's short, easy to read, full of great advice, and funny. Whether you're a beginner or an old hand, if you want to improve your website, this is one of the best investments you can make. But don't take my word for it. Read the reviews on Amazon.com, and then head for the library or buy it.

And of course, we can learn a great deal about what we ought to provide from our experience in searching the web for our own or someone else's family history.

Next time I'll take a look at evaluating the sites we search.

URLs for sites mentioned in the article:

USGenWeb requirements for counties: <http://www.usgenweb.com/volunteers/CCguidelines.shtml>

USGenWeb requirements for states: <http://www.usgenweb.com/volunteers/SCguidelines.shtml>

California requirements: <http://cagenweb.com/rules.htm>

Iowa requirements: <http://iagenweb.org/state/rules.htm>

Maryland requirements: <http://www.mdgenweb.org/guidelines.htm>

Florida requirements: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flgenweb/volunteers/adoptioninfo.html>

Cyndi's Genealogy Home Page Construction Kit: <http://www.cyndislist.com/construc.htm>

National Genealogy Society's Guidelines for Publishing Genealogy Pages on the Net:
<http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/comstandweb.htm>

CITING SOURCES

Sharon Rhodes Editor

There are many documentation styles. I'm not going to try to tell you which one you should use because that is determined by your purpose. For example: if you are writing for the NGS you should contact them to determine which style they recommend. My objective is to provide a simple way of recording sources. With this format you, and everyone else, will be able to find the source again. And, you will have the information you need for the documentation style you choose.

Format (based on the Turabian/Chicago Documentation Styles):

Record each of the following that applies to your source.

Author(s). Title. Article Title. Periodical Title :Volume.Issue Page(s). Pub Place: Publisher or Name of Website, Publication or Web Posting Date. Host. Other (Access Date). Web Address

EXAMPLES:

Internet- Article on a Webpage:

Mackey, Ronald S. "Margaret Mahagan." Orphan Train, an IAGenWeb Special Project, ed. Tina Vickery. IAGenWeb.org. Accessed 25 Sep. 2004. <http://iagenweb.org/iaorphans/surname.shtml#twombly>

Internet- Periodical in a Database:

DeBow, J. D. B. "Origin of the American Indians." Debow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources 3.6 565-574. June 1847. University of Michigan, Making of America Books and Journals. Accessed 25 Sep. 2004. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/acg1336>

Internet- Book in a Database:

Hazard, Samuel. Annals of Pennsylvania, from the Discovery of the Delaware. p. 608. 1850. University of Michigan, Making of America Books and Journals. Accessed 25 Sep. 2004. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/aav8575>

Book:

Cummings, Warren D. Sussex County, A History. (np) 1964. Rotary Club of Newton, NJ.

Periodical:

DeBow, J. D. B. "Origin of the American Indians." Debow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources 3.6 : 565-574. Jun. 1847.

Newspaper:

Mrs. F.M. Mathers obituary. Rockford (IA) Register. p. 4. 5 Apr. 1895

Letter:

Emmet H. Bell letter to Mr. Frank Berk. 29 Nov. 1909. Letter from Emmet in Newton, NJ to his Uncle Frank in Rockford, IA. Photograph copy of letter and postmarked envelope received from Carol Cook of (address and email).

Vital Record:

Marriage record for George E. Bestland and Johanna Ellingson. 25 Mar. 1887. Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota. County Recorder's Office, Redwood County, MN. Certified copy in my possession.

If you have a source not listed here you can follow the format. A speech, for example, would be cited as: speaker's name. "title of Speech" or description (keynote etc.). building/place, city. meeting and organization. date.

If you are not writing for any specific organization then the Turabian, Chicago, Turabian/Chicago or MLA style would suffice.

Here are a few sites to help with proper citations.

<http://www.lib.usm.edu/research/guides/turabian.html>

<http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citation.htm>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/index.html>

You are receiving this newsletter because you are a member of The USGenWeb Project. For address changes, or to be added to or removed from the mailing list visit the EC WebSite <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgwelections/> and contact your EC Rep.

To submit articles, letters and ideas, write to sharon@marshallnet.com

The USGenWeb NEWS is archived at <http://www.usgenweb.org/newsletter/>

----- NEWSLETTER STAFF

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